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ACRONYMS

ASASWEI	– The Association of South African Social Work Education
BSW	– Bachelor of Social Work
CCM	– Corporate Communication and Marketing
COMENSA	– Coaches and Mentors of South Africa
CPD	– Continuing Professional Development
DCCD	– Directorate: Counselling and Career Development
DCLD	– Directorate: Curriculum and Learning Development
DISA	– Department: Institutional Statistics and Analysis
DSD	– Department of Social Development
DSF	– Directorate: Student Funding
HEDA	– Institutional Information and Analysis Portal
IASSW	– International Association of Schools of Social Work
ICF	– International Coaching Federation
ICR	– International Coaching Research Forum
ICT	– Information Communication Technology
IDD	– Intervention Design and Development
IFSW	– International Federation of Social Workers
NASW	– National Association of Social Workers
NSFAS	– National Student Financial Aid Scheme
SAASWIPP	– South African Association of Social Workers in Private Practice
SACSSP	– South African Council for Social Service Professions
SAQA	– South African Qualifications Authority
UCT	– University of Cape Town
UNISA	– University of South Africa
UP	– University of Pretoria
US	– University of Stellenbosch

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa (UNISA) has the highest intake of social work students, but also the lowest throughput (Schenck, 2008:5) among South African universities. As an open and distance learning (ODL) institution, UNISA aspires to remove all unnecessary barriers to learning and increase access to education to previously disadvantaged students (De Beer & Bezuidenhout, 2006:64-81; UNISA, 2008a:15). The Department of Social Work has long been aware of the impeding influence of the personal, social and learning contexts of social work students on their performance, as well as the need for student support programmes (Lawlor, 2008; Lintvelt, 2008; Wade, 2009).

1.1.1 Student throughput: an international concern

Nationally and internationally there are increasing concerns regarding the “revolving doors” of higher education; i.e., the lack of student success and throughput (Prinsloo, 2009:6). Many students leave higher education institutions without completing their qualification due to failure, drop out or withdrawal (Johnes in Nel, 2008:14).

Student access and throughput or retention at both residential and distance education institutions internationally are concerns and have been widely studied in higher education over the last four decades (Tinto, 2006-2007:1-2). Nevertheless, there has been no substantial improvement in the graduation rate of students. In a study referred to by Letsoka, Cosser, Breier and Visser (2010:3) on degree completion in post-secondary schooling in the United States of America (USA) over a 100-year period, it was found that, despite the growth of a more formal educational degree in the USA, approximately 58% of first full-time students seeking a four-year bachelors or equivalent degree completed the degree within six years. Regarding the equity between high- and low-income students, a study by the National Center

for Education Statistics in the USA found that, although the access for low-income students has increased, students from the lowest socio-economic quartile (76%) are less likely to graduate and also do so over a longer period than students from the higher quartile (90%) (Tinto, 2006-2007:12).

1.1.2 Student throughput: a national concern

In **South Africa** the concerns surrounding poor student throughput and success must be seen against the history of higher education, and the effects and legacy of apartheid (Qakisa-Makoe, 2005:44). Since 1994 various government policy papers (e.g., 1995 National Commission of Distance Education Report, 2001 National Plan for Higher Education and 2004 Council for Higher Education Report) have outlined a number of strategies to redress the imbalances created by the apartheid system and improve access of low-income students to institutions of higher learning. Distance education was identified as a means that could increase access to education for people who do not have the opportunity to study full-time, either because they live in remote areas or have full-time jobs or for younger people who do not meet the requirements of campus-based institutions or people who do not have the money, as fees are generally lower for distance education (Qakisa-Makoe, 2005:44-61).

However, according to the 1995 National Commission of Distance Education Report, distance education institutions have not been successful in enabling students to perform to their maximum potential (Qakisa-Makoe, 2005:45). This inability has been attributed to inadequate education offered at university and a lack of understanding of the needs of distance education students. To address this in 2001, the National Plan for Higher Education embarked on a process of merging the various distance education institutions in South Africa to create a single dedicated, more effective open and distance learning institution in South Africa. On 1 January 2004 the old UNISA, the former Technikon Southern Africa (TSA) and the Vista Distance Education Campus (VUDEC) were merged as a single distance and comprehensive education institution in South Africa (Ntuli, 2008:20; UNISA, 2008a:13).

With almost 360 000 students, **UNISA** has become one of the mega-universities of the world and the largest in Africa (Prinsloo, 2009:6; Institutional Information and Analysis Portal

(HEDA), 2012). The aspirations of UNISA are reflected by its vision: “Towards the African University in service of humanity” (UNISA, 2008a:15). As open and distance learning institution, UNISA strives to provide open access to higher education by removing all unnecessary barriers to learning. It gives students as much control as possible over what, when, where and how to learn (De Beer & Bezuidenhout, 2006:64-81). It is also the most affordable institution of higher education in South Africa (Kilfoil in Schenck, 2008:3). Consequently, access to education for black students has increased significantly since 1994. The proportion of black students at UNISA has increased from about 56% in 1993 to 70% in 2011 (Department of Institutional Statistics & Analysis, 2012:11; Qakisa-Makoe, 2005:48; UNISA, 2008a:18).

In spite of the increase in the proportion of black students at UNISA increasing concerns have been expressed regarding the lack of student success and throughput. In a study conducted in 2000, comparing a selected group of UNISA students with a selected group of Technikon RSA students before the merger of the two institutions, it was found that 59% of the UNISA group left without graduating while 85% of the Technikon RSA group left without obtaining a qualification (Scott in Prinsloo, 2009:28). The throughput rate of the post-merger UNISA remained very low. In 2007, UNISA registered 244 000 students while the pass rate was only 6% in that year (Schenck, 2008:4).

In 2008, the UNISA Throughput Forum tasked Prof George Subotzky (Executive Director: Information and Strategic Analysis) and Prof Chris Swanepoel (Department of Decision Sciences) to form a small working group to develop a conceptual model regarding factors impacting on student throughput as well as the provision of effective and appropriate student support, as set out in UNISA’s 2015 objectives (Prinsloo, 2009:7). A comprehensive discussion document, “Modelling throughput at UNISA: The key to successful implementation of ODL” (Prinsloo, 2009), was compiled on factors contributing to student throughput and a conceptual model for UNISA’s unique context. These factors will be discussed in the next paragraph.

1.1.2.1 International and national factors influencing student throughput

From national and international research, Prinsloo (2009:85) concludes that students' perseverance is the consequence of a dynamic interplay between the following personal, institutional and broader contextual factors:

- Different factors influence impact on student throughput and retention. Younger students are more likely to have made poor course choices, while mature students are more likely to leave because of external circumstances (Education Policy Institute in Prinsloo, 2009:86).
- Students whose parents have not participated in post-secondary education tend to face more challenges, as their families are unable to support them academically or financially (Education Policy Institute in Prinsloo, 2009:86).
- Proficiency in English is decisive to students' chances for success with their studies. For many students English is a second or third language to which they have had little prior exposure at home or at school (Eiselen & Geyser in Prinsloo, 2009:86; Rural Education Access Programme in Prinsloo, 2009:86).
- Poverty and access to financial security for their studies and while studying plays a major role in student throughput and dropout (Rural Education Access Programme in Prinsloo, 2009:86).
- Gender, age, marital status and family roles are further variables influencing student success. Stratton et. al. (in Prinsloo, 2009:58) found that older men are more likely to discontinue their studies than younger men, while age is not a significant factor for women. Compared to never-married men, married men are significantly more likely to discontinue rather than to enrol repeatedly. Likewise, married women are also more likely to discontinue compared to never-married women. The presence of a young child is more likely to affect women than men to discontinue whereas men are more likely to enrol repeatedly.
- Self-efficacy, attribution and locus of control are intrapersonal factors that play a significant role in student success. A student's prior learning experience influences his or her perception of locus of control and self-efficacy (Parker in Prinsloo, 2009:87; Rendon et. al. in Prinsloo, 2009:87).

The following hypotheses made by Koen (in Prinsloo, 2009:87) regarding retention/ completion of postgraduate studies are confirmed by other sources (cf. Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980 and 1988):

- Students who receive inadequate academic and institutional support, and who do not enjoy strong social interaction with academics and fellow-students are more likely to abandon their studies than would other students.
- Weak academic departments and faculties (in terms of the number of PhDs, and types of resources available for training and socialisation) are more likely to struggle to retain students than would strong departments.
- The morale of academics and students, and the motivation of students to stay are influenced by the distribution and availability of organisational resources; e.g., supervisors.
- Student socialisation experiences with other students and the extent to which institutions reinforce normative behaviour are likely to play an important role in retention.
- The level of student motivation and commitment in completing a master's course is influenced by the availability of resources, the type of academic support they receive and the degree to which they are affirmed in departments.
- Socio-economic and household circumstances play a significant role in retention.
- Students' motivation, aspirations, expectations, intentions and study plans play crucial roles in retention.

Students' success and throughput are influenced negatively by courses or career choices that include vocational or professional programmes with "real-life workplace experience" and include elements of work-based or work-integrated learning (WIL) (Groenewald & Thulukanam, 2005:84). WIL programmes focus on the application of theory in authentic, work-based contexts, address specific competencies identified for the acquisition of a qualification and enable the development of skills that will make the student employable, and provide a real context in which theoretical, practical, interpersonal and reflexive competencies are developed in an integrated way (UNISA, 2005:1). These programmes are demanding in terms of time, travelling, costs and personal development. Social work is such a course.

During their fourth level social work students are placed at an organisation where they do their practical work in case work, group work and community work for at least eight hours a week. Students also meet weekly in small groups with a supervisor who facilitates the integration of theory and practice.

1.1.3 Throughput of social work students

The situation of the social work profession in South Africa, with a ratio of one social worker to 40 000 people (McKendrick in Wade, 2009:258) and social work having been declared a scarce skill (Earle in Wade, 2009:258), has created a huge increase in the demand for trained social workers and a high throughput of students. However, the following training requirements for social work as profession may at the same time have a negative impact on throughput rates of social work students. The degree in social work (Bachelor of Social Work – BSW) is a four-year course culminating in a postgraduate qualification. It is registered with the National Qualification Framework (NQF) as a level 8-qualification on the Higher Education Qualification Sub-framework (HEQSF) (SAQA Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work, 2012). The Standards Generation Body (SGB) for social work prescribes 27 exit level outcomes for all social work curricula at South African universities (SAQA Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work, 2012).

A further implication of social work as a profession that may affect throughput is that, as a profession with a code of ethics, it is value-based and infused with the following ethical principles: social justice, respect for people's worth, human rights and dignity, high standards of competence, integrity, personal responsibility, concern for the wellbeing of others and service above self-interest (SACSSP, n.d.:5-7). This requires specialised knowledge and skills; e.g., relationship and communication skills through which social workers, with their clients, bring about change. Therefore, to become social workers students need professional development as well as personal development. Students also have to be financially able to register with the Council for Social Service Professions as student social workers during their training.

Schenck (2008:5) has compared the throughput rates of social work students at South African universities, based on data obtained by Earle (2008). In Table 1 below data of first-level registrations is compared with course completion data:

Table 1.1 Throughput of social work students at South African universities

(Schenck, 2008:5)

	Registration 2001	Completion 2004	Percentage %
Fort Hare Alice	180	47	26
Fort Hare East London	33	8	24
Free State	34	13	38
Huguenot College	86	41	48
KZN	127	13	10
Limpopo	43	38	88
North-West	25	5	20
UCT	58	38	66
UNISA	999	72	7.2
University of Johannesburg	75	17	22
University Stellenbosch	85	19	23
UP	30	19	63
UWC	112	77	69
Venda	100	52	52
Walter Sisulu	92	21	23
WITS	42	14	33

The table shows that the throughput of social work students at most South African universities is extremely low. Compared to other universities, **UNISA's Social Work Department** has the highest intake of students but the lowest throughput percentage (Schenck, 2008:5) which is in accordance with the rest of UNISA. In 2006, only 6% of students who initially registered for the BSW course completed their degrees within a four-year period (Schenck, 2008:5). The

number of students enrolling for social work at UNISA has increased enormously. According to the departmental statistics, students enrolled for 10 000 more social work modules in 2010 than in 2009. Unlike other universities, like the University of Pretoria, who have a strict selection policy, UNISA, as an ODL-institution, aims to remove any barriers to learning and has only started with a policy of managed access in 2013, setting some minimum requirements per qualification (UNISA, 2012b:4).

Earle (2008:122-124), who conducted research in the Department of Social Work at both the University of Limpopo and Stellenbosch, explains that one needs to understand educational throughput in the context of the personal and family factors that impact on the institution, its students and their ability to complete the degree. With the change in student demographics, the majority of students are now from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and impoverished communities. Many had first-hand experience of the social ills affecting South Africa, such as:

- Widespread alcoholism and drug abuse in families
- Teenage pregnancies
- Breakdown of family units, as parents leave their children with grandparents and migrate in search of work
- Lack of role models in the community
- Lack of early childhood development opportunities
- Lack of academic and communication support from parents or grandparents who are often uneducated
- Lack of access to technology and educational resources
- Lack of access to quality schooling.

Lawlor (2008:13), Lintvelt (2008:8) and Wade (2009:333) researched the personal, academic and practical work experiences of fourth level social work students of 2006-2008 at UNISA. Subsequently, Schenck (2008:10-23) did a meta-analysis of these experiences, using Max-Neef's taxonomy of fundamental human needs and poverties. According to Max-Neef (in Schenck, 2008:8), the following are fundamental human needs (satisfiers of need indicated in brackets):

- **Subsistence** (food, shelter, etc.)
- **Affection** (relationships, care, family)
- **Protection** (security, safety)
- **Understanding** (education)
- **Freedom** (rights, equal access, etc.)
- **Idleness** (leisure experiences)
- **Creation** (work, to contribute)
- **Identity** (the self of the person, values)
- **Participation** (decision making).

A tenth need was later considered and included by others using this framework:

- **Transcendence** (spirituality).

According to Max-Neef (in Schenck, 2008:8), all needs are interrelated; thus, parts of a whole and to some extent, affect the other needs. The fundamental human needs are universal to all people of all cultures. What are different are the satisfiers; e.g., income, food and a shelter are satisfiers of the need for subsistence. Some satisfiers can satisfy a particular need but at the same time destroy another need; e.g., to build a wall around my house may satisfy the need for protection but affects the need for freedom. Some satisfiers may also satisfy more than one need; e.g., a mother who breastfeeds may satisfy the need for subsistence, protection and affection. For a student to be able to study and qualify is a satisfier of the need for understanding, protection, freedom, identity, participation and subsistence. Any fundamental human need not satisfied adequately reveals a form of human poverty. Therefore, needs and satisfiers have to be viewed holistically, as one need may influence another and one satisfier may satisfy many needs.

From the research by Lawlor (2008:13), Lintvelt (2008:8) and Wade (2009:333) Schenck (2008:10-23) found that the poverties experienced by the students were as follows:

- **Poverty of subsistence** refers to inadequate income, not enough to eat, lack of water and fuel, and not access to decent and affordable housing. In Wade's (2009:399) research, 43% of the students reported that they have experienced extreme poverty, were living in poor, low-income areas and with high rates of unemployment where the

people were mostly dependent on state grants.

- **Poverty of protection** exists due to having inadequate and unreliable protection systems against crime, labour practices, health systems, poor sanitation etc. Lintvelt (2008:88) asked the students to describe how safe their neighbourhoods were. It was perceived as very safe by 14% of the students, safe by 18%, while 44% of the students experienced their neighbourhoods as “average”, 15% as unsafe and 9% as very unsafe. When Wade (2009:406) asked about their own traumatic experiences it emerged that most of the students had experienced multiple traumatic incidences; e.g., murders, hijackings and domestic violence (Wade, 2009:391, 394).
- **Poverty of affection** refers to a lack of relationships, to exploitation and the loss of the people close to them. Most of the participants had lost significant people in their lives. Most had lost close family members (79%), some had lost their life partners (28%) and some had been removed from home in childhood (17%) (Wade, 2009:391, 394).
- **Poverty of identity:** Lintvelt (2008:50-53) reported on the participants’ family of origin. The students grew up in a variety of family settings from nuclear families (54%), extended families, reconstructed families and adoptive families, foster care (abandoned) and child-headed families. The respondents were requested to describe how they had experienced their families. The descriptions varied from happy families (53%) with fond memories to terrible experiences and unhappiness during childhood (40%).
- **Poverty of understanding** refers to a lack of access to good education, recognition of innate knowledge, skills wisdom and resources. Although the students do have access to knowledge (being enrolled at UNISA), other factors influence their performance; e.g., the qualification of their parents and the lack of the existence of a culture of learning, the context in which they study, and the other responsibilities they need to carry like caring for children and family that have limited the time they can spend on their studies (Lintvelt, 2008:113).
- **Poverty of participation:** The poverty of participation manifests as exclusion and isolation. Open and distance learning in itself contribute to exclusion and isolation, as just over 50% of the students have indicated to Lintvelt (2008:96) that they experience loneliness. In Lintvelt’s (2008:97) study 82% of the students, who included the

Afrikaans-speaking students, have to use their second language to communicate in class and this, in some instances, excludes the students from participating in discussions and debates, as they feel they cannot convey their input as well as the English-speaking students can.

- **Poverty of idleness:** Recreation or enjoyment ensues from the necessity to work constantly to survive, with little free time or relaxation to develop peace of mind. Specifically the working and female students had family responsibilities, and they experienced a lack of time for leisure and relaxation. Lintvelt (2008:33) tested students' exposure to 22 different leisure experiences. The two experiences that scored lowest were a visit to an arts exhibition and the zoo – 91% had never visited an art exhibition – and 83% had never visited a zoo.
- **Poverty of creation:** Poverty of creation exists due to the lack of an opportunity to work, produce, design and invent. Wade (2009:384) indicated that 33% of students did not work at all or had never had the experience of being employed. An additional dimension related to this poverty, was the students' lack of driver's licenses.
- **Poverty of transcendence:** Although no questions were asked about the faith or belief system of the respondents, 47% of the participants in Lintvelt's (2008:37) study indicated that spirituality and faith were part of their identity. Most of the students indicated that they were of the Christian faith and that faith played a major role in their coping with their challenges.

Schenck's (2008:24) meta-research of the studies done by Lawlor (2008), Lintvelt (2008) and Wade (2009) implies that UNISA social work students live in three worlds or contexts: the world of UNISA as an ODL institution, the Department of Social Work at the university that needs to prepare the students for the world of work and the world of multiple interconnected poverties. For students to be successful and increase the throughput rates, these three worlds have to be in synergy. Creating synergy between these worlds requires a holistic approach to student development or a student-centeredness which includes additional programmes to assist students with their social skills, life- and work-related skills, the development of a work ethos, and access to counselling and support services.

1.1.4 Student support in higher education

Student support can be defined as “a variety of integrated activities, within administrative, academic and socio sub-systems to provide students with a quality learning experience and success” (UNISA, 2008b:59).

Student support is accepted as part of higher education and as essential, especially within distance higher education, to improve the performance of distance education students (Qakisa-Makoe, 2005:46). Nonyongo and Ngenebule (1998:xi) state that student support plays an important part in reducing the difficulties experienced by students in distance education by, amongst other things, helping to reduce their isolation, facilitating effective learning, reducing attrition rates, increasing success rates and generally improving the quality of distance education. There has, however, been a movement urging higher education institutions not to see student success as only a high throughput or retention rate, but to also to consider other success indicators, such as being prepared for jobs, serving society’s needs, gaining basic general education, understanding and pursuing lifelong learning (Habley & Shuh in Kramer & Associates, 2007:359; Kramer in Kramer & Associates, 2007:437).

There are different opinions as to who should offer the support services. Various authors (King & Fox in Kramer & Associates, 2007:399; Mandew, 2003:61; Tinto, 2002:4; Vowell in Kramer & Associates, 2007:19) agree that it is not only the role of student advisors but that lecturers or “faculty” should also play an important role in supporting the student. A partnership should be developed between student service practitioners and academic staff.

Internationally and nationally higher education institutions use a variety of programmes and technologies to support students. These include academic support, career development and counselling services which can include, but is not limited to the following (Mandew, 2003:69-70; also compare Kramer in Kramer & Associates, 2007:440-442):

- The provision of study skills and “learning about learning” – note-taking, reading, summarising, library usage, word processing, essay writing, topic analysis, preparing for exams, Internet research/use etc.

- The provision of skills required for finding employment: CV writing, job application, job interview skills, team playing, self-motivation, career planning, multi-skilling etc.
- Provision of leadership and governance: leading and managing change, team building, policy development and analysis, conflict intervention and management, negotiation, interaction management etc.
- Provision of skills on how to chair a meeting, taking and writing minutes, financial management, proposal writing, report writing, disciplinary procedures etc.
- Diversity and boundary crossing: facilitating an understanding of the person's own and others' identity regarding class and socio-economic status, race, gender, nationality, language as well as religion, and countering prejudice and discrimination
- Provision of skills in entrepreneurship, such as designing business plans, conducting market research, how to market oneself and one's products, and how to do proper financial management
- Democracy and citizenship: facilitating an understanding of issues, such as constitutionalism, rule of law, human rights, non-racism, gender and equality, freedom of expression and association, social justice and volunteerism
- Provision of life skills: financial planning, time management, planning, interpersonal skills, assertiveness, coping with criticism, decision-making, social sensitivity, creative problem-solving, team-building, conflict management, self-esteem building, stress management, peer counselling, health and sexuality, coping with relationships, substance abuse prevention etc.

Workshops, face-to-face interviews, peer support programmes, groups, pamphlets, booklets, role plays, assessment instruments and online technology are used to present the abovementioned content and programmes to students (Badenhorst, 2008; Bingham & Daniels, 1998:1-13; Dembo & Seli, 2008:xvi; UCT, 2007).

UNISA has committed itself to effective student support, as described in its 2015 Strategic Plan, Objective 5 which reads as follows: “Establishment of service-orientated technology-enhanced student support to increase retention and throughput” (UNISA, 2007:11). Strategy

1.3 of the Institutional Operational Plan 2010 states as follows: “To develop an integrated support model” (UNISA, 2010a:9).

UNISA offers three kinds of student support services, namely academic services, affective support and administrative services (Mashiapata, 2010a). Several sections (service divisions) contribute to these fields, such as the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development; Directorate: Student Social Development; Directorate: Instructional Support and Services; Regional Services; Directorate: Curriculum and Learning Development; Directorate: Advocacy and Resource Centre for Students with Disabilities; Directorate: Student Assessment Administration; Directorate Student Admissions and Registration; Corporate Communication and Marketing; the library, and Directorate: Student Funding (Van Schoor, 2012a).

The following table (Table 1.2) sets out support services of the Directorate for Counselling and Career Development (Mashiapata, 2010a):

Table 1.2 Support services rendered by the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development

Counselling	Career services	Academic development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal counselling and therapy • Career counselling and psychometric assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career development and guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic support and academic literacy • Focus on assisting students with academic difficulties, reading, memory, methods etc.

UNISA offers these services at academic literacy centres in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni (Benoni), Florida, Vaal Triangle, Polokwane, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Newcastle, Middelburg, Mbombela (Nelspruit), Parow, George, East London, Mthatha, Port Elizabeth, Kimberley, Bloemfontein, Kroonstad, Rustenburg, Potchefstroom and Mahikeng (my Studies @ Unisa, 2012:80-81).

1.1.4.1 A socio-critical model and framework for improving student success in open and distance learning at UNISA

The conceptual model on student throughput and success mentioned in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.1.2 were developed by a task team commissioned by the Throughput Forum of UNISA. It was finalised as a socio-critical model and framework for improving student success in open and distance learning at UNISA, as presented in Figure 1.1 below (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:177-193).

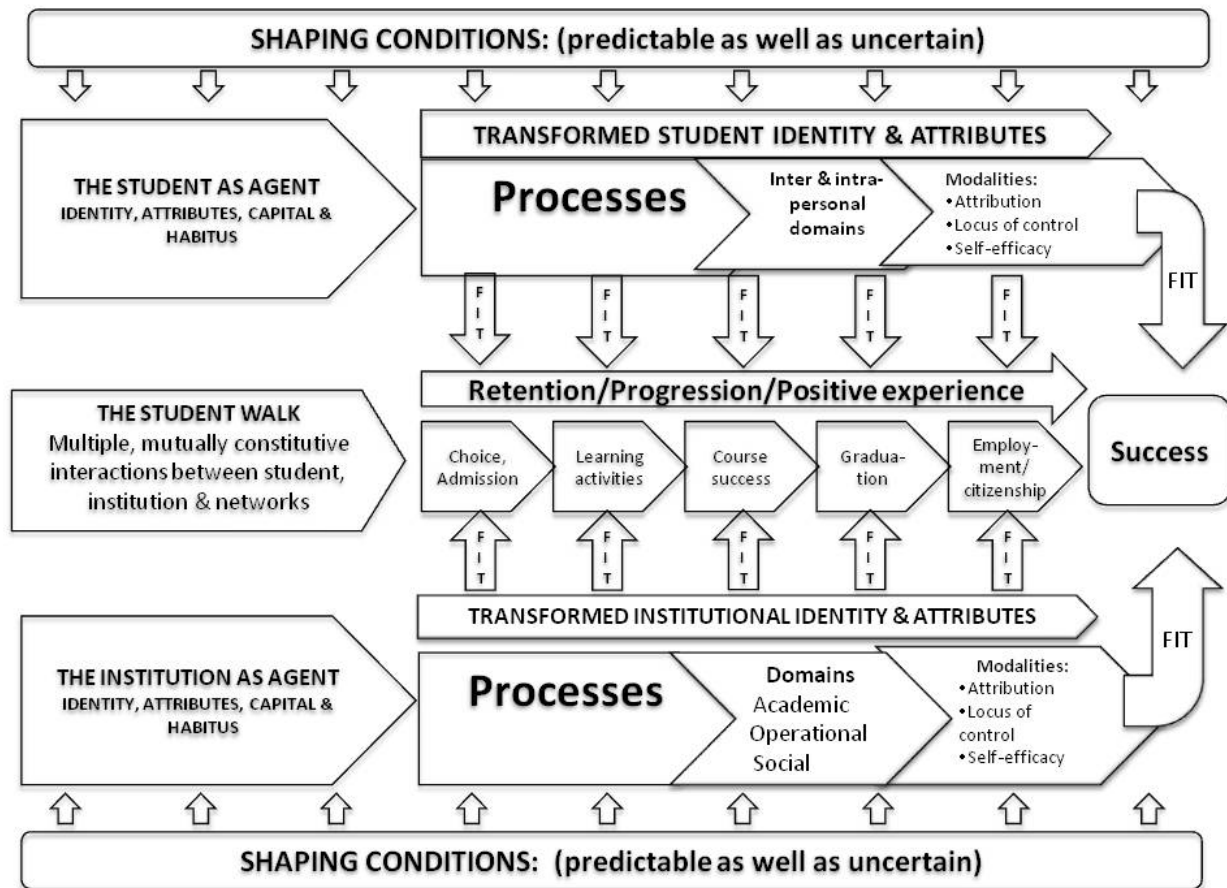


Figure 1.1: UNISA's socio-critical model for explaining, predicting and enhancing student success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:92-119)

This model has been informed by a set of key constructs which describe the dynamic nature of student success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:92-119):

- **Situated agents and the institution**

The student as well as the institution is seen as “situated agents” which implies that their attributes and behaviour are shaped by their historical, geographical, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and circumstances. Yet, as “agents”, they are relatively free to grow and change their attributes to gain success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:184).

- **Student walk**

A central concept in the model is the “student walk” which refers to “the numerous continuous interactions between student and institution throughout each step of the student’s journey, beginning with application and registration but also including teaching, learning and assessment, student support, graduation and ending with participation in the community and labour market” (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:185). The model stresses the mutual responsibility for transformation of student and institutional attributes. To transform and achieve success the student needs to have “knowledge of the institution” which includes making an informed choice of the qualification he wants to achieve, courses and course loads; understanding and meeting learning and assessment expectations, and mastering the necessary competencies. It also involves knowledge of where, when and how to access guidance from lecturers, tutors, counsellors, administrators as well as library staff. For the institution, “knowledge of the student” involves understanding the needs, attitudes, behaviours, academic and non-academic profiles, backgrounds, risk factors, life circumstances and socio-economic conditions of students, and fulfilling the needs of students. If sufficient mutual knowledge is transformed into effective action at each point of the student walk, a “fit” between student and institution leads to sustained success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:186).

- **Capital**

Success is enhanced when student and institution have specific kinds of capital, such as financial, cultural, intellectual, organisational and attitudinal forms of capital. Academic literacy is one form of cultural and intellectual capital required by the student while the capacity of institutional learning is required by the institution (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:186).

- **Habitus**

The habitus refers to “the complex combination of perceptions, experiences, values, practices, discourses and assumptions that underlie the construction of our worldviews” (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:186). These are often hidden, and both student and institution need to reflect on how their behaviour is influenced by their habitus.

- **Domains and modalities of transformation**

For students, change must occur in both the “intrapersonal” and “interpersonal” domains. The first refers to “the range of individual psychological attributes required for success”, including a positive attitude and beliefs, self-discipline, motivation and confidence. The second refers to the “range of social, psychological and sociological aspects of social interaction that need to be negotiated and mastered in self-development” which includes communication and interpersonal skills, assertiveness, critical reflection and self-knowledge derived from these interactions (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:187). For the institution, change must occur in the academic, administrative and non-academic social domains. The first two refer to the core activities of teaching, research and community engagement while the last refers to aspects like the institutional culture, intergroup dynamics and dominant ideologies (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:187).

Three key modalities, namely attribution, locus of control and self-efficacy are applied to the student and the institution:

- Attribution is the process of attributing causality (rightly or wrongly) to external or internal factors which are mostly based on perceptions and not evidence. The risk is to identify only one or a few of many factors that partially attribute cause. It is important that both the student and the institution identify all possible factors impacting on success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:187).
- Locus of control refers to allocating control to factors over which we have or do not have control. Both the student and the institution need to rightly attribute causes to factors over which they have/do not have control (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:187).
- Self-efficacy refers to the belief in one’s own capacity to succeed which applies to both the institution and the student (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:188).

- **A broad definition of success**

Success can be defined as course success leading to graduation, a positive student experience and satisfaction throughout the student walk, a successful fit between students' graduate attributes and the requirement of the workplace and society as well as course success without graduating (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:188).

Previously, support initiatives were siloed between academic/research and student support efforts. To overcome this divide a comprehensive framework for enhancing student success was adopted by UNISA in 2008. It consists of the following six elements (Liebenberg & Archer, 2012:2; Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:189-190):

- Drawing from an extensive literature review, the development of an appropriate conceptual model of all factors impacting on student success in the UNISA context
- Based on this, the identification of relevant, measurable and available information
- The systematic gathering of this information from various sources and the integration of this into a comprehensive tracking system
- Utilising this information, the detailed analysis, profiling and assessment to predict risk
- Utilising this intelligence and early warning of risk from the tracking system to inform student support initiatives
- Over time, monitoring and evaluating of these initiatives and continuously improving practice.

The next step is to operationalise the model by “identifying what is knowable and actionable” from the institutional perspective, and to inform student support initiatives to achieve maximum effectiveness and impact (Prinsloo, 2009:119).

This statement links to what Guentzel and Nesheim (2006:8) said about the development of support services for students, namely that research on attrition, student experiences, socialisation and programme intervention are useful in the development of support services, but educators must research the needs and experiences of their specific institution. Tailoring services for students necessitates first taking steps to assess the needs and experiences of

students on individual campuses. The educator also needs to identify the gaps between what they, as educators, think they are doing and how they are perceived by their constituents, the students, and take action to reduce the gaps. By developing the proposed tracking system UNISA will be able to identify its students' experiences and success.

The Department of Social Work has already researched its students within their habitus and identified the different poverties the students are experiencing (Lawlor, 2008; Lintvelt, 2008; Schenck, 2008; Wade, 2009). However, the students' support needs and their expectations of the Department of Social Work to satisfy these needs are unknown. With this study, the researcher aims to take the process one step further and identify social work students' support needs and how they expect the Department of Social Work and UNISA to fulfil these needs. She will explore life coaching as a possible form of student support within an ODL context.

1.1.4.2 Life coaching as a form of student support

Many student support programmes focus on personal and career development of the student, but the researcher has been unable to find information on the use of life coaching programmes within higher education institutions (Badenhorst, 2008; Heydenrych, 2010; Mashipata, 2010b; Prinsloo, 2010; Proctor, 2010; Van Vuuren, 2009; UCT, 2007). Life coaching with its focus on self-awareness, personal development and goal achievement provides a unique opportunity for social work students to take responsibility for their own personal and professional development from the moment that they enrol until they graduate as social workers. Although life coaching offers possibilities as a form of student support for social work students within an ODL context, this possibility has not been explored yet.

Life coaching is one branch of coaching (Fairley & Stout, 2004:12). In the next section the researcher will explore coaching, its history, theoretical approaches, coaching models and skills as well as research findings on the effectiveness of life coaching.

➤ Exploring coaching

To understand what coaching is, it is helpful to differentiate it from mentoring, counselling and consulting (The Coaching Centre, 2009:1; Williams & Anderson, 2006:11; Williams & Menendez, 2007:40). From the abovementioned sources the following comparison of the terms was developed using the following: focus of work, expertise, who sets the agenda, relationship and process as depicted in the table below:

Table 1.3 A comparison between counselling, mentoring, consulting and coaching

	Counselling	Mentoring	Consulting	Coaching
Focus of the work	Deals mostly with the client's past and trauma; client seeks healing	Deals mostly with succession training; client wants to learn what mentor knows or does	Deals mostly with problems and seeks to provide information (e.g., strategies) to solve the problems	Deals with the client's present and seeks to guide the client into a more desirable future
Expertise of service provider	Expert in psychological health	Expert in the client's field of work	Expert or advisor in the client's field of work	Expert in learning and goal attainment
Relationship between service provider and client	Depends on approach of service provider – can be more or less directive	Older or wiser service provider guides the younger or less experienced client	The service provider provides the person with answers or advice	The service provider, as partner, assists the client to discover his own answers
Who sets the agenda for sessions	Service provider follows the client	Either service provider or client	Agenda determined by client experiencing problems	Client sets the agenda, but a structure is provided by service provider
Process of service delivery	Depends on the approach of service provider;	The client observes the service provider's	The service provider evaluates the situations and	The client identifies his goals and

	relationship is usually important, but different techniques could be used for change	behaviour; service provider answers questions and provides guidance	tells the client how to solve the problems	challenges; service provider works with client to reach his goals
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In comparison with the mentor, counsellor, consultant and trainer, the coach creates a facilitative learning environment in which the client takes the lead in a proactive process of growth.

This is also illustrated in the following definitions of **coaching**:

- “Coaching is the facilitation of learning and development with the purpose of improving performance and enhancing effective action, goal achievement and personal satisfaction. It invariably involves growth and change, whether that is of perspective, attitude or behaviour” (Bluckert in McDermott & Jago, 2005:8).
- “Coaching is a professional, collaborative and outcome-driven method of learning that seeks to develop an individual and raise self-awareness so that s/he might achieve specific goals and perform at a more effective level” (COMENSA in The Coaching Centre, 2009:9).
- “Professional coaches provide an on-going partnership designed to help clients produce fulfilling results in their personal and professional lives. Coaches help people improve their performances and enhance their quality of life” (Williams & Menendez, 2007:xxxviii).
- Coaching is “facilitating learning” and learning is described as moving from unconscious incompetence to conscious incompetence, from conscious competence to unconscious competence (The Coaching Centre, 2009:7).

Referring to the common elements in the above definitions, the researcher defines coaching for the purpose of this research as a process of facilitating self-awareness, setting goals, and facilitating personal and professional growth and development.

The above definitions refer to the two currently accepted branches of coaching – **personal coaching** and **business coaching** – with each gaining speciality areas (Fairley & Stout, 2004:12). Each branch is known by various names. Personal coaching is also known as **life coaching**, success coaching, personal life coaching and professional coaching (Fairley & Stout, 2004:12). Some of the popular sub-specialities include spiritual coaching, relationship coaching, grief coaching, elder coaching, personal development coaching and career coaching. Business coaching is also known as corporative coaching, performance coaching, management coaching, executive coaching, strategic coaching, change coaching and leadership coaching. Personal coaches usually work with a wide range of individuals on intrapersonal and interpersonal issues, such as coping with a problem or crisis, focusing their energy, making a career transition, living a more fulfilled life, overcoming conflict, enhancing communication skills as well as specifying and achieving their life goals.

Business coaches usually work with business managers, executives and people focusing on leadership development, increasing employee motivation, organisational strategy, building a company, organisational development, change-management issues, career advancement, overcoming sales and marketing challenges, team building, effective communication skills and management training (Fairley & Stout, 2004:13, 20; also compare McDermott & Jago, 2005:10; The Coaching Centre, 2008:63).

A distinction is also made between individual and group or team coaching (Mthembu, 2007:vi; Williams & Davis, 2007:165;). Individual clients or groups can meet personally, telephonically (telephone conference) or through email or Skype with a coach. Groups learn from each other's growth processes, or formal groups or teams from one organisation or company can meet to work on individual and company goals (Mthembu, 2007:vi; Williams & Davis, 2007:166).

The coaching programme to be developed will specifically be a life coaching programme, as it will focus on the personal and professional development of the student. It will, however, also include elements of career coaching, as the focus will be on social work as a profession and

even business coaching as a third party, the organisation, in this instance, the higher education institution is involved.

➤ **History of coaching**

The core of coaching is said to have a very long history, as far back as Socrates who was not interested in imparting knowledge, but in facilitating thinking. The coaching profession, however, is a recent development. There have been sport coaches for many years, but in 1975 Tim Gallway published *The Inner Game of Tennis*, sharing his strategy of enabling clients to attend to their own mental processes. Among his students were business people who could see the relevance of his approach to corporate life (McDermott & Jago, 2005:16).

One of these students, John Whitmore, developed and brought his approach to Europe and in 1995 published *Coaching for Performance*. In the late 1970s, business consultant and politician, Fernando Flores, and Professor Hubert Dreyfus developed ontological coaching which focuses on the use of language in connecting with others. This way of thinking was further developed by Julio Olalla, Rafael Echverria and James Flaherty who all worked with Flores, and offered coaching training (McDermott & Jago, 2005:16-19).

By the beginning of the 1990s, a number of people wanted to formalise what they had developed individually into a more structured discipline. In 1992, Thomas Leonard, a former financial planner, founded the Coach University. Some years later, Laura Whitmore (an accountant) and Henry Kimsy-House founded the Coaches Training Institute. In 1998 the members of the Professional Personal Coaches Association and the International Coach Federation (ICF) came together to form the International Coach Federation which was initially largely North American but became an international body. Other bodies like the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) have also been formed to develop and enhance coaching standards. Another accreditation body playing an important role is the Worldwide Association of Business Coaches (WABC) (McDermott & Jago, 2005:16-19).

In South Africa, Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA) was established to regulate coaching and mentoring, develop credibility and align national standards with international standards. During 2005-2006, COMENSA developed a simple framework of standards for coaches, which was revised in 2007 into a draft framework, *Membership Criteria and Standards of Competence (MCSC)*. COMENSA is still in a process of finalising the draft (McDermott & Jago, 2005:16-19; Rostron, 2009a:16, 205).

Contemporary professional coaching is a cross-disciplinary methodology. In a study of 2 529 coaches in 2004 by Grant and Zackon (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007:25), it was found that coaches came from a variety of professional backgrounds, including consultants (40.8%), managers (30.8%), executives (30.2%), teachers (15.7%) and salespersons (13.8%). Only 4.8% of respondents came from a background in psychology. This diversity is both a strength and a liability. It means that coaching draws on a wide range of methodological approaches, but on the other hand, it brings a lack of clarity of what professional coaching really is, what makes for an effective or reputable coach, and an unclear knowledge base and terminology (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007:23, 24; Rostron, 2009a:21). This diversity also contributed to the development of a variety of coaching approaches and models to be described in the next section.

➤ **Theoretical approaches to coaching**

As mentioned, coaching is currently an “emerging profession” which does not have its own clear knowledge base (Rostron, 2009a:21). Coaches use theory from different professions, including psychology; e.g., contributions of Irvin Yalom, an existential psychotherapist; Ernesto Spinelli, an existential professor of psychology and Bruce Peltier, a psychologist. The core conditions of change and the skills of the person-centred approach of Carl Rogers, such as active listening, respecting clients and working from their frame of reference, are widely used in coaching (Rostron, 2009a:20).

In order to understand behaviour and facilitate change in clients, coaches base their work, sometimes a whole model, sometimes on specific tool or on a psychological theory. Alfred

Adler (Rostron, 2009a:26-27, 31) mentioned that adult behaviour is purposeful and goal-directed, and that life goals provide individual motivation. He recommended goal setting during therapy and using techniques like “acting as if” and role play – tools used by coaches.

Carl Jung viewed the adult phase as a time for “individuation”. He suggested that people have different preferences and thus alternative perspectives on situations. This idea is now used in coaching, dealing with motivation and leadership. Erik Erikson views development as a lifelong process where individuals must resolve a series of polarities which may be initiated by a crisis or turning point. This is used in the Hudson’s Renewal Cycle coaching models. Abraham Maslow has theorised that we need to resolve certain issues before we can fulfill other needs (moving from physiological needs to safety needs to social needs to self-esteem and to self-actualisation). His model is used to understand motivation. The theory of experiential learning of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget and David Kolb that stresses the importance of experiential learning and a client’s subjective experience, has strongly influenced coaching (Rostron, 2009a:26-27, 31).

Positive psychology or the strengths-based approach which is defined as “an approach to psychology which aims to use scientific psychological research to enhance the wellbeing of individuals and communities” is widely used in coaching (Linley cited by Driver, 2011:1). It provides an applicable theoretical framework for coaching and has enabled coaches to use the existing, validated positive psychology interventions (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011:209). Positive psychology and coaching both claim that attention should not be on “fixing” the client or on pathology; both share a concern with optimal functioning and wellbeing, and both help clients to find their strengths and use their resources effectively (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011:209).

Appreciative inquiry (AI) is an application of the positive psychology or strength-based approach. It is used in all levels of human systems, such as families, teams, schools, businesses and even global alliances (Barrett & Fry, 2005:42; Schenck, Nel & Louw, 2010:65). It searches for the best in people, their organisations and the relevant world around them, and build them. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a

system's capacity to build its potential (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d.:3). The meaning of the concept is also clear when you look at the meaning of the words “appreciative” meaning “valuing” or “recognising the best in people or the world around us” as well as “increase in value”, while “inquiry” denotes “exploration or discovery” and “to ask questions” (Appreciative Inquiry Commons, n.d.:1).

The researcher will utilise concepts from positive psychology or the strength-based approach and specifically the appreciative inquiry in the life coaching programme for support of social work students, although some of the models or tools used may be based on other theoretical approaches. Applicable concepts from the strength-based psychology as well as the Appreciative Inquiry will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, paragraph 5.8.5.1 and 5.8.5.2.

➤ **Coaching models**

A huge variety of coaching models have been developed. According to Rostron (2009a:86), a coaching model is representative of what happens or will happen in the coaching conversation (micro level) and the overall coaching intervention or journey (macro level). Starr (2011:154, 223) distinguishes between the path or structure of a coaching conversation which is a formal or informal conversation between the coach and the client, and the framework of a coaching assignment, representing a series of coaching conversations. “Coaching models help us to understand the coaching intervention from a systems perspective, and to understand the need for ‘structure’ in the interaction between the coach and client . . . It is a metaphor or analogy to help visualise and describe the journey” (Rostron, 2009a:86).

Models are not regarded as prescriptive or rigid, as the client's decisions remain central. Some coaching schools train students to use a single model, while others teach a variety of models so that the students can choose to work from one model or integrate a variety of models to create their own unique model (Rostron, 2009a:86, 88). Existing models include the circular, four-quadrant, U-process as well as the “spiral process” and the acronym models (Crane, 2007:44; The Coaching Centre, 2008:47; Rostron, 2009a:86, 88; and). These models are

further explored in Phase 2, Step 2 of the intervention research framework (cf. Chapter 5, paragraph 5.8.1).

➤ **Research on coaching effectiveness**

Very little literature and research on the effectiveness of coaching were found. Fillery-Travis and Lane (in Palmer & Whybrow, 2007:56) found some studies that showed a consistent improvement in performance rating of managers within organisations who had been coached in goal setting, seeking feedback to improve performance, interpersonal skills and leadership effectiveness. Other clients maintained that studies on the clients' perception of the value of coaching found that coaching impacted favourably upon their performance regarding communication skills, interpersonal support or self-efficacy.

Fillery-Travis and Lane (in Palmer & Whybrow, 2007:67) mention a study undertaken by a public sector agency that found an increase of 88 percent in the productivity of coached individuals compared to a 22 percent increase for non-coached individuals. It is difficult to do research on the effectiveness of coaching, as one needs to be clear about the original purpose of coaching and the mode of coaching used. Both these factors influence the criteria for success and the research method. There seems to be a consensus that clients within a business environment enjoy being coached and believe it enhances their professional lives. This view is shared by their organisations.

One of the requirements for coaching to be recognised as a regulated profession is peer-reviewed and accepted research. In September 2008, a group of 40 internationally recognised coaching researchers and other stakeholders came together at Harvard as the International Coaching Research Forum (ICRF) with the aims of promoting and coordinating coaching research worldwide. The ICRF identified the following areas as important to coaching research: coaching specialities, modalities and process, outcomes and methodology, business coaching, politics, ethics and governance, training development and knowledge base, theoretical frameworks, definition of coaching, coaching skills and core competences, coaching and society as well as diversity issues (Rostron, 2009a:315).

1.1.4.3 Positioning of coaching towards social work

Coaching is seen as a field of specialisation on its own (Rostron 2009a:4). Since this research study is done within the field of social work, it is important to position coaching towards social work. Based on the work of Nicolas, Rautenbach and Maistry (2010:1-246) and Rostron (2009a:13-325), the similarities and differences between the fields are presented in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4 Comparison between social work and coaching

	Social work	Coaching
Focus of work	Change and empowerment of individuals, groups and communities	Change and empowerment of individuals, groups/teams and organisations
Service provider	Trained social workers, auxiliary social workers	People from various backgrounds and professions, including social workers
Client	All levels of society, voluntary and involuntary	Usually upper-class or business organisations, voluntary
Knowledge base	Social work theory (case work, group work, community work) from a variety of approaches, also management and research; four-year qualification for degree, one to three years for auxiliary work	Variety of coaching models, theories on human behaviour and coaching skills; various training groups or institutions use different approaches, three-day to one-year courses
Skills	Case work, group work and community work skills	Coaching skills which overlap with some case work (listening, self-reflection); other skills are coaching-specific; e.g., question frameworks
Profession	Social work is a profession with its own body of knowledge, accredited qualification, legal professional body (SACSSP) and code of ethics.	Coaching is still developing its own body of knowledge; not an accredited qualification yet; various governing associations; e.g., COMENSA and code of ethics

Legal responsibility	Legislative mandate: Work is governed by various acts; e.g., Social Service Professions Act (No. 110 of 1978). The Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005)	No legislative mandate
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Social work is a profession with a wide body of knowledge and skills base which can enrich the field of coaching. Some of the coaching knowledge, such as models of coaching, and skills, such as the use of question frameworks, can contribute to the field of social work. These two factors can also contribute towards the support of social work students within an ODL context.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Several needs or sources can be advanced for conducting research. These needs may be based on personal experience with an issue, job-related problems, an advisor's research agenda and/or scholarly literature. Creswell (1998:94) sees a documented need in the literature for increased understanding and dialogue about an issue as the strongest rationale of the needs listed above. Since research requires much time and effort, it is critical that the researcher be interested in the topic he/she researches (Alston & Bowles, 2003:29).

A topic researched in a social work department should also be relevant to the social welfare industry either as "applied" or "pure" research. Applied research is directly related to organisational or programme goals and is often immediately useful, while pure research involves theoretical development or exploring more general issues affecting social welfare (Alston & Bowles, 2003:31).

As a lecturer working within the Department of Social Work for five years and having been the national practical work coordinator of fourth-level students from June 2008 to January 2010, the researcher realised that due to their personal contexts and studying within an ODL context, social work students experience many challenges. These challenges negatively

influence their “student walk” or journey within UNISA as well the successful completion of their studies which has to prepare them for the social work profession.

Previous research done within the Department of Social Work has already identified these challenges, but the support needs of social work students and their expectations of the Department of Social Work and UNISA to satisfy these needs are not yet known. There seems to be a lack of information of the specific support needs of social work students within an ODL context.

Although existing student support and career development programmes at UNISA also promote personal and career development, social work students do not seem to be utilising these services, among other things, because it is not compulsory to utilise the support activities or because lecturers do not make students aware of the value of existing support services. These programmes also do not focus on the unique needs of social work students who are following a work-integrated learning course within an ODL context which requires specific personal and professional development throughout their years of study.

The existing support within the Department of Social Work, in the form of workshops and supervision, is concentrated towards the end of the study period of the fourth-level students during their practical work placement when it may even be too late to develop an awareness of competencies needed for the social work profession. Therefore, there seems to be a necessity for a support programme focusing specifically on the needs of social work students throughout their study journey within an ODL context.

Life coaching with its focus on self-awareness, personal development and goal achievement provides a unique opportunity for social work students to take responsibility for their own personal and professional development from the moment that they enrol until when they graduate as social workers. Life coaching is usually done on a one-to-one basis, but could be adjusted to be offered through self-assessments, assignments, electronic media and small groups to suit the needs of an ODL institution.

It seems that a **life coaching programme**, specifically developed for social work students within an ODL context, could fill the existing gap within UNISA's support services in the following ways:

- Life coaching can address students' multiple poverties (cf. Max-Neef's approach to poverty), but also support students to recognise and utilise satisfiers to their needs. Students need to become aware of the needs or poverties influencing their studies, and of available and existing satisfiers or resources to meet their needs. Life coaching facilitates self-reflection which forms the basis of setting goals.
- Life coaching links well with UNISA's proposed model of student throughput (Prinsloo, 2009:92-119). This model perceives the student as an autonomous, but co-responsible agent within his own habitus, aligning himself with the organisational habitus. Success is indicated by retention, progression through the main phases of the student walk, and ultimately successful graduation and effective entry into the labour market and/or citizenship. Success also incorporates a positive student experience. Life coaching sees the client as being a unique, proactive individual. It focuses on the broader picture of the client's goals and steps necessary to achieve these within different contexts or settings.
- The Department of Social Work uses the person-centred approach as a theoretical basis for training. Life coaching shares the basic assumptions of the person-centred approach that individuals are unique, the belief in the self-determination of the client as well as the conditions for and process of change (Ellis, 2006:1-180). Many of the skills used in life coaching correspond with those utilised by PCA practitioners. Life coaching of social work students would be supportive of the theoretical foundation of the BSW course.
- The proposed research is also according to the International Coaching Research Forum's (ICRF) aim of promoting coaching research worldwide. It will focus on one of the areas identified by the ICRF, namely coaching specialities, in this case life coaching with social work students within an ODL context.

The **significance and proposed contribution** of the study and the proposed development of a life coaching programme for student support lie within the following:

- Student success and throughput will be enhanced.
- The professional and personal development of students in preparation for the profession of social work will be enhanced.
- The students will take ownership of their own learning process.
- The students will experience their journey or “walk” within UNISA more positively.
- The self-reflection and self-development skills which students learn can be utilised as part of their life-long learning.
- The student support programme can contribute to the curriculum development of the Department of Social Work.
- Coaching knowledge and skills will contribute towards the development of social work students.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

The nature of the research question differs, depending on whether quantitative or qualitative research is done. “Whereas quantitative research begins at the top of the ‘pyramid of abstraction’ and involves careful thinking through of research questions before the research is begun, qualitative research begins as close to the ground as possible, and gradually works upwards through the rungs of the pyramid, developing questions and hypotheses as it goes (Alston & Bowles, 2003:51). According to Creswell (2009:129), inquirers into qualitative research state research questions which assume two forms: a central question and associated sub-questions.

Applying the above guidelines, the following **central question** was formulated:

What would a life coaching programme to support social work students within an ODL context consist of?

From the abovementioned central research question follows a refinement of the associated **sub-questions**, namely:



- What are the support needs of social work students within an ODL context to facilitate their “student walk” or journey within UNISA?
- What are the support needs of social work students within an ODL context to successfully prepare them for the social work profession?
- What are the support needs of social work students within an ODL context to grow on a personal level?
- What are the views of social work students of existing support services within an ODL context?
- What are the views of recently graduated and employed social workers of existing support services within an ODL context?
- What are the core elements that should be included in a support programme aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context?
- How should such a support programme, aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context, be implemented?

1.4 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The terms “goal”, “purpose” and “aim” are used interchangeably in research. These terms refer to the broader, more abstract conception of a dream one wants to realise, while, in this context, the concept “objective” refers to the steps one has to take at grassroots level and within a certain time-frame to attain the vision (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2007:104). According to Rothman and Thomas (1994:31), goals refer to the broad conditions or outcomes that are desired by the community of interest, while the objectives refer to those more specific changes in programmes, policies or practices that are believed to contribute to the broader goal.

The **goal** formulated for this research, informed by the research question, was to develop a life coaching programme to support social work students studying within an ODL context. This required that intervention research be conducted (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:3).

In order to achieve the goal, using intervention research, the following **task objectives** were formulated:

- To explore and describe the support needs of social work students within an ODL context to facilitate their “student walk” or journey within the institution
- To explore and describe the support needs of social work students within an ODL context to successfully prepare them for the social work profession
- To explore and describe the support needs of social work students within an ODL context to grow on a personal level
- To explore and describe existing support services within an ODL context from the perspective of social work students
- To explore and describe existing support services within an ODL context from the perspective of recently graduated and employed social workers
- To undertake a literature review to ascertain the state of technology (i.e. support programmes, coaching models) available to support social work students within an ODL context
- To develop a life coaching programme that is based on the above findings with the purpose of supporting social work students within an ODL context
- To disseminate the research findings and the developed life coaching programme to the Department of Social Work who might decide to use the programme as part of their curriculum as well as other applicable contexts, such as other departments within UNISA, ODL institutions or residential universities that might be able to utilise the programme of student support.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology refers to a theory of how inquiry should proceed. It involves the analysis of assumptions, principles and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry that, in turn, governs the use of particular methods (Schwandt, 2001:161). According to Mason (1996:19), the key tasks at the design stage in relation to method are to decide upon appropriate methods and data sources, and to think carefully about the links between the research question and research methods.

This section outlines the theory that has informed the methodology used to plan this study. Chapter 2 provides details of how the research methodology has been applied.

1.5.1 Research approach

The research question and sub-questions posed above express a need for learning more about and understanding the support needs of social work students as well as developing an appropriate support programme. Hence, a **qualitative research approach**, based on interviews with students, ex-students and experts from related fields from the real world and existing documentation, is argued for in order to meet the research objectives.

In deciding on a research approach, the researcher needed to understand the difference between the qualitative and quantitative approach to research. Where quantitative researchers begin with theories of patterns or relationships and testing them in the “real world”, qualitative researchers start with their experiences and specific observations. They allow patterns to emerge from their experiences and then build theories from the patterns they observe in their data. Whereas quantitative researchers want to “discover” universal, social “laws”, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how others experience life (Alston & Bowles, 2003:10).

Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:47) state that quantitative and qualitative researchers base their conclusions on different kinds of information, and employ different techniques of data analysis. Quantitative researchers collect data in the form of numbers and use statistical types of data analysis. Qualitative researchers collect data in the form of written or spoken language or in the form of observations that are recorded in language. Then they analyse the data by categorising themes. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to study selected issues in depth in trying to understand categories of information as they emerge from the data. Quantitative methods begin with predetermined categories and use the data to make broad comparisons which can be generalised.

Comparing the proposed research to these descriptions, it was clear that the researcher would use a qualitative research in that she planned to collect data in the form of spoken language and identify themes from the data. The researcher was interested in understanding the support needs of social work students.

To confirm this choice, some of the characteristics of qualitative research were weighed against the nature of the research questions of the study which entailed the following:

- Qualitative research is naturalistic – real life situations are studied as they unfold, with openness to what emerges (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:48). The students’ support needs as they had been and were experiencing them were explored.
- Qualitative research is holistic – whole phenomena are understood as complex systems that are more than the sum of its parts (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:48). The students were studied in the context of their personal worlds as well as their student life. A range of support needs, both personal and professional were described.
- Qualitative research is inductive – the researcher immerses into details and specifics of the data to discover important categories and interrelationships (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:48). From the detailed information provided by the social work students and newly employed social workers the researcher would identify categories of interrelated support needs as well as possible satisfiers to these needs.

Ritchie and Lewis (2003:32-33) state that qualitative research is appropriate when the phenomenon being studied is

- ill-defined or not well-understood;
- deeply rooted in longstanding values or beliefs;
- sourced from local “experts” or people with singular or highly specialised roles in society; and
- delicate and of a sensitive nature.

In the proposed study, students’ support needs were not understood well, and information was to be sought from students as experts on their support needs and from experts in the student support field.

Considering the aforementioned descriptions, characteristics and use of qualitative research, the researcher concluded that this approach was suited to answer the research questions, as formulated.

1.5.2 Research design

A research design can be described as “a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research” (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:34). Alston and Bowles (2003:65) state that a research design indicates how data will be collected, analysed and reported. Monette, Sullivan and DeJong (2011:506) define a research design as a detailed plan outlining how a research project will be conducted.

Babbie (2011:67-69) distinguishes between the goals of social research as exploration, description, explanation and evaluation. Monette et al. (2011:4) categorise social research according to goals as descriptive, predictive, explanatory as well as evaluative research while Rubin and Babbie (2013:50-52) describe the purpose of qualitative and quantitative research as exploration, description, explanation and evaluation.

The purpose of this research study was to explore and describe the support needs of students and to develop a life coaching programme as support for social work students. Research with exploration and description as purpose can be described as follows:

- **Exploratory research** is undertaken when little is known about an area. This may lead to a more detailed study (Alston & Bowles, 2003:34). Terre Blanche et al. (2006:44) state that exploratory studies are used to make preliminary investigations into relatively unknown areas of research. They employ an open, flexible and inductive approach to research. An extensive literature review and the researcher’s personal experience indicated that, although studies have been undertaken around the experiences of fourth-level students, the support needs of social work students had not yet been explored in detail, and no specific support programme existed to provide for the personal and professional needs of these students.

- In **descriptive research** the researcher usually already knows or has found out much of the information that an exploratory study has provided. The aim is to describe more specific details or patterns (Alston & Bowles, 2003:34). Descriptive studies describe phenomena accurately, either through narrative-type descriptions, classification or measuring relationships (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:44). To describe the support needs of social work students studying within an ODL context in detail, social work students on all four levels were included as well as recently employed social workers. The students' needs were also described holistically according to Max-Neef's taxonomy of fundamental human needs, indicating the interrelatedness of separate needs.

Since the goal of the research study was not only to explore and describe the support needs of social work students within an ODL context, but also to develop a life coaching programme to address these needs, the researcher planned to use the **intervention research design**, employing the Intervention Design and Development (IDD) model of Rothman and Thomas (1994:3-51). The plan outlining data collection and analysis is discussed in the next paragraph.

1.5.2.1 The Intervention Design and Development model

The Intervention Design and Development (IDD) model of Rothman and Thomas (1994) is at present still the only fully developed model on intervention research. This model aims to develop new interventions and human technologies, including strategies, techniques and methods that can be implemented to assist social service delivery (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:474-5).

The IDD model was to be implemented to provide the researcher the opportunity to develop insight into the research problem, namely a lack of knowledge on the support needs of social work students within an ODL context as well as practical interventions and programmes to support these students. Based on the exploration and consequent insights, the researcher envisaged developing a life coaching programme to fill these gaps.

The Intervention Design and Development model has six phases, each characterised by key operations or activities, as summarised in the following table:

Table 1.5 Phases and operations of intervention research (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:28)

Phases	Activities
1. Situation analysis and project planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Identifying and involving clients • Step 2: Gaining entry to and cooperation from settings • Step 3: Identifying the concerns of the population • Step 4: Analysing the identified concerns • Step 5: Setting goals and objectives
2. Information gathering and synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Using existing information sources • Step 2: Studying natural examples • Step 3: Identifying the functional elements of successful models
3. Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Designing an observational system • Step 2: Specifying the procedural elements of the intervention
4. Early development and pilot testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Developing a prototype • Step 2: Conducting a pilot test • Step 3: Applying design criteria
5. Evaluation and advanced development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Selecting an experimental design • Step 2: Collecting and analysing data • Step 3: Replicating the intervention under field conditions • Step 4: Refining the intervention
6. Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Preparing the product for dissemination • Step 2: Identifying potential markets for the intervention • Step 3: Creating a demand for the intervention • Step 4: Encouraging appropriate adaptation • Step 5: Providing technical support for adopters

Each phase has distinct activities which need to be carried out in order to complete the work of that phase. Rothman and Thomas (1994:9) state that there is some flexibility in the process although the basic pattern proceeds as described. For the purpose of this research, the researcher planned to use the first four phases of the IDD model (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:28), namely situation analysis and project planning, information gathering and synthesis, design and early development. Time as well as financial and logistical constraints contributed to this decision.

This research endeavour was based on the purpose of obtaining a postgraduate qualification. The researcher planned to disseminate the research findings and the developed life coaching programme to the Department of Social Work who could decide to use the programme as part of their curriculum as well as in other contexts; e.g., other departments within UNISA, ODL institutions or residential universities that might be able to utilise the student support programme. It was also envisaged that the last two steps, namely evaluation and advanced development as well as dissemination may form part of a postdoctoral research project.

In the following section the researcher will describe how she planned to adapt the Intervention Design and Development model for the purposes of this study.

- **Phase 1: Situation analysis and project planning**

Rothman and Thomas (1994:27) identify five steps that contribute to the successful completion of Phase 1 of the intervention research design. These steps, identifying and involving clients; gaining entry and cooperation; identifying concerns of the population; analysing identified concerns, and setting goals and objectives as well as the proposed implementation thereof are described in the following section.

➤ **Phase 1, Step 1: Identifying and involving clients**

Intervention research selects a population with whom to collaborate, and whose issues and problems are of current or emerging interest to the clients themselves, researchers and society (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:27). A population can be defined as a collection of individuals of interest in a particular study. It is a set of all units of analysis defined by your problem area (Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Shaw, 1997:339).

In order to explore and describe the support needs and views of social work students within an ODL context, two interest groups comprised the target population, namely:

- All social work students registered at UNISA in Pretoria at the time of sampling; and
- all recently graduated and employed social workers who studied at UNISA, and were working in Pretoria at the time of sampling.

The motivation behind the focus on these two groups is the following: UNISA is the only ODL institution in South Africa that trains social work students. First-, second-, third- and fourth-level students were included, as the needs of students at different levels might differ. The researcher is situated in Pretoria. Due to time and cost constraints it was not be possible to conduct research at all the major learning centres of UNISA.

Although Rothman and Thomas do not refer to the process of sampling, the researcher planned to use a sample since it was impractical to study everybody in the target population. A **sample** is one or more elements selected from a population (Monette et al., 2011:506). A sample for inclusion in the study was to be selected from the aforementioned two populations.

In order to explore and describe the support needs and views of **social work students** within UNISA, the criteria for inclusion of participants in the sample were as follows:

- Social work students registered at UNISA at the time of sampling
- First, second, third and fourth level social work students. Students who were registered for at least one first-level social work module were regarded as “first level” students. Students who were registered for at least two second-level social work modules were regarded as “second level” students. Students who were registered for at least three

third-level social work modules were regarded as “third level” students. Students who had completed the third level of social work and were registered for at least one fourth-level social work module were regarded as “fourth level” students.

- Social work students who resided in Pretoria while studying who were available and willing to participate in the study.

In order to explore and describe the perspectives **of recently graduated and newly employed social workers at the time of sampling**, the criteria for inclusion were defined as follows:

- Social workers who had studied through UNISA
- Social workers who had completed their studies at the end of 2009 or January 2010
- Social workers who had been recently employed within the social work profession
- Social workers who were employed in Pretoria who were available and willing to participate in the study.

There are two major categories of sampling, namely **probability and non-probability sampling**. Probability sampling refers to sampling in which each unit of analysis of the population has an equal chance to be selected. This is usually used in quantitative research. Probability sampling is generally used in exploratory research by qualitative researchers. There are four common types of probability sampling, namely accidental, quota, purposive and snowball sampling. **Purposive sampling**, which was planned to be used in this study, refers to a technique where a sample is selected for a specific purpose-typical. Information-rich examples of the issues the researcher wants to study are selected to provide insight into these issues (Alston & Bowles, 2003:80-88).

In qualitative research, samples are not selected to ensure representativeness of the wider population and specific sample size is determined at the beginning of the study. Sampling continues until the information being gathered becomes repetitive. Terre Blanche et al. (2006:288-289) refer to this as “theoretical saturation” (also called “data saturation”) and express themselves as follows in this regard: “Theoretical saturation marks the point where one stops collecting new material because it no longer adds anything to one’s unfolding analysis. This is sometimes termed “sampling to redundancy” because further information

becomes increasingly redundant, to the extent that it becomes repetitive.” The researcher thus did not decide on a specific sample size at the beginning of this study; the sample size was to be determined by data saturation.

➤ **Phase 1, Step 2: Gaining entry and cooperation from settings**

This is the second step in the phase of situation analysis and project planning, and follows on identifying and involving clients. Researchers need to gain entry into the context in which they want to work. “Before approaching an agency or group, investigators should know something about its clients, goals, policy, staff and programmes. Conversations with key informants help researchers understand what they have to offer, how to articulate the benefits for potential participants and members of the group or organisation” (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:29). As stipulated in UNISA’s research policy, researchers need to gain permission from the Dean of their College and the Head of the Department. In order to gain access to the sample from the population of **social work students**, as described in the previous section, the researcher planned to send a letter (cf. Annexure A), explaining the purpose of the research and requesting permission to conduct the research at UNISA, to the Dean of the College of Human Sciences as well as the Head of the Department of Social Work.

Once the necessary permission was obtained, the researcher proposed to establish contact with the students in the following ways:

- 1) Invite the first-level students who had attended tutoring classes.
- 2) Approach the group of second-level students involved with the Bright Site of Sunnyside, a service learning centre of the Department of Social Work where some fourth level students are placed for their practical work.
- 3) Invite third- and fourth-level students during workshops to participate in the research.

Separate meetings were to be arranged in Pretoria for social work students of the different year levels. During the meetings the researcher would provide the students with a letter, inviting them to participate in the research (cf. Annexure B). Benefits of participating as well as ethical considerations were to be discussed during the meetings and consent forms were to be signed (cf. Annexure D). Dates were to be set for follow-up meetings when data would be collected

by means of focus group discussions. Willing and interested participants would then be provided with a list of biographical questions and an interview guide with the questions to be asked during the focus groups (cf. Annexure F and Annexure H). The researcher would explain to the students that a focus group consists of eight to ten students and that the first ten students who handed in their consent forms would be included. If these students could participate on the specific dates set, or if more focus groups needed to be held in order for data to be saturated, other students who completed their forms would be contacted. Closer to the dates of the focus groups the students to participate from each year level were to be phoned to confirm attendance.

The researcher also planned to gain access to the sample from the population of recently graduated and employed **social workers** by using purposive sampling. At the beginning of 2010 a number of students who had completed their studies at the end of 2009 or beginning of 2010 would come to collect a form from the Department of Social Work to confirm that they had completed their studies. Most of these students needed to register at the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP), since they would have started working as social workers.

The researcher would explain to the students whom she assisted that she might contact them to participate in the research, and planned to obtain their permission and contact details. The researcher would phone these ex-students to find out whether they were working as social workers and if so, where they worked. A letter inviting them to participate in the research (cf. Annexure C), a letter of consent (cf. Annexure E) and an interview guide containing the questions to be asked as well as a list of biographical questions (cf. Annexure G and Annexure I) would be e-mailed to these newly employed social workers working in Pretoria. Semi-structured individual interviews were to be arranged with a number of social workers in Pretoria. The number of interviews would depend on data saturation.

➤ **Phase 1, Step 3: Identifying the concerns of the populations**

This is the third step in the phase of situation analysis and project planning, and follows on identifying and involving clients as well as gaining entry and cooperation from settings.

Intervention researchers are to avoid imposing their perceptions of the research problem onto the population. Once researchers have access to the setting, they should try to understand issues that are important to the population (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:29).

To identify the issues of importance to the population the researcher planned to explore and describe the following:

- The support needs of social work students within an ODL context
- The views of social work students, and recently graduated and employed social workers on existing student support services within an ODL context.

As discussed in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.1 and 1.5.2, the researcher was to use a qualitative approach with the purpose to explore, describe and develop a support programme. Methods of data collection suitable for the qualitative research were to be used. According to Fossey, Harvey, Dermott and Davidson (2002:726), interviews, focus groups and participant observation are common modes of qualitative data gathering.

In order to explore and describe the needs and views of social work students within an ODL context, **focus group interviews** were to be conducted. Focus groups are facilitated group discussions that make use of group interaction as a means to explore issues being researched. A focus group is typically a group of people sharing a similar type of experience, but the group does not exist as a social group exactly as brought together (Fossey et al., 2002:727; Terre Blanche et al., 2006:304). The **advantages** of focus groups, as a method of data collection, are that focus groups:

- Can be conducted at a relatively moderate cost and brief time
- Expose the researcher to the participants' worldviews
- Shed light on phenomena about which little is known
- Facilitate interaction between participants and allow them to build upon the each other's reaction, adding creativity
- Allow the researcher to probe, adding flexibility
- Can be a source of validation for other methods of data collection

- Can be analysed quickly (Alston & Bowles, 2003:120; Greeff in De Vos et al., 2011:361-362).

The **disadvantages** of using focus groups as a method of data collection are that:

- It might be difficult to recruit people meeting the criteria.
- The researcher has less control than when conducting individual interviews.
- Data can be relatively difficult to analyse.
- When sensitive issues are discussed confidentiality can become an issue.
- Information gathered cannot be generalised.
- The researcher or interviewer needs to be skilled.
- It can be difficult to assemble participants at a specific time and place.
- The environment needs to be conducive.
- Participants may feel threatened to reveal their true opinion and diversity might be lost.

As far as the difficulty to recruit people meeting the criteria are concerned, the researcher had to make sure that the participants chosen were able to attend the focus group meeting. Although sensitive issues were likely to emerge, it would be contracted with focus group members that information shared in the group would be kept confidential. This was not likely to be a problem, as the researcher also had extensive group work experience which could be useful.

Traditionally, the recommended size of a focus group ranges between six to 12 people. The ideal size of a focus group typically falls between six to nine participants. Focus groups with more than 12 participants are not recommended because they limit individuals to share their insights and observations (Krueger, 1994:78). The researcher planned to select ten social work students for each group to make provision for some students not turning up.

The researcher planned to facilitate the group process and empower participants by using the following techniques: listening, encouraging all members to speak, asking follow-up questions and probing. The researcher would also use the “five-second pause” which unobtrusively

prompts the participants to give more information (Schurink, Schurink & Poggenpoel, 1998:322).

An **interview guide** or topic guide would be prepared to prompt the researcher to recall issues to be discussed. It would, however, not be used as a questionnaire, but only to guide the discussion. Some questions would be “stimulus-structured”, meaning that the focus of the questions would be specific (Breakwell et al., 1997:284). Krueger (1994:61) refers to focus group questions using “standardised strategies”, e.g., conceptual mapping.

The wheel of fundamental human needs and a time line were to be used as stimuli. The following questions were to be included in the interview guide for the focus groups of social work students:

- *Describe the personal and professional attributes of a good social worker. (Group brainstorms and use an assistant to draw a mind map.)*
- *What motivated you to study social work?*
- *If you compared yourself with the personal and professional attributes of a good social worker, which attributes do you still have to develop?*
- *This time line represents the typical student’s walk or journey within UNISA as an ODL institution.*

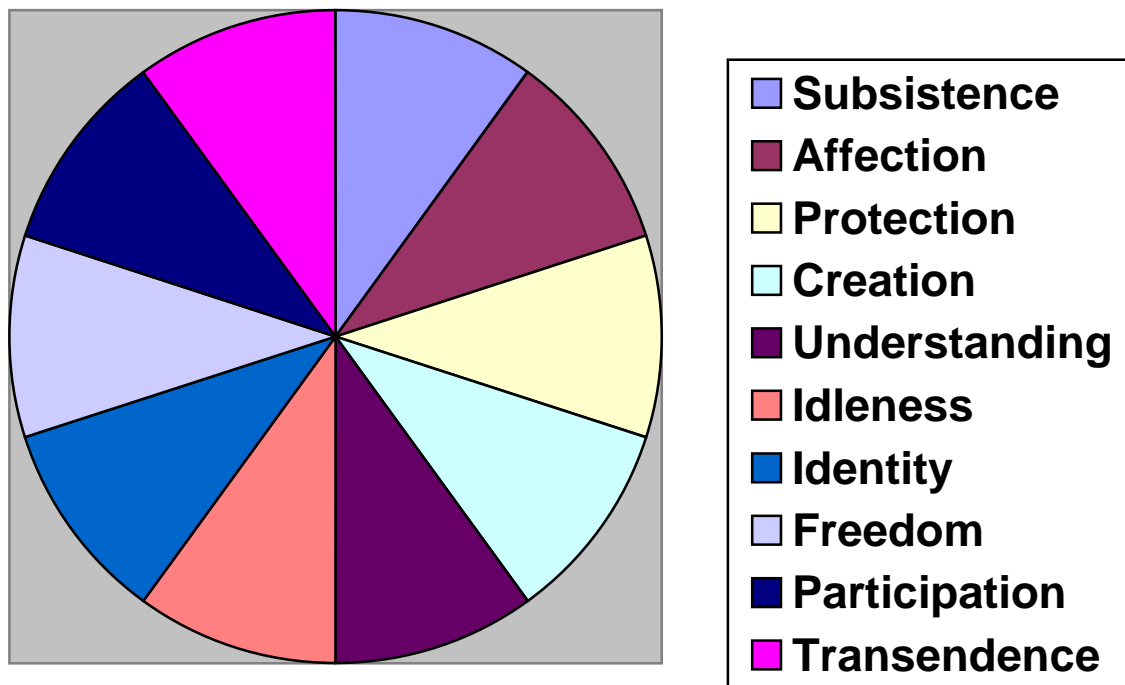


- *Please indicate where on the time line you are at the moment.*
- *Have you experienced any difficulties during this student walk? Please indicate where and specify.*
 - *As a student, what makes you happy, sad, angry, worried, hopeful and proud?*
 - *Max-Neef’s theory of fundamental human needs identifies nine fundamental human needs (one added) as indicated in the wheel below.*

According to Max-Neef’s approach to poverty, all needs are interrelated. If a person experiences poverty (unfulfilled needs) in any segment, it will to some extent affect the

other segments or needs. If a student experiences poverty in any of these segments it may hamper his/her performance. Max-Neef also referred to the satisfiers of the needs, e.g., income, food and shelter, as satisfiers of the need for subsistence (to be clarified at the beginning of the group discussion).

Please indicate in which of these needs you experience poverty. How does it influence your studies? In which of these needs do you have sufficient satisfiers? What influence does that have on your studies?



-
- *Which support or resources did you, as a social work student within UNISA as an ODL institution, access in the past? Please refer to resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.*
 - *What is your view on existing support services within UNISA as an ODL institution?*
 - *What support or resources do you, as a social work student studying at UNISA as an ODL institution, require to facilitate your “student walk” or journey? Please refer to*

resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA. Indicate on the provided time line where you require this support.

- *What support or resources do you, as a social work student within UNISA as an ODL institution, require to successfully prepare yourself for the social work profession? Please refer to resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.*
- *What support or resources do you, as a social work student within UNISA as an ODL institution, require to grow on a personal level? Please refer to resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.*
- *Referring to the wheel and your answer on Max-Neef's fundamental human needs and poverties, which satisfiers to the poverties you have identified can you suggest?*
- *Life coaching can be described as a process of facilitating self-awareness, setting of goals, and facilitating personal and professional growth and development. With this definition in mind, which core elements should be included in a life coaching programme aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context?*
- *How should a life coaching programme aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context be implemented?*

Students were to be asked to complete a form with the following biographical information (cf. Annexure H):

- *Are you male or female?*
- *How old are you?*
- *What are your family commitments, e.g., children, parents, siblings, spouse?*
- *Are you working? If so, full-time or part-time?*
- *Where do you stay when you are studying?*
- *Where do you stay when you are not studying?*
- *When did you complete your school career?*
- *How long have you been studying?*
- *Have you completed any other studies? If so, please specify.*

- *What are your financial resources?*
- *Anything else you would like to share?*

In order to explore and describe the views of **recently graduated and employed social workers** on the support needs of social work students within an ODL context as well as existing support services, **semi-structured face-to-face individual interviews** directed by an interview guide that was to be used. According to Fossey et al. (2002:727), semi-structured interviews using an interview guide are used to facilitate more focused exploration of a specific topic.

Once again the advantages and disadvantages of semi-structured interviews were considered (Fossey et al., 2002:27; Greeff in De Vos et al., 2011:351-352). The **advantages** are that the semi-structured interview:

- Enables the researcher to obtain an “inside view” of the phenomena explored as well as other avenues of research emerging from the interview
- Facilitates the discussion of sensitive issues
- Ensures sensitivity to the language and knowledge of participants.

The **disadvantages** are that it:

- Is time-consuming
- The vast amount of data collected makes ordering and interpretation difficult
- Usually needs to be conducted by the researcher him- or herself.

The main method of data collection was planned to be focus groups with social work students, while only a few semi-structured interviews were to be conducted with recently qualified and employed social workers. The researcher planned to conduct the interviews herself.

When interviewing the researcher had to (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:299):

- Listen more, speak less
- Follow up on what the participant says
- Ask questions when she didn't understand or wanted to hear more
- Avoid leading questions

- Ask open-ended questions
- Avoid interrupting
- Keep participants focused and ask for detail
- Ask participants to rephrase
- Tolerate silence and allow participants to think.

As with the focus groups, **an interview guide** had to be prepared. The following questions and stimuli were to be included in the interview guide for the semi-structured face-to-face interviews with recently graduated and newly employed social workers:

- *What motivated you to study social work?*
- *As a social worker, how does the profession fulfil your expectations?*
- *Describe the personal and professional attributes of a good social worker. (You can draw a mind map.)*
- *In which areas did your training lack in preparing you adequately for being a social worker in practice?*
- *How long did it take you to complete your studies?*
- *This time line represents the typical student's walk or journey within UNISA as an ODL institution.*



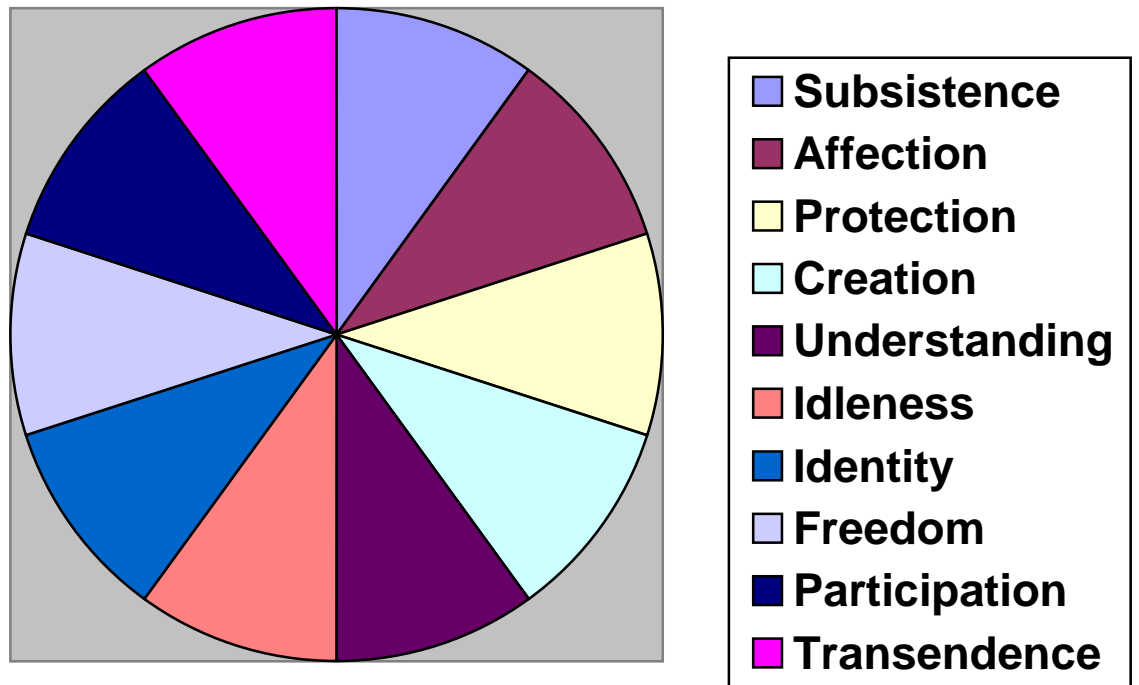
Please describe your student walk through UNISA, indicating difficulties experienced and support or resources utilised on the way.

- *Max-Neef's theory of fundamental human needs identifies nine fundamental human needs (one added) as indicated in the wheel below.*

According to Max-Neef's approach to poverty, all needs are interrelated. If a person experiences poverty (unfulfilled needs) in any segment, it will to some extent affect the other segments or needs. If a student experiences poverty in any of these segments it may hamper his/her performance. Max-Neef also referred to the satisfiers of the needs, e.g., income, food and shelter, as satisfiers of the need for subsistence.

Please indicate in which of these needs did you experience poverty when studying through UNISA as an ODL institution. How did it influence your studies? In which of these needs did you have sufficient satisfiers? What influence did that have on your studies?

☺



- *Which support or resources did you, as student within UNISA as an ODL institution, access while studying? Please refer to resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.*
- *What is your view on existing support services within UNISA as an ODL institution?*
- *What support or resources, in your view, do social work students studying at UNISA as an ODL institution require to facilitate their “student walk” or journey? Please refer to resources within the student, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA. Indicate on the provided time line where the student needs this support.*

- *What support or resources, in your view, do social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution require to successfully prepare themselves for the social work profession? Please refer to resources within the student, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.*
- *What support or resources, in your view, do social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution require to grow on a personal level? Please refer to resources within the student, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.*
- *Referring to the wheel and your answer on Max-Neef's fundamental human needs and poverties, which satisfiers to the poverties you have identified can you suggest?*
- *Life coaching can be described as a process of facilitating self-awareness, setting of goals, and facilitating personal and professional growth and development. With this definition in mind, which core elements should be included in a life coaching programme aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context?*
- *How should a life coaching programme aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context be implemented?*

The social workers were to be asked to complete a form with the following biographical information (cf. Annexure I):

- *Are you male or female?*
- *How old are you?*
- *When did you complete your studies?*
- *When did you start working?*
- *Where are you working?*
- *When did you complete your school career?*
- *How long did you study before completing the social work degree?*
- *Have you completed any other studies? If so, please specify.*
- *Anything else you would like to share?*

Data obtained from the social work students, and recently graduated and employed social workers was to be recorded by means of digital voice recordings, completed forms and stimuli as well as flip chart notes which were to be transcribed later. Permission was to be obtained from the participants and a recording was to be made as unobtrusively as possible. The transcripts were to be kept as evidence of the research.

➤ **Phase 1, Step 4: Analysing the identified concerns**

The fourth step in the phase of situation analysis and project planning follows on step 3, identifying the concerns of the population.

A qualitative study produces vast amounts of data which need to be organised, categorised and analysed. Qualitative data analysis is the process of reviewing, synthesising and interpreting data to describe and explain the phenomena being studied (Fossey et al., 2002:728). Alston and Bowles (2003:68) stress that data analysis is an integral stage in the research process and needs to be planned carefully.

The transcripts of the interviews were to be **analysed** using Tesch's (in Creswell, 2009:186) framework for data analysis for qualitative research to ensure a systematic manner of data analysis according to the following eight steps:

- The researcher read all the written narratives and transcripts in order to get a sense of the whole. Ideas that develop from reading the transcripts are noted.
- One written narrative and one transcript are chosen as the most interesting. It is studied while the researcher makes notes of the topics and themes identified.
- The researcher then repeats the second step with all the written narratives and transcripts. Once all the topics are identified, they are clustered together and labelled according to their characteristics.
- The topics are given code words. The written narratives and transcripts are subsequently studied again while the codes are placed in the written narratives and transcripts at the relevant places.
- The researcher then categorises the topics and certain topics with specific characteristics are placed into a category.

- A decision to include the categories is then made.
- The categories in each written narrative and transcript are identified. All the information in one category is then placed together.
- The researcher then proceeds to write the report, based on this analysis.

These eight steps were to be used to ensure that the data analysis is done in a comprehensive and systematic manner.

Data verification ensures that the findings of the research accurately represent what is happening in the situation being studied (Welman; Kruger & Mitchell, 2005:142). The establishment of the trustworthiness of a study in order to validate the findings is essential. Guba (in Krefting, 1991:214-222) describes four criteria of trustworthiness of research and defines each from a qualitative and quantitative perspective. Although Guba's model was developed years ago, it is still relevant since it is conceptually well-developed and has been used successfully by qualitative researchers over a number of years (Krefting, 1991:215). Since this study is done from a qualitative perspective, the truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality were relevant.

Truth value: Truth value refers to whether the researcher has established confidence in the truth of the findings for the subjects and the context in which the study was done. The truth value in qualitative research is usually obtained from the discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by informants (Krefting, 1991:215). To establish confidence in the truth of the findings the following strategies are used by researchers:

- **Interviewing techniques** such as listening, questioning, probing, using silence or pausing were applied.
- **Triangulation** is the comparison of multiple perspectives by using different methods of data collection as well as different sources (Krefting, 1991:219). According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006:287), triangulation entails collecting material in as many different ways and from as many sources as possible.
- Krefting (1991:219) views **peer examination** as a profitable strategy for data verification.

- **Authority of the researcher:** Krefting (1991:217) refers to a number of strategies to establish trustworthiness which includes the authority of the researcher.

Applicability: This refers to the degree to which the findings of the research study are applicable to other contexts or groups and affect the trustworthiness of the research (Krefting, 1991:216). Transferability is a method through which applicability can be established. To create a foundation for transferability and allow other researchers to use the findings in comparing it to their own work, a research report must contain an accurate description of the research process, clear arguments why different choices of methods have been made, and a thick or detailed description of the research situation and context (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:381).

Consistency: Guba (in Krefting, 1991:216) refers to consistency as “whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were replicated with the same subjects or in a similar context”. This is achieved by a dense description of the research method, triangulation, peer examination and an independent coder.

Neutrality and transparency: Neutrality in qualitative research refers to freedom from bias in the research procedures and results, and the degree to which the research findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not other biases or motivations. Neutrality can be achieved through reflexivity, the researcher being aware of her own thoughts, feelings and ideas as well as through using transcripts and triangulation (Krefting, 1991:216-218).

Details of how data was verified during the study will be provided in Chapter 2.

➤ **Phase 1, Step 5: Setting the goals and objectives**

The final step in the first phase of the IDD model is the identification of goals and objectives of the study. The goals and objectives of the study, referred to as *task objectives*, have already been stated in paragraph 1.4 of Chapter 1. More information of how the task objectives were attained will be provided in Chapter 2.

Subsequent to the step of setting the goal and objectives of the study as part of the phase of situation analysis and project planning, the researcher planned to proceed to gather information on the specified field of interest.

- **Phase 2: Information gathering and synthesis**

According to Rothman and Thomas (1994:31), this phase should be subtitled “Not reinventing the wheel”. When planning an intervention research project, it is essential to discover what has already been done to address the issue of concern. The outcome of this phase is a list of functional elements or critical features of existing programmes and practices which could be incorporated into the design of the intervention. The discussion that follows introduces the three steps by Rothman and Thomas (1994:32) that were to be followed to implement this phase, namely using existing information sources, studying natural examples and identifying functional elements of successful models.

- **Phase 2, Step 1: Using existing information sources**

The first step of Phase 2, information gathering and synthesis, is using existing information sources. According to Rothman and Thomas (1994:32), a literature review usually consists of an examination of selected empirical research, reported practices and identified innovations relevant to the social or health concern. They further state that the researcher should look beyond the literature of her particular field, and discover and make links between concepts and methods of various related disciplines. For this research, these are the fields of ODL, social work, student support and life coaching. Some of the information obtained through the literature review has already been presented as part of the introduction to Chapter 1. In Chapters 3 and 4 information obtained from the literature is also used as literature control in the presentation of the findings of the study.

- **Phase 2, Step 2: Studying natural examples**

In the second step natural examples are studied. A useful source of information is to take cognisance of how others have been faced with the problem or concern investigated and

attempted to address it. “Interviews with people who have actually experienced the problem, such as clients, or those with knowledge about it, such as service providers, can provide insights into which interventions might or might not succeed, and the variables that may affect success” (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:32).

As indicated in the introduction and problem statement, no references could be found of any evidence of an existing life coaching support programme for social work students in an ODL context. The researcher, therefore, planned to resort to related fields and students suggestions for inputs on which interventions might or might not succeed, and the variables that might affect success. This information is presented in Chapter 2.

➤ **Phase 2, Step 3: Identifying the functional elements**

The third step in Phase 2 of the IDD model, information gathering and synthesis, addresses the importance of exploring different service programmes, practice guidelines and services, and of evaluating the effectiveness of these programmes, practice guidelines and services in addressing the research problem. Different questions can be asked, e.g.: “Has there been a practice which successfully attained the outcomes?”; “What made this practice effective?”; “Is there a practice that was unsuccessful?”; “Why was it unsuccessful?” (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:33).

The researcher planned to gain information on functional elements which could be included in a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context by:

- Interviewing student support specialists working within UNISA
- Interviewing HoDs from residential social work departments in South Africa
- Studying the existing curriculum of the Department of Social Work at UNISA to identify functional elements already in use
- Identifying functional elements from life coaching models through literature study.

This would provide information on the features, advantages and limitations of existing related practices, and provide guidelines for a life coaching programme for social work students.

- **Phase 3: Design**

According to Rothman and Thomas (1994:33), there are two types of products resulting from intervention research, namely (a) research data that may demonstrate relationships between the intervention and behaviours or outcomes that define the problem of interest and (b) the intervention which may include a programme, practice or policy.

In this study, the focus was to be on the understanding of the support needs of social work students and the development of an intervention which is a support programme in the form of a life coaching programme. The researcher planned to use task objectives 1-5 (cf. Chapter 1, paragraph 1.4) which formed the basis for the empirical findings of this research as well as the knowledge base obtained through task objectives 6-8 (cf. Chapter 1, paragraph 1.4) to develop a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context.

Phase 3 of the IDD model of Rothman and Thomas (1994:33-35) is divided into two steps, namely (a) designing an observational system and (b) specifying procedural elements of the intervention.

To evaluate the developed intervention, a method has to be established to discover the extent of the problem and detect the effects of the intervention. Step 1 of Phase 3 makes provision for the development of an observational system (Thomas & Rothman, 1994:34). Since the focus of this study is only on the development of a life coaching programme for support of social work students and not on the evaluation of this intervention, the researcher only planned to use Step 2 of the design phase.

- **Phase 3, Step 2: Specifying procedural elements of the intervention**

By observing already existing successful and unsuccessful practices the researcher identifies procedural elements for the use of the intervention which could be information, skills, training for their acquisition, environmental change strategies, policy change or enforcement strategies (Rothman & Thomas 1994:35). According to De Vos and Strydom (in De Vos et al., 2011:483), this activity should include specific details on the proposed procedures (i.e.

treatment methods, programmes, service systems, policies and guidelines) to ensure that it is easy to understand and implement in practice (i.e. user-friendly). The proposed procedures should be detailed to enable practitioners to duplicate them in different settings. In this study, the details of the procedural elements are described in Chapters 5 and 6.

- **Phase 4: Early development**

During this phase a “primitive” design is developed that can be evaluated under field conditions. Rothman and Thomas (1994:36-37) identified three steps in this phase, namely (a) developing a prototype intervention, (b) conducting a pilot study and (c) applying design criteria to the prototype intervention concept.

Due to financial and time constraints the researcher planned to conclude this research study with the first step of this phase while steps 2 and 3 were considered to be done at a later stage as part of a postdoctoral study.

- **Phase 4, Step 1: Developing a prototype or preliminary intervention**

In this stage of the design process, preliminary intervention procedures as well as a mode of delivery of the new intervention, e.g., workshops or peer instruction, are selected (Thomas & Rothman, 1994:36). The researcher planned to base the preliminary intervention, the life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context on the data obtained from the participants of this study, the literature review as well as the functional elements obtained from existing programmes on student support and life coaching. The intervention developed is presented in Chapter 6.

1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics can be defined as a set of moral principles. These principles are suggested by an individual or group, widely accepted, and offer rules and expectations about the correct conduct towards others involved in the research process, such as respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers and students (Strydom in De Vos et al., 2005:57). Ethics is a vital

part of every research project. According to Alston and Bowles (2003:21), it is generally accepted that social research must meet the following five ethical criteria:

- Autonomy/self-determination (includes informed consent and confidentiality)
- Non-maleficence (not doing harm)
- Beneficence (doing good)
- Justice (Is the purpose just?)
- Positive contribution to knowledge.

Terre Blanche et al. (2006:63) focus on the first four criteria, referring to them as philosophical principles that could be applied to determine whether research is ethical. The researcher planned to apply the following ethical considerations while conducting the research study:

1.6.1 INFORMED CONSENT

Researchers should inform participants of all aspects of the research which might be expected to influence their willingness to participate in a study. The researcher should explain any aspect of the research about which the participants enquire (Breakwell et al., 1997:30). According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006:72), the standard components of consent are:

- provision of appropriate information;
- participants' competence and understanding;
- voluntariness in participation and freedom to withdraw after the study had started; and
- formalisation of consent, usually in writing.

The researcher must, therefore, provide potential participants with clear, detailed and factual information about the study, its methods, risks and benefits as well as the assurance that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw from the study at any time.

1.6.2 PROTECTION FROM HARM TO PARTICIPANTS

Researchers should consider the welfare of participants and must protect them from physical or mental harm. The risks for participants should not be greater than risks which the person

encounters on a daily basis. If there are aspects of the research which might harm the respondents the researcher has the responsibility to identify, remove or correct these consequences (Breakwell et al., 1997:29). Terre Blanche et al. (2006:71) agree but add that a researcher should balance the risks and benefits by minimising the risks to participants and maximising the benefits the researcher might generate for participants.

1.6.3 RIGHT TO PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA AND ANONYMITY

The participants' right to privacy is their right to decide when, where, to whom and to what their attitudes, beliefs and behaviour should be revealed. A distinction is made between privacy, implying the element of personal privacy, while confidentiality indicates the handling of information in a confidential manner (Strydom in De Vos, 2005:60). Alston and Bowles (2003:21) state that privacy includes the right of participants to withdraw at any stage and to refuse to answer certain questions. Confidentiality means that information given to the researcher will not be divulged to others, except in reporting the results as agreed. Information should not be used for any purpose other than the research. Anonymity implies that the identity of participants cannot be recognised by people other than the researcher. This is usually achieved by disguising participants' identities by using a code instead of a name (Mason, 1996:56).

Details on how these ethical principles were taken into consideration will be described in Chapter 2.

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

In order to ensure clarity, the researcher defines the following concepts used in the study that are key to the discussion that will follow:

Context

According to Schwandt (2001:37), context is a background of influences and determinants of meaning, identity, speech etc. as well as the set of interrelated conditions in which something

occurs or exists. Context can also be defined as the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement or idea (Oxford, 2013:s.v. “context”). Within this study, the focus is on the interrelated contexts of the students’ personal circumstances or experiences, the Department of Social Work (preparing students for the career of social work) and UNISA as an ODL environment.

Intervention research

De Vos and Strydom (in De Vos et al., 2011:475) refer to Cozby, Neuman and Schilling who have described intervention research as an action undertaken by a helping agent to enhance or maintain the functioning and wellbeing of an individual, group or community. These are studies which have been carried out for the purpose of creating and testing innovative human service approaches to prevent or relieve problems or improve quality of life.

According to Rothman and Thomas (1994:xxv), intervention research sets forth systematic procedures for designing, testing, evaluating and refining the needed social technology, and for disseminating proven techniques and programmes to professionals in the community. In this study, the intervention developed is a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context.

Life coaching

“Coaching is the facilitation of learning and development with the purpose of improving performance and enhancing effective action, goal achievement and personal satisfaction” (Bluckert cited in McDermott & Jago, 2005:8). Life coaching or personal coaching is a type or category of coaching focusing on a wide range of intrapersonal and interpersonal issues, such as coping with a problem or crisis, making a career transition, living a more fulfilled life, overcoming conflict, enhancing communication skills, specifying and achieving life and professional goals (Fairley & Stout, 2004:13, 20). In this study, life coaching is understood as the personal and professional development of social work students within an ODL context.

Life coaching model

A coaching model is representative of what happens or will happen in the coaching conversation (micro level) and the overall coaching intervention or journey (macro level (Rostron, 2009a:86, 88). Holroyd and Field (2012:40) describe a model of coaching as “a strategy or an approach which the coach will follow to achieve a goal or outcome, importantly, the model provides the structure or frame onto which the coaching conversation hangs”. A life coaching model refers to a specific model used within life coaching as a type or category of coaching. In this study, the life coaching model refers to the overall strategy of intervention on which the developed life coaching programme was based.

Life coaching programme

Life coaching can be defined as the practice of assisting an individual through the process of achieving specific personal or professional goals (The Free Dictionary, 2013: s.v. “life coaching”). A programme is described as a specifically arranged selection of things to be done, a plan or a syllabus (The Free Dictionary, 2013: s.v. “programme”). In the context of this study, a life coaching programme refers to a support programme to assist social work students with academic, personal and professional growth, utilising life coaching theory, models, tools and skills. It refers to the content of the self-coaching programme.

Open and distance learning (ODL)

Freeman (cited in Ntuli, 2008:22) defines open and distance learning (ODL) as an “amalgamation of two approaches which focus on expanding access to learning. The first factor is ‘a philosophy’ whose purpose is to ‘remove barriers to learning and allow students to study what they want, when they want and where they want.’ The second factor is systems of ODL which mediate learning by means of technologies such as print workbooks, audio cassettes, radio and the Internet.” According to Beekman and Scholtemeyer (2012:261), ODL is “a multi-dimensional system aimed at bridging the time, geographical and transactional distance between student and institution, student and lecturer/counsellor, student and peers and student and material”. Within this study, ODL refers to a non-residential learning environment where students can study from where they are; a learning environment trying to remove all possible barriers to successful learning.

Person-centred approach (PCA)

The person-centred approach was developed by Carl Rogers. It refers to a type of humanistic counselling which deals with the ways in which people perceive themselves consciously rather than having a counsellor trying to interpret unconscious ideas or thoughts (Person-centred counselling, 2013). The person-centred approach is non-directive and moved away from the idea that the therapist is the expert. It trusts the innate tendency of human beings to find fulfilment of their personal potential (What is the person-centred approach?, 2013). The person-centred approach is used by the Department of Social Work of UNISA.

Social work

The International Federation of Social Workers agreed on the following definition of social work in Montreal in July 2000 (Lawlor, 2008:28): “The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships, and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance wellbeing. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.” Social work can also be defined as a profession devoted to helping people to function best in their environment, and which has its own body of knowledge, code of ethics and practice standards (National Association of Social Workers, 2012). Within the context of this study, both definitions are applicable.

Social worker

This term refers to the duly registered person authorised to practice social work in terms of the Social Service Professions Act, Act No. 110 of 1978 (as amended). The social worker is seen as a competent professional committed to working with and alongside people who use social work services, their advocates and other professionals to help them achieve the best possible outcomes in their lives (21st Century Social Work, n.d.). In this study, a social worker refers to any person who has qualified and/or is practicing within the profession of social work.

Student

A student refers to a person engaged in study; one who is devoted to learning; a student; a pupil, a scholar, especially one who attends a school or who seeks knowledge from professional teachers or books (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2003:1020). A student can also be defined as “a person who is studying at a university or other place of higher education” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2013: s.v. “student”). The latter definition is relevant within the context of this study.

Social work student

Taking the above definitions of “social work” and “student” into account, a social work student refers to a person engaged in studying in order to prepare him/her for the profession of social work. Within this study, the concept refers to students enrolled in the Department of Social Work at UNISA as an ODL institution.

Student success

Student success is often measured by the percentage of students who enrol, the percentage who stay and the percentage who subsequently graduate. Kramer in Kramer et al. (2007:437) states that institutions must look at other success indicators, not only graduation rates; e.g., being prepared for jobs, serving society’s needs, gaining basic general education understandings and pursuing lifelong learning. Subotzky and Prinsloo (2012:188) define student success as course success leading to graduation; a positive student experience; a successful fit between graduate attributes and the requirements of the workplace; as well as course success without graduating. For the purposes of this study, it is important to focus on a broad definition of student success and not only on the throughput rates of UNISA.

Student support

Student support can be defined as “a variety of integrated activities, within administrative, academic and socio sub-systems to provide students with a quality learning experience and success” (UNISA, 2008b:59). According to Beekman and Scholtemeyer (2012:266), the function of student support is threefold, namely cognitive, affective and systemic. These three functions are essential and interdependent. In this study, student support will refer to all efforts

within a university, both from student support services and academic departments to facilitate student success.

Student support services

Mandew (2003:3) refers to “student services” and describes it as an integrated group of departments and units providing support, and welfare services and programmes for students in higher education institutions. De Jager (in Beekman & Scholtemeyer, 2012:12) refers to student support services as student career and development services. Student career and development services involve supporting and enhancing wellness and holistic growth of students, assisting students in enhancing learning skills, and providing personal and career counselling. Within this study, the term “student support services” refers to all services rendered to students to facilitate personal and professional growth.

Student’s walk

“The student walk encompasses everything from the moment students contemplate enrolling in higher education and choosing a career, to their initial inquiries and choice of an institution of higher learning, through the preregistration and registration process, the tuition and assessment cycle, to the eventual event of graduation and employment” (Prinsloo, 2009:109). According to Schmidt (2012a:18-31), the concept of “student walk” has been developed over the years to explain the process of learning through an ODL institution. The student walk is described as four steps: choose and apply, register, teach and learn, and lastly graduate and lifelong learning. When the researcher developed the questions for the interview guide, the student walk was described according to Prinsloo’s definition as a five-step process, namely choosing a career, initial inquiries and choice of institution, preregistration and registration, tuition and assessment, and lastly graduation and employment.

Support needs

“Support” can be defined as giving assistance or being actively interested in and concerned about someone’s success, while “needs” refers to “of necessity” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2013: s.v. “support” and Oxford Dictionaries, 2013: s.v. “needs”). For the purpose of this study,

“support needs” refers to human, emotional, physical and spiritual resources students might require to complete their studies successfully.

Max-Neef’s model assists us to specify these needs of students by identifying the following nine specific fundamental human needs (with a tenth added later):

- Subsistence (food, shelter, etc.)
- Affection (relationships, care, family)
- Protection (security, safety)
- Understanding (education)
- Freedom (rights, equal access, etc.)
- Idleness (leisure experiences)
- Creation (work, to contribute)
- Identity (the self of the person, values)
- Participation (decision-making)
- Transcendence (spirituality) (added later).

Throughput rate

This term describes student wastage and refers to “non-retention, non-completion, non-persistence, attrition, failure/dropping out and failure or withdrawal” (Johnes in Nel, 2008:14). Subotzky (2010) refers to the HEMIS “proxy” graduation rates which are calculated by the number of graduates over headcounts in an academic year. He also refers to “course success rates” or degree credit success rates. In this study, throughput rates refer to proxy graduation rates, as defined by Subotzky.

UNISA

University of South Africa. It is an open and distant learning (ODL) institution located in Pretoria and the only ODL institution in South Africa to offer social work training.

1.8 FORMAT OF THE STUDY

The research report comprises the following chapters:

- Chapter 1** Introduction and general orientation to the study
- Chapter 2** Application of the research methodology in the development of a life coaching programme for support of social work students within an ODL context
- Chapter 3** Research findings on the journey of social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution
- Chapter 4** Research findings on the attributes of a good social worker and a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context
- Chapter 5** Possible functional elements for a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context
- Chapter 6** A self-coaching programme as support for social work students within an ODL context
- Chapter 7** Summary, conclusions and recommendations.

1.9 CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 provides a general introduction and orientation to the study. The background and motivation of the study, the research problem and question to be answered through this study as well the goals and objectives to be achieved are discussed. The chapter also describes the research methodology and defines the key concepts relevant to this study.

Chapter 2 reviews the methodology as it has been employed in this study.

CHAPTER 2

APPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LIFE COACHING PROGRAMME AS SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS WITHIN AN ODL CONTEXT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the research study. The problem of low throughput of social work students within the UNISA ODL context seems to be a problem influenced by challenges experienced by the students, as well as institutional factors within UNISA. Although a number of student support services exist within UNISA or are being planned, no programme specifically suited to the unique needs of social work students studying within an ODL context has been developed.

This study became an official reality with the approval of the research proposal by the Ethics and Research Committee of the Department of Social Work in May 2010. The research proposal is reflected in Chapter 1. The idea of developing a support programme for social work students started growing soon after I joined the Department of Social Work as a lecturer and became aware of the challenges faced by especially fourth-level students to complete their studies. My previous work experience and my personal interest in coaching sparked thoughts about developing a life coaching programme as support for social work students studying within an ODL context.

Based on the formulation of the research problem, a central research question was formulated, namely: What would a life coaching programme to support social work students consist of? The aim of the research study to develop a life coaching programme as support for social work students within an ODL context pointed towards using the Intervention Design and Development (IDD) model of Rothman and Thomas (1994), with specific attention to exploring and describing social work students' and former students' experiences of their student walk within UNISA. Chapter 1 further provided detail on the proposed research method, data verification and ethical guidelines.

This chapter provides a thick description of the methodology applied during the study. “Thick description” is “a term used in qualitative research for descriptions of behaviour that includes not only behaviour but also the social context to render it meaningful to the outsider” (Whittaker, 2012:131). A thick description is necessary within qualitative research, based on the interpretive nature of this type of research (Yin, 2011:264). Every good qualitative researcher has both a “declarative self” and “reflective self”. The researcher’s “declarative self” wants to tell the world what he/she has learned, while the “reflective self” needs to admit how he/she has learned, including possible reservations about his/her methods (Yin, 2011:264).

In this chapter I will reflect on how I derived the findings and developed the intervention. To highlight this awareness of my “reflective self”, I will, in contrast to the other chapters, write this chapter in the first person. Richardson (in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:516) supports this practice: “Writing from our Selves should strengthen the community of qualitative researchers and the individual voices within it, because we will be more fully present in our work, more honest, more engaged.”

2.2 THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH

As mentioned in Chapter 1, I decided to investigate the research topic from a qualitative approach. From the stance of the “reflective self”, I have to ask myself: “Why did I choose to use the qualitative approach?”

The first step in answering this question is to have a clear understanding of what the qualitative approach entails and how it differs from other approaches; thus, elaborating on the information provided in Chapter 1. The next step is to reflect on the qualitative nature of my study and what I have learned from it.

Qualitative research is “research that focuses on data in the form of words, pictures, descriptions or narratives” (Monette et al., 2011:506). “Rather than seeking to develop specific testable hypotheses, qualitative research seeks to explain the meaning of social phenomena through exploring the ways in which individuals understand their worlds” (Whittaker, 2012:7). Quantitative research “uses numbers, counts and measures of things” (Monette et. al., 2011:506) and emphasises objectivity by following a traditional scientific

method, and seeking to remove the values and attitudes of the researcher from the study (Whittaker, 2012:7).

The difference between the two approaches or methods of enquiry can be summarised in the following table:

Table 2.1 A comparison of qualitative and quantitative research (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:42; Schurink, 1998:242)

Qualitative approach	Quantitative approach
Aims to understand the meaning that people attach to everyday life	Aims to objectively measure the social world, to test hypotheses, and to predict and control human behaviour
Flexible procedures evolve as data is gathered.	Research procedures are specified in advance.
Uses an inductive form of reasoning: develops concepts, insights and understanding from patterns in data	Uses a deductive form of reasoning; collects data to assess preconceived models, hypotheses and theories
Regards reality as subjective	Regards reality as objective
The research design is flexible, unique and evolves throughout the research process. There are no fixed steps that should be followed and cannot be replicated exactly.	The research design is standardised according to a fixed procedure and can be replicated.
The setting is the natural environment of research participants.	The setting for data gathering can be an office, organisation, via mail or the Internet.
Data gathering methods are lengthier and less structured; e.g., observations and interviews.	Data gathering methods are highly structured.
Data is presented in the form of words, quotes from documents and transcripts.	Data is presented by means of exact figures gained from precise measurements.
Data is analysed by extracting themes.	Data analysis is undertaken by means of standardised tests.
Concepts are in the form of themes, motifs and categories.	Concepts are in the form of distinct variables.
Data collection and analysis are more time-consuming.	Data collection and analysis are less time-consuming.

A third research approach has been identified, namely the mixed method approach which refers to a combination of the qualitative and quantitative methods within the same study. In mixed method research, the researcher collects both qualitative and quantitative data, and integrates both sources of data at one or more stages of the research process to better understand the phenomena under research (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:43).

Although I clearly stated in Chapter 1 that I planned to use the qualitative approach in my study, this decision was not so clear-cut and I reconsidered this choice throughout the research process. I knew that I would use the qualitative approach to gain an understanding of the support needs of social work students studying within an ODL context and that I would use qualitative research methods to gain information from support specialists and HoDs of Social Work. I also knew that I would only be able to evaluate my support programme on a postgraduate level when it would be converted to an online programme as part of advanced development. However, I struggled to decide whether or not to include qualitative assessment tools to measure the students' academic, personal and professional development in the present format of the life coaching programme.

After a discussion with my supervisor I decided not to include these assessment tools, as many factors in the dissemination phase, such as the input of colleagues into the content of the programme and the availability of funds for the implementation and assessment of the support programme, could influence the future format of the life coaching programme. The focus of the study is the design and development of an intervention and not the evaluation of this intervention.

Based on the characteristics of qualitative research, I can reflect on the qualitative nature of my research study as follows:

- Qualitative research is naturalistic and aims to understand the meaning people attach to their lives in real-world conditions (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:48; Yin, 2011:7).

I conducted focus groups with social work students, from first level to fourth level, to understand their unique journeys as social work students within UNISA. I decided to involve newly employed social workers who studied at UNISA by conducting individual

interviews, as I thought they might have different perspectives of the support needs of students once they had experienced the realities of practice.

First-level students were very enthusiastic about making a difference in people's lives; second-level students were frustrated about some of their academic expectations which were not met; third-level students felt overwhelmed with all the work, while fourth-level students reflected on their whole journey within UNISA. Newly employed social workers compared the demands they had experienced within the workplace with support to students which would have better equipped them for the world of work.

Despite the differences in the meaning these groups attached to their experiences, the overall themes identified when data was analysed, were not influenced by these different meanings.

- Qualitative research is holistic – whole phenomena are understood as complex systems; the whole is more than the sum of its parts (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:48).

This study uses a holistic approach to students' needs. The inclusion of students from all four levels as well as newly qualified social workers, as described in the previous point, was done to get a holistic understanding of support needs of students on different levels. According to Max-Neef (in Schenck, 2008:8), the poverties of subsistence, affection, protection, understanding, freedom, idleness, creation, identity and participation (parts) are viewed as a system (whole) of interrelated interacting needs, and not as different separate and isolated needs. If unsatisfied, these are poverties that also have to be understood and addressed holistically, as a single satisfier may influence or satisfy many needs and vice versa.

This study also culminates in a holistic support programme presented in Chapter 6. As mentioned in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.1.4.1, support initiatives were previously siloed between academic/research and student support efforts. In line with efforts within UNISA to provide a more comprehensive, integrated system of student support (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:189-190; Liebenberg & Archer, 2012:2), the life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context links students to resources provided by various directorates within UNISA.

The life coaching programme is also holistic in that it addresses the academic, professional and personal needs of social work students, focusing on the student as a whole person. It also provides support through the whole “student walk” or journey from the first to the fourth study level. The support programme developed during this research process, therefore, addresses the students’ needs holistically.

- Qualitative research is inductive; logical principles or explanations are developed from specific observations as the researcher becomes immersed in details and specifics of the data to discover important categories and interrelationships (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:48; Rubin & Babbie, 2013:369).

Through inductive reasoning an independent coder and I analysed the transcriptions of focus groups and individual interviews. Independent of each other, we identified very similar themes, and slightly more different sub-themes, categories and sub-categories on the support needs of social work students.

- A small sample size is used – qualitative researchers are not concerned about large samples but rather want to gain an in-depth understanding of participants (Royse, 2004:237).

Two population groups were identified, namely all social work students registered at UNISA at the time of sampling and all recently graduated social workers who had studied at UNISA. Due to practical reasons and financial constraints the sample included only 71 students and five social workers in Pretoria at the time of sampling.

Nine focus groups of students were involved and five individual interviews with newly employed social workers were conducted to gain an understanding of their support needs. Since the focus was on the in-depth understanding of the support needs of social work students studying within an ODL context and the sample was purposive, the small population and sample size were acceptable within the framework of qualitative research.

- The research design within the qualitative approach is flexible, unique and evolves throughout the research process. There are no fixed steps that should be followed and it cannot be replicated exactly (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:42; Schurink, 1998:242).

The research questions or goals may be altered, even while data is being collected (Royse, 2004:238).

I experienced examples of the flexibility and emergent characteristic of qualitative research. The title of the proposal for the research study originally read: “A life coaching model for social work students within an ODL context”. After completion of the study, the title was changed to “A life coaching programme for support of social work students within an open and distance learning (ODL) context”. The substitution of the word “programme” for “model” was made as I gained a better understanding of how these terms are usually, though not absolutely consistently, used in the field of life coaching (see Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.4).

I also realised that the focus of the study was not exclusively on the life coaching model on which the support programme for social work students was based, but on the support programme itself. Within this study a life coaching “model” is used to refer to the overall framework of intervention on which the life coaching programme developed, was based (the Seven C’s and I model), while the life coaching “programme” referred to the content of the support programme utilising life coaching theory, models, tools and skills. The life coaching programme referred to the content of the whole self-coaching programme.

The clarification of concepts, as part of the research process, can be described as “conceptualisation”. According to Babbie (2011:508), “conceptualisation” can be described as the “mental process whereby fuzzy and imprecise notions (concepts) are made more specific and precise”. Although conceptualisation usually precedes data gathering and analysis, it can be an on-going process, especially in qualitative research where the researcher has more flexibility to re-examine concepts and definitions during the research process (Babbie, 2011:128).

Researchers who are orientated towards qualitative research emphasise methodological freedom and allow themselves to redefine concepts as they gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon they are studying (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:95). The change in the formulation of the title also led to the reformulation of two of the research questions and the research goal, as newly stated in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.3 and 1.4. in the proposal these research questions read:

- What are the core elements that should be included in a support programme (i.e. life coaching model) aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context?
- How should such a support programme (i.e. life coaching model) aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context be implemented?

The research goal was originally “to develop a life coaching model targeting social work students within an ODL context”. The word “model” was replaced with “programme” in the research objectives. Although these changes were only made when the report was written, the previous formulation did not influence the data collected, as “life coaching model” was only mentioned as a further description of the intended support programme.

The flexible use of the research design will be described in Chapter 2, paragraph 2.3.

- The qualitative researcher is the main research instrument in collecting data. He/she has a human personality and does not function as a machine-like recorder of events (Yin, 2011:13). This includes bringing to the study the researcher’s personality, thinking, professional experiences, intellectual concerns and assumptions about knowledge.

As an experienced social worker skilled in group work, I created an inviting environment during the focus groups with students. I prepared the venues by arranging chairs in a circle, and providing students with water and peppermints. I welcomed the students as they entered the venues. I also used my experience of many years as a social worker to listen and attend, ask questions and clarify implied meaning. I also used reframing and repetition to probe deeper, when necessary.

When conducting a focus group with a second-level group, I was caught between my role as researcher and as lecturer, as this group was angry that the workshops for second-level students were cancelled. I tried to remain congruent and mentioned to the students that I “removed my researcher hat” to provide them with an explanation of why the workshops had been cancelled. I then “replaced my researcher hat” and continued with the focus

group. After the explanation, the students were more relaxed and focused on the questions in the interview guide.

In an effort to record my interaction with the research process, I kept a research journal (my “black book”), which I used throughout the study to summarise literature, analyse themes, make notes of changes in the UNISA environment, develop ideas, take notes of discussions with my supervisor, plan the research process and make notes on golden threads, possible conclusions and recommendations.

Whittaker (2012:4) mentions that the use of a research journal or log book in which the researcher jots down ideas, makes notes of material read, conversations and to-do lists can promote reflexivity, and helps the researcher to examine his/her thoughts and decisions made during the research process. Such a journal can help the researcher to clarify confusion and to retrace his/her steps.

- Qualitative research has been influenced by interpretivism as an epistemological position. Interpretivism posits that the subject matter of qualitative research is subjective meaning and not objective reality or truth; therefore, it challenges the traditional scientific approach of positivism and argues that the methods of the natural sciences cannot be used to study social phenomena (Whittaker, 2012:9).

As a researcher, I was aware that I was not trying to discover absolute truths, but that I wanted to understand students’ support needs from their subjective experience of their student walk. In Chapter 3 and 4 I also used the UNISA socio-critical model of Subotzky and Prinsloo (2011:92-119) for explaining, predicting and enhancing student success to make sense of the research findings.

Keeping the nature of the qualitative approach in mind, the application of the research design, as highlighted in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.2, will now be explored further.

2.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research designs, as described in Chapter 1, are logical blueprints or plans of research that depend on the purpose of the research by linking the research questions, the data to be

collected and the strategies for analysing the data so that the study findings will address the research questions (Babbie, 2011:67; Yin, 2011:76). Yin (2011:76) stresses the flexibility in the use of these blueprints within qualitative research. He mentions that the research design does not have to be created at the beginning of the study and that it can change during the course of a study. Furthermore, as the researcher conducts the study, different parts of the design may receive differential attention or even be omitted.

There are slight differences in how social research purpose or research goals are categorised. Monette et al. (2011:4) categorise social research according to goals as descriptive, predictive, explanatory and evaluative research, while Rubin and Babbie (2013:50-52) describe the purpose of qualitative and quantitative research as exploration, description, explanation and evaluation.

This research study was undertaken with the purpose of exploring and describing the phenomena of support needs of social work students, and designing an intervention, the life coaching programme, to fulfil these needs. To this end, qualitative research with an exploratory and descriptive purpose as well as intervention research was undertaken.

To develop the life coaching programme, only some of the stages of the Intervention Design and Development (IDD) model of Rothman and Thomas (1994:3-51) were utilised. Although this design can also be used with the purpose of evaluating the developed intervention, the focal point of this study was to design and develop, and not to also evaluate the intervention.

2.3.1 Research with an exploratory purpose

As mentioned in Chapter 1, some knowledge of the experiences of social work students, especially fourth-level students within an ODL context, existed. However, there was no clarity on their support needs or the needs of students on other levels. As set out in the research questions as well as the objectives, I wanted to know what the support needs of social work students studying within an ODL context are to facilitate their student walk within UNISA, to fully prepare them for the social work profession and to grow on a personal level. Research with an exploratory purpose provides a beginning familiarity with

the topic, especially when the subject of study is relatively new and unstudied (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:51).

2.3.2 Research with a descriptive purpose

The research objectives included accompanying descriptive purposes. The descriptive purpose to provide more and specific details on already available knowledge was met by using Max-Neef's wheel of fundamental human needs and the timeline of the students' journey within UNISA as stimuli during data collection. The idea was to encourage participants to provide detailed descriptions of their needs and not just general statements.

According to Rubin and Babbie (2013:51), many social work studies also have the purpose to describe, as the researcher first observes and then describes carefully and deliberately. Research methods used for these exploratory and descriptive purposes have been incorporated into the Intervention Design and Development (IDD) model, Phase 1.

2.3.3 Intervention research

Social work interventions often develop haphazardly, reactively or based on a "gut feeling" (Bailey-Dempsey & Reid, 1996:208). Contrariwise, intervention research is the systematic study and development of purposive change strategies characterised by the design and implantation of interventions to improve the practice of human service interventions (Fraser & Galinsky, 2010:325; Comer, Meier & Galinsky, 2004:250).

Intervention research provides a design and development methodology rigor and credibility in the design and development of social interventions (Comer et al., 2004:251). The basic message behind intervention research is that effective interventions must be built systematically through a process of design, continual testing, feedback and modification (Bailey-Dempsey & Reid, 1996:208).

Intervention research has three related purposes, namely (a) to develop and refine interventions, (b) to determine whether the developed intervention is effective in producing the desired outcomes and (c) to inform theory (Fraser, Richman, Galinsky & Day, 2009:25-26.). These authors stress that none of these three purposes can be achieved in a

single study and that a series of studies, each with a different research design, is needed. Both qualitative and quantitative methods can be used in intervention research which Fraser et al. (2009:26) refer to as “methodological pluralism” within intervention research.

The process of intervention research is iterative and sequential, meaning that the process follows rough steps. There is, however, disagreement on the number and nature of the steps (Fraser et al., 2009:28). The Intervention Design and Development model of Rothman and Thomas (1994) consists of six phases, each characterised by key operations or activities:

- 1) Problem analysis and project planning
- 2) Information gathering and synthesis
- 3) Programme design
- 4) Early development and pilot testing
- 5) Evaluation and advanced development
- 6) Dissemination.

This IDD model is based on the principle of “stepwise commitment” (Bailey-Dempsey & Reid, 1996:209). This means that an activity is only undertaken when the previous activity has been carried out successfully.

Fraser et al. (2009:36) present a five-step model for intervention research:

- 1) Specify the problem and develop a program theory.
- 2) Create and revise programme material.
- 3) Refine and confirm programme components.
- 4) Assess effectiveness in a variety of settings and circumstances.
- 5) Disseminate findings and programme materials.

The authors suggest that these steps unfold over time and across studies. They also suggest that each step, which also includes sequential tasks, may be revisited, implying reconceptualisation and a return to an earlier step at any time. Gilgun and Sands (2012:350) clarify this process as follows: “Design and development is composed of several parts, which, although we present them in linear fashion, may be better visualised

as a series of activities that loop back to previous activities, as in a spiral that evolves over time.”

In my research proposal I planned to use the IDD model of Rothman and Thomas (1994). Only later did I come across the work of Fraser et al. (2009) which I then tried to incorporate into the work of Rothman and Thomas. I became totally confused, since different concepts and activities are used in the two models. Therefore, I decided to stick to the IDD model of Thomas and Rothman. I thought I had used the model in a stepwise fashion until I had to write Chapter 2 and discovered that the various activities did actually loop back and inform one another.

Fraser et al. (2009) also provided substantiation of the decisions to only complete some of the phases of the IDD, and to utilise qualitative research with exploratory and descriptive purposes within the Intervention Design and Development (IDD) model, Phase 1.

In the next section I will describe how I used the IDD model in the development of a life coaching model for social work students within an ODL context.

2.3.3.1 The unique application of the IDD model in designing a life coaching programme for social work students studying within an ODL context

In exploring and describing the support needs of social work students studying within an ODL context and developing a life coaching programme to fulfil these needs, I used the IDD model in a unique way. In this section I reflect on how and why I deviated from the planning in my proposal and share the discoveries I made which added value to my research.

Table 2.2 Phases and activities of the IDD model used in the development of a life coaching programme for social work students studying within an ODL context

Phase	Steps/Activity
1. Situation analysis and project planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Identifying clients • Step 2: Gaining entry to and cooperation from settings

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 3: Involving clients and identifying the concerns of the population • Step 4: Analysing the identified concerns • Step 5: Setting goals and objectives
2. Information gathering and synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Using existing information sources • Step 2: Studying natural examples • Step 3: Identifying the functional elements of successful models
3. Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Specifying the procedural elements of the intervention
4. Early development and pilot testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Developing a prototype • Step 2: Applying design criteria • Step 3: Conducting a pilot test

The process followed, differs from the phases and steps set out in Chapter 1. It is described below.

The steps in Phase 1 were used in a slightly different order. In the original model, Thomas and Rothman (1994:128) described Step 1 as “Identifying and involving clients”, while I referred to it only as “Identifying clients”, as I only involved the participants during Step 3. In the original model, Step 3 was titled as “Identifying concerns of the population”, while I referred to it as “Involving clients and identifying the concerns of the population”. I did not use Step 1, “Designing an observational system” of Phase 3, as the purpose of the study was not to evaluate the newly developed intervention. Step 4 and Step 5 were omitted, as the intervention will only be evaluated and disseminated in a postgraduate phase.

- **Phase 1: Situation analysis and project planning**

In the initial phase, the researcher established that a problem existed, gained an in-depth understanding of problematic situations, verified its seriousness and documented the inadequacy of existing interventions (Bailey-Dempsey & Reid, 1996:210; Gilgun & Sands, 2012:350).

In the literature study and existing information on throughput of the experiences of social work students as well as existing resources, it was clear that a problem existed. The support needs of social work students were then explored and described.

➤ **Phase 1, Step 1: Identifying clients**

Clients for this study were social work students, and recently graduated and employed social work students who had studied at UNISA. Students from all over the country as well as from Botswana and Zimbabwe study social work at UNISA. A requirement is that from their third level, they have to attend workshops at the various regional centres of UNISA in South Africa. It would have been ideal to involve students from all the regional centres, and all recently graduated and employed social work students.

However, due to time and financial constraints, only a small purposive sample (71 students and five social workers) of the population was included from all social work students registered at UNISA, in Pretoria and all recently graduated and qualified students employed as social workers in Pretoria at the time of sampling. Based on the qualitative nature of this part of the research, a small population and sample would still provide me with an in-depth understanding of the participants (McLaughlin, 2012:35).

The population was comprised of two different groups because students' perspective of support needed could be different from that of recently graduated and employed social workers who compared the demands of the workplace with support which could have made a difference to their training. This triangulation also contributed to the truth value of the study (Krefting, 1991:215).

Since some information was already available on the experiences of fourth-level students but not of students on other levels, I therefore wanted to include students from all four levels. Initially I experienced difficulty in deciding to which level a student belonged, as students might be registered for modules on various levels.

After consultation with colleagues in the Department of Social Work, I was able to compile clear selection criteria. Students who were registered for at least one first-level social work module were regarded as "first-level" social work students. Students who were registered for at least two second-level social work modules were regarded as

“second-level” social work students. Students who were registered for at least three third-level social work modules were regarded as “third-level” social work students. Students who had completed their third level of social work and were registered for at least one fourth-level social work module were regarded as “fourth-level” social work students.

➤ **Phase 1, Step 2: Gaining entry and cooperation from the settings**

As described in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.2.1, I gained entry to the social work students after being granted permission to conduct the research at UNISA by the Dean of the College of Human Sciences and the Head of the Department of Social Work (cf. Annexure A).

My position as a lecturer in the Department of Social Work facilitated my contact with the students. First-level students were invited to participate in the research when I visited the tutoring classes at the Sunnyside campus in Pretoria. The Bright Site of Sunnyside (a service-learning centre of the Department of Social Work at UNISA) involved a group of second-level students in a community project where I met with this group. Third- and fourth-level students were busy with workshops at the Sunnyside campus; so, I arranged with the facilitators to meet with these students to explain my research and invite them to participate.

All the students were provided with a letter, inviting them to participate in the research (cf. Annexure B). Ethical considerations were discussed and consent forms were signed (cf. Annexure D). Interested participants were provided with an interview guide and a list of biographical questions (cf. Annexure F and H). As I am also a lecturer, I stressed that students who were not interested would not be penalised in any way by, for example, losing face or losing marks. It was important to honour the ethical principle of informed consent to ensure that students did not feel pressurised to participate (Yin, 2011:46-47). One of the second-level groups was concerned that they might not pick the fruits of their input themselves.

My requests were met with different levels of enthusiasm. The first- and second-level students were very keen to participate, while third- and fourth-level students were less interested. This could be explained by their situations; first- and second-level students have

little direct contact with the lecturers and seemed keen to give input, while third- and fourth-level students were used to seeing lecturers during workshops.

After the invitations described above, separate follow-up meetings were arranged in Pretoria for social work students of the different year levels for the focus group discussion. I experienced difficulty to arrange venues for the first-level groups, as meetings were held on a Saturday at the Sunnyside campus where and when tutorial classes also took place.

The plan to engage newly graduated and employed social workers was executed exactly as outlined in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.2.1. I arranged the interviews at the social workers' place of employment to minimise any disruption. In one case I also introduced myself to the social worker's supervisor to explain my presence during work time.

➤ **Phase 1, Step 3: Involving clients and identifying the concerns of the population**

Although I have already referred to the interview guides for focus group discussions and individual interviews (portrait in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.2.1,) in the previous paragraph, I will now describe how I prepared these instruments.

To design the interview guides I made use of the previous research on the experiences of social work students by Lintvelt (2008), Lawlor (2008) and Schenck (2008). I followed Lintvelt and Lawlor's method of grouping students' experiences as professional, personal and academic, and Schenck's use of Max-Neef's taxonomy of fundamental human needs and related poverties to provide an aid to explore and describe students' experiences.

The concept of the "student walk", as described in UNISA's conceptual model on student throughput (Prinsloo, 2009:109), and the five steps of this journey were used to assist students to situate themselves and their professional, personal and academic experiences, their unmet and met needs, and their satisfiers/resources experienced and required. The five steps entail Step 1: choice of social work as career; Step 2: initial enquiries and choice of institution; Step 3: preregistration and registration; Step 4: tuition and assessment cycle, and Step 5: event of graduation and employment.

The questions in the interview guide also distinguished between resources or satisfiers which students required to facilitate success within their journey as UNISA students (study needs), to prepare them for the social work profession (professional needs) and facilitate personal growth (personal needs).

The question on what makes a student happy, sad, angry, worried, hopeful and proud, from Hope and Timmel (1995:53, Book 1) served not only to provide information on needs and satisfiers, but also as a warm-up question. Although not included in the original interview guide, another question was added as an ice-breaker. Students were asked: “At this moment: how do you feel? Pull a face to show the group.”

In order to understand the participants as “situated agents” (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:184), a list was added with a request for biographical information (cf. Appendices H and I).

Questions can be piloted by asking an expert to review the questions, inviting selected representatives of the target audience to comment on the questions or by running a focus group interview, asking feedback from participants after the focus group (Krueger, 1994:68-69). The Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work made comments on the original interview guide presented in the research proposal. Although it was not planned and described in Chapter 1, two fourth-level students commented on the questions in the interview guide.

A pilot focus group was conducted to reflect on the wording, sequence of the questions and the use of the various types of questions. The only feedback received was from one of the students who felt that it was important to clearly explain the meaning of “poverties” and “satisfiers”, as these concepts could confuse participants.

During the focus groups and interviews I used a visual representation of the wheel of fundamental human needs, and explained each poverty with possible satisfiers to participants. Since the pilot focus group, consisting of four fourth-level students, were happy with the questions in the interview guide and did not have any other input on the focus group process, I decided to use the information gathered during the focus group as part of my research findings.

Nine focus groups were conducted. In total 17 fourth-level students participated in three focus groups (four, seven and six respectively); 19 third-level students participated in two focus groups (11 and eight respectively); 17 second-level students participated in two focus groups (nine and eight respectively) and 18 first-level students participated in two focus groups (11 in one group and seven in the other).

As expected, the one big advantage of using focus groups was that discussions provided rich data, as participants presented and defended their own views while challenging those of others (McLaughlin, 2012:37). The focus groups also provided me with the opportunity to probe on what was shared by participants (Alston & Bowles, 2003:120; Greeff in De Vos et al., 2011:361-362). In this process the support needs of students were clarified. I experienced the focus groups positively.

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with five recently graduated and employed social workers at their place of work. An interview guide, similar to that used in the focus groups, provided direction to these interviews. Additional questions were added on whether social work fulfilled their expectations and on the areas that their training lacked in preparing them adequately for being a social worker in practice.

This method of data collection was effective as it provided me with an “inside” view of their experiences as newly employed social workers. It ensured sensitivity to the social workers’ employment context and language preferences (Fossey et al., 2002:27; Greeff in De Vos et al., 2011:351-352). Although all the interviews were conducted in English, one social worker made some comments in her mother tongue, Afrikaans. These comments were translated to English. Conducting semi-structured interviews enabled me to follow up on what participants said, kept them focused on detail and asked them to rephrase when necessary (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:299).

The data obtained from the focus group discussions and individual interviews was recorded by means of digital voice recordings that were transcribed later, completed forms and stimuli, as well as notes on flip charts. Permission was obtained from the participants and a recording was made as unobtrusively as possible. I also requested a volunteer in each focus group to write minutes of the session so that notes could be compared with the transcriptions.

The information obtained from students and social workers on the satisfiers or resources they had used to fulfil their needs, as well as suggestions on what a support programme could comprise of, provided ideas on possible functional elements which could be included in the life coaching programme. This loops forward to Phase 2, Step 3.

➤ **Phase 1, Step 4: Analysing the identified concerns**

Data analysis in this study already started during the focus groups as participants responded to the stimuli provided (drawing of the study journey, Max-Neef's wheel of needs – cf. Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.2.1).

In order to save time the interviews were professionally transcribed. As the person doing the transcriptions was not from the field of social work, I went through all the transcriptions to ensure that she had captured information correctly and also to be more in touch with the data. This is supported by Schurink, Fouché and De Vos (2011:408)

To code and analyse data I used the services of an independent coder, who like myself, used Tesch's framework in Creswell (2009:1). A consensus discussion between the independent coder, study supervisor and I ensued during which we came to a consensus on the themes, categories and sub-categories produced by the data. We identified similar themes and categories, but subcategories differed. I tended to identify many more sub-categories.

By going through and correcting the transcriptions I gained a sense of the whole and realised that the data could broadly be grouped according to the topics of the sub-questions for the research (cf. Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.2.1) that had been expanded on in the content of the semi-structured interview guide as well as the interview guide for the focus groups. Participants provided much more input on their journey within UNISA than on suggestions for a life coaching programme. This might be because the first addresses their experiences on an emotional level, while the latter required them to think hypothetically, more on an abstract level.

The themes of the findings are presented in chapters 3 and 4. Themes on participants' needs and satisfiers for these needs are described in Chapter 3 (Research findings on the

journey of social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution) while the findings on their perception of the attributes of a good social worker and suggestions for a life coaching programme are stated in Chapter 4 (Research findings on the attributes of a good social worker and a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context). In Chapters 3 and 4, the findings were interpreted by using the UNISA's socio-critical model for explaining, predicting and enhancing student success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:92-119).

For data verification, Guba's model (in Krefting, 1991:214-222) was used, describing the truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality of the study. Yin (2011:19-20) identifies three objectives for building trustworthiness and credibility during qualitative research, namely 1) transparency – the researcher describes and documents his/her qualitative research procedures in such a way that other people can understand and review it; 2) methodicness – this means following some orderly set of research procedure to minimise careless work but still leave room for flexibility, and 3) adherence to evidence – qualitative research needs to be based on an explicit set of evidence which could consist of participants' actual language expressed.

In the next section I will indicate which strategies I have used to increase the trustworthiness and credibility of the study, and link each strategy to an objective for building trustworthiness and credibility, as identified by Yin (2011:19-20). I will then summarise this in Table 2.3, further in this chapter.

As planned, I established confidence in the **truth** of the findings through the use of the following strategies:

- Credibility was enhanced within the interviewing process by using reframing, repetition and probing deeper, when necessary. The visual stimuli used as part of the interview guide also helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences. Adherence to evidence, as described by Yin (2011:19-20), is applicable, as these strategies assisted me to gain in-depth data from the participants.

- Triangulation was utilised as the views of both social work students and recently graduated and employed social workers were obtained. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were used in conjunction with focus groups as a method of data collection. This further contributed to triangulation. In Chapters 3 and 4, three storylines were used in most instances to confirm a theme. In the interview guides of the focus groups and interviews, more than one question covered the same theme; e.g., the question on what made students happy, sad, angry, worried, hopeful and proud. The question on whether they had experienced any difficulties during their student walk provided information on participants' needs or poverties and suggested satisfiers to these needs. All these strategies enhanced adherence to evidence.
- Peer examination served as another strategy for data verification. As a lecturer employed at the Department of Social Work at UNISA, throughout the research study I requested advice and guidance from colleagues who are experienced in the field of qualitative research. By consulting colleagues with experience in research, I gained methodicness.
- As mentioned in Chapter 1, I have been practicing social work since 1990 and have gained experience in various fields, including supervision of social work students and research. I obtained my MA (Mental Health) degree in 2000. As lecturer, I have been supervising MA students in their research – I therefore have the necessary authority to undertake this research. This also contributed to methodicness.
- The students and newly employed social workers were informed in writing (cf. Appendices H and I) of the purpose of the study and their right not to participate. The students were also assured that the researcher, being a lecturer, will have no impact on their studies. These tactics were used to ensure transparency.
- I noted my ideas on the process, discussions with my supervisor and notes on changes in the context of the study as reflective commentary in my “black

book” throughout the research process. Through reflecting I contributed to transparency and methodicness.

Applicability of the study was established through transferability. I clearly described the research process in Chapters 1 and 2 of this report. In the literature review I clearly described the various contexts of the study being the personal world of experience of the students, the Department of Social Work and UNISA as an ODL institution. The limitations of the study are noted at the end of this chapter. All these strategies added to transparency, as described by Yin (2011:19-20).

Consistency of this study was defined in terms of dependability by using of a dense or thick description of the research method, triangulation of data sources and methods of data collection, peer examination and an independent coder in order to establish consistency. In terms of Yin’s (2011:19-20) objectives, this facilitated transparency, methodicness and adherence to evidence.

Neutrality was obtained through ensuring conformability. I reflected on my part in the research process by making notes in my “black book”. I, for instance, commented on me feeling intimidated by the fast and continuous process of change with UNISA as an institution. Data obtained through the focus groups and interviews (triangulation of data sources) was transcribed. Statements made about participants’ experience were supported by quotations from the transcripts. Findings on the “problem” or study needs of social work students within an ODL context were reported in Chapter 3. Neutrality underwrote transparency, methodicness and adherence to evidence.

The discussion above is summarised in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 Strategies used for data verification (according to Guba’s model) linked to the objectives for building trustworthiness and credibility (identified by Yin)

	Strategy: Truth-value	Strategy: Applicability	Strategy: Consistency	Strategy: Neutrality
Objective: Transparency	Informed consent letter; role of	Thick description of the research	Thick description of	Reflecting in the “black book”

List of research project topics and materials

	lecturer; reflecting in the “black book”	process, the various contexts of the study and the limitations	the research method	
Objective: Methodicness	Peer examination; own research experience; reflecting in the “black book”		Peer examination; independent coder	
Objective: Adherence to evidence	Reframing; repetition; visual stimuli; triangulation of data sources and methods of data gathering		Triangulation of data sources and methods of data collection; independent coder	Triangulation of data sources; quotations from the transcripts

➤ **Phase 1, Step 5: Setting goals and objectives**

The goals and objectives referred to in Phase 1, Step 5 of the IDD model refer to goals and objectives of the intervention, and not the goals and objectives of the entire study (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:479-480; Rothman & Thomas, 1994:31).

As I was writing this report, I became aware that in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.2.1, I had set out the goals and task objectives for the study, while only the development of a life coaching programme as support for social work students was relevant there. The goals of the life coaching programme, as set out in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.2 are:

- To enhance student success and throughput
- To facilitate the personal and professional development of students in preparation for the profession of social worker
- To empower students to take ownership of their learning process
- For social work students to experience their journey or “student walk” within an ODL institution more positively
- For students to learn self-reflection and self-development skills to be utilised as part of their lifelong learning

- To contribute to the curriculum development of the Department of Social Work
- For coaching knowledge and skills to contribute towards the development of social work students.

Most of the steps of Phase 1 of Rothman and Thomas's IDD model had been applied. In preparing the research proposal (see Chapter 1, paragraph 1.1.3), the seriousness of the low throughput of social work students as well as the inadequacy of existing support interventions was established and documented. After the research, there now is a more comprehensive understanding of the personal, professional and academic support needs of social work students in their student walk within an ODL context. The research also confirmed the need for the development of an appropriate support programme for which goals were not yet set.

- **Phase 2: Information gathering and synthesis**

During this phase the researcher retrieves, organises and analyses information that would be useful during the design of the intervention. The researcher familiarises him-/herself with interventions that others have used, including what worked and what appeared to have not worked (Bailey-Dempsey & Reid, 1996:212; Gilgun & Sands, 2012:351).

The gathering of information for incorporation into the design of the intervention already started with the initial literature study I undertook when writing the research proposal (see life coaching and student support in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.1.4) and continued throughout the research process.

- **Phase 2, Step 1: Using existing information sources**

Starting with preparing the research proposal, I read widely across various fields; e.g., ODL, social work, student support and life coaching. A literature study was undertaken by utilising various databases. The subject librarian assisted me in doing subject literature searches using databases mainly from EBSCOHost, such as Academic Search Premier, Afric-Wide Information, ERIC, PsycINFO, Public Administration Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts, SocINDEX with full-text and SA E-Publications of Sabinet. This information is contained in Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6, and is reflected in the bibliography.

➤ **Phase 2, Step 2: Studying natural examples**

Studying natural examples is about discovering what has already been done. As I could not find an existing life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context, I asked social work students and newly graduated and employed social workers during the focus groups and individual interviews about the satisfiers of their needs or the resources they used to fulfil their needs as well as suggestions of what should be included in a such support programme (see Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.2.1). This information is described in Chapters 3 and 4.

➤ **Phase 2, Step 3: Identifying the functional elements**

The search for functional elements was much more comprehensive than initially planned. I gained information on functional elements which could be included in a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context by:

- Doing an Internet search and identifying functional elements in support programmes of international ODL universities. The researcher requested a list of international ODL institutions from Paul Prinsloo, ODL consultant at UNISA. From this list two universities offering social work were randomly selected, namely the Open University, United Kingdom and Deakin University in Australia. The researcher communicated by e-mail with a support specialist (Cocking, 2013) from The Open University (UK) about a useful support programme. She referred the researcher to a colleague from the University of Bedfordshire (Kumar, 2013). After communicating per e-mail about the support programme she had developed which corresponded with my ideas, I bought her book, *Personal, Academic and Career Development in Higher Education. SOARing to success*. Many ideas and activities of the SOAR programme were incorporated into the life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context.

- Interviewing support specialists from two South African residential universities. I was referred to the Tshwane University of Technology by a colleague who was under the impression that the institution offers a life coaching support programme. Here I met with a support specialist (Barnard, 2013) from Student Support and Development. I also e-mailed and obtained valuable information from her colleague (Mason, 2013) working in the same department. The HoD of the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria

suggested that I interview the head of the support centre of the University of Pretoria (Nolte, 2013).

- Interviewing student support specialists working within UNISA. I interviewed an ODL consultant at UNISA (Prinsloo, 2013); two support specialists from the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development (Van Schoor, 2012a; Deyzel, 2012); two researchers from the Department of Institutional Statistics and Analysis (Liebenberg, 2012a; Van Zyl, 2012); the director from Corporate Communication and Marketing (Schmidt, 2012b); the manager from Student Social Development (Le Roux, 2013b) and the academic support coordinator of the departments of Social Work, Health Studies and Sociology (Sindane, 2013). I had either worked with these specialists before or was referred to them by their colleagues in other departments.
- Requesting interviews and conducting telephonic interviews with willing HoDs from residential social work departments in South Africa. Fifteen HoDs were approached and requested twice by e-mail to participate in the study. Nine HoDs responded, but only seven could be interviewed. The researcher interviewed HoDs or when referred, a staff member, of the University of Fort Hare, the University of Venda for Science and Technology, the University of the Free State, the University of the Western Cape, the North-West University, the University of Pretoria and the University of the Witwatersrand.
- Studying the existing curriculum of the Department of Social Work at UNISA to identify functional elements already in use by working through the study guides and tutorial letters of 2012 of the various social work modules.
- Identifying functional elements from life coaching models through literature study. I identified a few useful coaching models as well as relevant information on coaching conversations, coaching approaches, focusing specifically on positive psychology as a theoretical framework and the role of the coach.
- Identifying functional elements in social work literature. I found a book, *Successful social work education: a student's guide* (Barsky, 2006), which contains many

functional elements or themes which could be used in the development of a support programme.

Where interviews were used, participants were provided with information on the study, requested to give consent and were provided with the following topics which could be addressed during the interview (cf. Appendix J):

- *The structure of support services within your tertiary institution and/or department*
- *Policies or guidelines influencing the support services rendered*
- *The type of support programme rendered by your institution and/or department*
- *Evidence of the success of a life coaching/coaching/mentoring programme rendered*
- *Suggestions regarding core elements which should be included in a life coaching programme aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context*
- *Suggestions on how a life coaching programme aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context could be implemented.*

During the interviews, I asked questions on the topics specified above and took notes in my “black book”. Functional elements, which could contribute to fulfilment of the needs of social work students, were described in Chapter 5. Strengths and weaknesses of the identified functional elements or activities were evaluated and where available, evidence of success was described.

During Phase 2, I organised and analysed information that would be useful during the design of the intervention. Information gathered from specialists, especially HoDs from social work departments, also provided information regarding the support needs of social work students. In this way, this step linked recursively with Phase 1, Step 3 (cf. Chapter 2, paragraph 2.3.3).

• **Phase 3: Design**

Designing an intervention can be described as both a science and an art (Bailey-Dempsey & Reid, 1996:213). For this, the researcher uses knowledge gained during the previous phase as well as his/her practice wisdom and creativity. The outcomes of this phase are a

preliminary construction of the intervention and an initial set of implementation guidelines. The preliminary intervention needs to be sensitive to the experiences of the potential users (Bailey-Dempsey & Reid, 1996:213; Gilgun & Sands, 2012:351).

Phase 3 of the IDD model of Rothman and Thomas (1994:33-35) is divided into two steps, namely 1) designing an observational system and 2) specifying procedural elements of the intervention. During Step 1 a measurement system is developed which is used in the evaluation of the developed intervention. As mentioned in Chapter 2, paragraph 2.3, the purpose of this study is only to design an intervention, the life coaching programme, to address the support needs of social work students in an ODL context. Should funds be available, the programme could be evaluated at a later stage as part of postgraduate research. Step 1 of Phase 2 was therefore omitted. I did, however, include regular requests for feedback in the programme which could be used in advanced development.

➤ **Phase 3, Step 2: Specifying procedural elements of the intervention**

According to De Vos and Strydom (in De Vos et al., 2011:483), this activity should include specific details on the proposed procedures (i.e., treatment methods, programmes, service systems, policies and guidelines) to ensure that it is easy to understand and implement in practice (i.e., user-friendly). The proposed procedures should be detailed to enable practitioners to duplicate them in different settings.

I identified the procedural elements of this intervention through conversations with service providers at UNISA and other universities, data analysis and the literature review. In Chapter 5, I identified general guidelines for the implementation of the functional elements which assisted me to develop the implementation guidelines of the life coaching programme, as described at the end of Chapter 6.

The implementation of the online self-coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context will depend on whether the staff of the Department of Social Work will agree to the use of the programme as part of the curriculum. The implementation guidelines are therefore only tentative.

I will now explain the factors I took into consideration when developing the life coaching programme:

- Due to technological developments and the nature of UNISA as an ODL institution, most of the student support at UNISA is provided online. This also contributes to the accessibility of student support (Deyzel, 2012a). It would not be possible to provide individual life coaching to all social work students studying within an ODL context, but an online self-coaching programme will be accessible to all students who can access the Internet. Since the students are only required to go online twice a year, students can use an Internet café. On request, the programme could be made available in printed format.

- The life coaching process is usually divided into conversations (Rostron, 2009a:86). I used the same idea to divide the life coaching programme into eight sections or conversations spread across the students' four years of study; two conversations per year – the first one in the beginning of the year – about February/March and the second during August/September. This will ensure support throughout the students' study journey without adding too much work pressure.

- Support specialists agreed that students often do not use support programmes because it is not compulsory (Deyzel, 2012a; Schmidt, 2012b). Should lecturers agree, the programme will be linked to the practical modules SCK1503, SCK2604, SCK3705 and SCK4802, while the one assignment per year will count a small percentage towards the year mark of the specific module. This has been built in to ensure that students use the self-coaching programme. The contents of these assignments as well as mark sheets will also be further negotiated with the relevant lecturers. The assignments will be marked by the markers of that specific module under supervision of the lecturer. Students can be reminded by SMS to attend to their self-coaching programme as well as assignments.

- The IDD model provides for continuous advanced development of the intervention (Thomas & Rothman, 1996:37). Students are requested to give feedback on the programme at the end of each conversation as well as in the last conversation. In the online version of the programme provision will be made for this to be sent to the coordinating "life coach".

- Student support should be consistent and not “siloeed” with different stakeholders working on their own (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:189-190). The “life coach” or coordinator of the programme will be available on e-mail to students at all levels to provide a form of continuity of support. This person can also liaise with the support departments within UNISA and alert students of relevant information or workshops.
- Training and motivation of support staff are essential (Barnard, 2013). The programme and their part in it, will have to be sold to e-tutors, third-level workshop facilitators and fourth-level supervisors. The one session per year where these support people provide input, will have to be scheduled according to their work programs and clear guidelines on their role needs to be provided. SMS notifications can also be sent to remind and motivate e-tutors, facilitators and supervisors. Guidelines for e-tutors, facilitators and supervisors have been set out in Chapter 6, Table 6.1.

To summarise, the support programme will be available online, follow the life coaching model and consist of two conversations per year, integrated into the present social work modules as compulsory assignment, “in development”, managed by a coordinator in the Department of Social Work who is accessible by email, and implemented by existing human resources already involved with social work students.

- **Phase 4: Early development and pilot testing**

In this phase, instruments for preliminary testing are devised and data is collected from small samples which could be used to improve the intervention. Input from service users and service providers is valuable (Bailey-Dempsey & Reid, 1996:214; Gilgun & Sands, 2012:351).

- **Phase 4, Step 1: Developing a prototype intervention**

The content and format of the online life coaching programme, as presented in Chapter 6, emanated from the support needs and views obtained from the samples, drawn from the populations of this research study as well as the literature study and functional elements identified from literature and personal interviews with student support specialists.

The goals of the support programme were based on the significance and proposed contribution of the study, as discussed in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.2. I wanted to develop the life coaching model which would guide the structure of the life coaching programme, based on a combination of the student success model of Subotzky and Prinsloo (2011) (cf. Chapter 1, Figure 1.1) as well as the framework for a coaching assignment of Starr (2012) (cf. Chapter 5, Figure 5.7).

As far as the content of the programme was concerned, I was also strongly influenced by the ideas of Kumar's SOAR model (2007) (cf. Chapter 5, paragraph 5.3.1.3). I wrote the life coaching programme in nine sections, focusing on the student's self-awareness; UNISA and social work as contexts for the student's study journey; assessing the fit between the student and the choice to study at UNISA and to study social work; setting goals to become a good social worker; challenges faced along the journey; personal and interpersonal growth; finding a niche within social work; finding employment and assessing the journal.

When I discussed my first draft with my supervisor, she highlighted that she missed a consistent theoretical framework. She introduced me to appreciative inquiry life coaching and the four phases of the appreciative inquiry process, namely "discovery", "dream", "design" and "delivery". I revised the content of the life coaching programme based on the principles of AI life coaching. I then expended the four phases of the appreciative inquiry process to seven actions towards growth, namely "clarifying my strengths"; "connecting to my context"; "clarifying my vision"; "completing my plan"; "committing to action and growth"; "confirming my direction" and "celebrating completion". I called the model "The Seven C's and I model" which corresponded with a programme at UNISA, "The 11C's (plus 1)". The latter was introduced to UNISA by the present Principal and Chancellor, Prof Makhanya, in 2011 to support an ethos of servant leadership. It was included in UNISA's Charter of Transformation to articulate what is desired and envisioned for our institution (Makhanya, 2011:1-7). I decided on this title, as there are seven stages and the "I" represents the student who is undertaking the self-coaching. This model is represented in Figure 2.1 below.

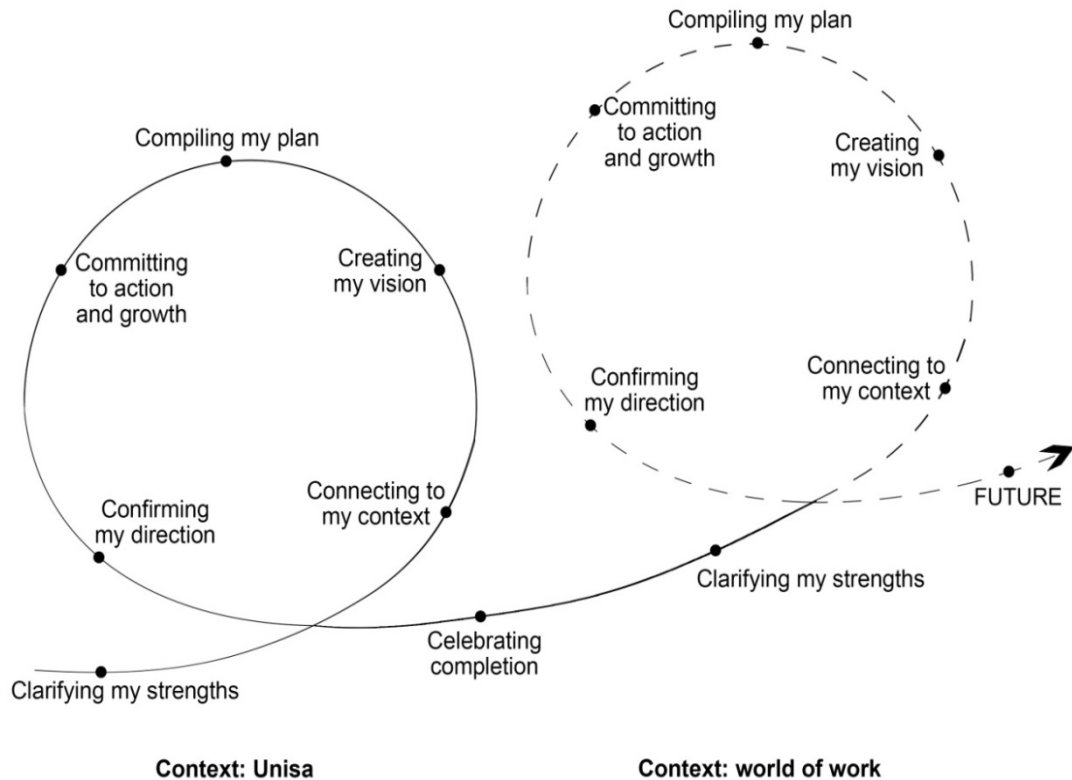


Figure 2.1 Seven C's and I life coaching model

The model can be applied not only within the context of studying social work at UNISA, but also as part of lifelong learning when the students venture out into the world of work.

The self-coaching programme is divided into eight conversations, based on the seven actions for growth with the following content:

- **Conversation 1: Clarifying my strengths.** Conversation 1 (to be completed at the beginning of level one) assists the students to identify past positive emotions and achievements, and use these to articulate their strengths.
- **Conversation 2: Connecting to my context.** Conversation 2 (to be completed at the end of level one) is about opportunity awareness, discovering social work as a profession and discovering the resources within UNISA. It enables the students to clarify for themselves whether they fit within an ODL institution and social work as a profession.

- **Conversation 3: Clarifying my vision.** During Conversation 3 (to be completed at the beginning of level two) students create their vision and clarify their academic, personal and professional goals.
- **Conversation 4: Completing my plan.** In Conversation 4 (to be completed at the end of level two) students plan actions to achieve these goals as part of their own personal development plan (PDP).
- **Conversation 5: Committing to action and growth.** Conversation 5 (to be completed at the beginning of level three) is about a commitment to change, as students focus on personal and interpersonal growth.
- **Conversation 6: Confirming my direction.** In Conversation 6 (to be completed at the end of level three) students confirm their direction by monitoring their progress, using their PDP's and by identifying fields in social work where they may work.
- **Conversation 7: Celebrating completion.** During Conversation 7 (to be completed at the beginning of level four) students are introduced to the concept of a career portfolio and start preparing themselves to be employed.
- **Conversation 8: Celebrating completion.** Conversation 8 (to be completed at the end of level four) represents the last stage of the students' study journey. It assists them in looking back to assess their journey and own growth as well as forward towards lifelong learning.

To make the programme interesting and creative I chose to not include much theory, but added many activities, stories, opportunities for reflection and resources. I used key symbols to identify the various categories of content. I also added an evaluation of each conversation as well as an evaluation of the whole programme to enable me to improve the programme once it is implemented.

➤ **Phase 4, Step 2: Conducting a pilot test**

In my proposal I did not plan to conduct a pilot test or apply design criteria to the preliminary intervention, but was advised by the chair of the Research and Ethics Committee to do so on the completion of the life coaching programme, as this will add to the credibility of the programme. As the programme is not yet in an online format, it had to be piloted in its present written format.

Two target groups were included in the pilot study: specialists in the fields of social work, ODL, life coaching and student support as well as social work students from all four levels. Specialists were identified purposively – I approached people I knew played an important part in the identified field. The HoD of the Department of Social Work as well as a senior staff member in the department, a senior e-counsellor and developer of support material in the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development, the Head of Khanya College (training institution for auxiliary workers) who is also a life coach, and an ODL consultant at UNISA were all invited telephonically, followed by an e-mail, to give feedback on the programme (cf. Annexure K).

Social work lecturers involved with the four levels were requested to provide details of at least four students per level who could be involved in a pilot study. Lists were obtained from the lecturers involved with level one, three and four, while the lecturer working with level two students phoned students first to explain the reason why I will contact them and then provided me with a list of students willing to participate.

I phoned 17 students from the list to invite them to participate, followed by an e-mail (cf. Annexure L). Four students per level were invited, but one fourth-year student later returned a call and was also included. These students were also invited to attend a meeting during which the self-coaching programme would be discussed in detail with myself and my supervisor. The programme was provided to all the participants by e-mail in a PDF format. After an inquiry, I realised that the students who also had to follow up on Internet references found it difficult to access these addresses and forwarded a Word copy to all the students.

Specialists were requested to read through the programme and give written feedback. Questions provided to guide their feedback will be discussed under Step 3. Students on level one were requested to work through Conversations 1 and 2; students on level two focused on Conversations 3 and 4; students on level three had to comment on Conversations 5 and 6, while students on level four were asked to provide feedback on Conversations 7 and 8. Students were asked specific questions (cf. Step 3).

I received written feedback from four of the five specialists. The ODL specialist went overseas for a period of time and could not assist with the pilot test. I received written feedback from eight students (four from fourth level; two from third level and one each

from second and first level). The discussion meeting was attended by ten students (five on level four; two on level three; two on level two and one of level one). It seemed that students who were part of the study journey for longer, were more motivated to contribute to the support programme.

➤ **Phase 4, Step 3: Applying design criteria to the preliminary intervention concept**

Specialists responded to the support programme based on the following questions: “What in the programme works well?”; “Why does it work well?”; “What in the programme does not work well?” and “Why does it not work well?”

They were also asked for any suggestions on how the support programme could be improved (cf. Annexure K). I decided to formulate the questions in this way, as it represents typical questions asked within the appreciative inquiry approach.

Students were asked to estimate how long it had taken them to work through the conversations allocated to them; to reflect on whether the support programme reached its goals; whether instructions given for activities to be completed were clear; whether activities were meaningful and whether students who had enrolled for social work as an elective in another qualification only could also benefit from this programme.

Feedback received from the specialists and the students as well as adjustments made to the programme based on the feedback are discussed in Chapter 6, paragraph 6.3.

This section describes how the IDD model has been used with a qualitative approach to systematically design an online support programme for social work students within an ODL context.

2.4 RESEARCH ETHICS IN THIS STUDY

In the literature on IDD that was consulted no mention was made of anything related to ethics. However, ethical considerations applicable to qualitative research were included, as planned in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.3.

In qualitative research, a researcher may face ethical dilemmas related to data collection and analysis as well as dissemination of findings (Creswell, 2007:141). Issues related to data collection include informed consent, protecting participants from harm and upholding the participants' right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of data.

Yin (2011:41) uses the term “research integrity” to state that the researcher’s “word/s can be trusted as truthful positions and statements”. A researcher shows research integrity when he/she clarifies the point of view being represented and shares possible reservations or uncertainties related to the study. This can be obtained by disclosing as much as possible about the methodological conditions of the study, and the researcher’s personal profile and interests. Research integrity can also be maintained by obtaining the necessary approval from the institutional review board and by conducting an honest informed consent dialogue with participants (Yin, 2011:41-47). In my proposal I planned to apply the ethical considerations of informed consent, protection from harm to participants and the right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of data (cf. Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.3).

2.4.1 Informed consent

As I mentioned in the discussion of Phase 1, Step 2, I did gain easy access to the students and newly employed social workers due to my position as a lecturer within the Department of Social Work at UNISA. As such, my research could be described as a form of “insider research” (Yin, 2011:42).

However, I tried my best to follow the ethical requirements by presenting social work students, and recently graduated and employed social workers with a written invitation to participate, explaining the nature and purpose of the study, the criteria for inclusion, a description of what participation involved and what topics would be discussed, permission to record the groups and interviews, a statement that participation is voluntary and could be terminated at any time, a guarantee that all participants would remain confidential and anonymous as well as the details of the researcher and other individuals who could be contacted if there were any questions (cf. Annexures B and C).

Participants willing to participate in the study were requested to sign a consent form (cf. Annexures D and E). Persons who were involved in rendering support services to social

work students at UNISA, UP and TUT as well as HoDs of social work departments were provided with an invitation to participate with information on the research, a consent form and topics which could be discussed during the interview (cf. Annexure J).

I brought up my double role as lecturer and researcher during the informed consent discussion with students and assured them that they will not be penalised or privileged in any way for being involved in the study or for deciding to withdraw at any stage. Third-level students who agreed to participate in one of the focus groups had to hand in portfolios the next day. After a discussion, in which I assured them that they could decide not to participate in the research, they decided to go ahead.

2.4.2 Protect participants from harm

In the exploration of the support needs of social work students, and the views of recently graduated and employed social workers, I ensured that data was collected in a comfortable and safe environment where confidentiality and privacy were honoured. The focus groups and face-to-face interviews were arranged at times and locations that minimised disruption of the participants' daily activities. The questions in the interview guides were formulated in a non-judgemental manner.

Participants were offered that debriefing or counselling to be arranged if they felt a need for that, should they share any information which upset them. This was, however, not necessary. Some of the students wanted to know whether they would still benefit personally from the intervention to be developed. This was unlikely, but I explained that they would have contributed to a support programme which would hopefully contribute towards the development of social work students following in their footsteps.

Appointments were made with support specialists at times convenient to them and the researcher visited them in their work environments; thus, minimising any inconvenience to them.

2.4.3 Right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of data

As a social worker, I am registered at the South African Council for Social Service Professions in accordance with Act No. 110 of 1978 and thus held to a professional code of ethics. During the study I respected the participants' right to decide which information to share or not to share. They could leave the focus groups or face-to-face interviews at any time and decide not to answer certain questions. Data was stored in a cupboard at my home, to which only I had access.

The recorded interviews, when transcribed, were coded to disguise any identifying information. I used the abbreviations FG1-9 for the focus groups and I1-5 for the interviews. During the informed consent discussion I made participants aware that the transcripts, without any identifying information, would be made available to the independent coder and the researcher's supervisor with the purpose of assisting and guiding the researcher with the research endeavour. The recordings and transcripts will be kept in a safe place for three years after which it will be destroyed.

2.4.4 Other ethical aspects

Additional information related to ethics in this study includes that the proposal was subjected to the scrutiny and approval of the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work. Such committees serve an important function in upholding ethical standards of research (Strydom 2011:126-127).

It is also ethical to give credit for contributions to the research (Strydom, 2011:128). This was done by providing detailed descriptions of different people who contributed (cf. Phase 2, Step 2 and 3 in Chapter 2, paragraph 2.3.3.1).

In the letter inviting students and social workers to participate in the study, I invited potential participants to contact me should they want feedback on the outcome of the research and I would provide them with a copy of the research report. This contributed to transparency within the study (Yin, 2011:19-20).

2.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is ethical to mention shortcomings or limitations of a study clearly in a report. Should the report be consulted by future researchers, they would avoid repeating things like errors in procedures, questionnaires and understanding (Strydom, 2011:126). This contributes to what Yin refers to as “research integrity”.

In an effort to live up to the ideal of research integrity, as presented by Yin (2011:41), the researcher has to acknowledge reservations he/she has about the research.

The goal of the research was to develop a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context. To achieve this goal, I used the Intervention Design and Development model of Rothman and Thomas (1994). The use of this research design is very time-consuming and labour intensive (Whittaker, Tracy, Overstreet, Moorandian & Kapp, 1994:208). Due to time limitations and the fact that the intervention programme will be implemented over a period of four years in the future, I was unable to evaluate and redesign the intervention based on the evaluation data.

Practical procedures had to be followed e.g., obtaining permission to implement the support programme in the Department of Social Work at UNISA. This also made the utilisation of all the steps of the IDD model impossible. Although it is a concern that all the steps in the IDD model were not followed, Fraser et al. (2009:26) state that all the purposes set out in this model cannot be achieved in a single study and that a series of studies, each with a different research design, is needed.

Although the nature of qualitative research permits an in-depth understanding of smaller samples (Royse, 2004:237), I also have reservations about gathering data from only the population of social work students studying in the Pretoria area, and only newly qualified and employed social workers working in the Pretoria area at the time of the study. Although the population may have been limited, I feel confident about data saturation taking place after nine focus groups of students and five face-to-face interviews with social workers.

Qualitative research tries to understand people, groups and organisations within the full context within which they act (Monette, et al., 2011:432). During the period from the start of the study to date, many contextual changes have taken place within UNISA as an institution and the Department of Social Work; e.g., a new registration system, online marking and e-tutoring were implemented. These aspects were not covered in the focus groups as they were not yet implemented. Support services within UNISA are also changing rapidly; for example, the Directorate: Student Social Development did not exist when the focus groups and interviews were conducted. There was also a significant change in staff within the Department of Social Work. Few members who were employed in the department when the study started, remained and the staff contingent is now much larger. These factors may actually make implementing the programme within the department more feasible than previously.

A corner stone of the IDD model is the analysis of how successful or not previous programmes were in addressing the identified problem (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:32). I could only find one example of a life coaching programme for supervision of social work students. However, no evidence could be found that this programme had been implemented.

I had to look for functional elements from a variety of sources, such as literature, institutional support services, support provided to social work students studying at residential facilities and the existing curriculum of the Department of Social Work. This made the conversion of functional elements into an intervention more difficult, especially to build an underlying rationale for change and to identify the focus of change.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In Chapter 2, I gave a thick description of the application of the qualitative research methodology used within this study. The unique application of the Intervention Design and Development model of Rothman and Thomas (1994) as adapted in the development of a life coaching programme for social work students was described.

Tesch's steps (in Creswell, 2009:186) were used to analyse the data systematically and data was verified by integrating Guba's model (in Krefting, 1991:214-222) with Yin's

(2011:19-20) three objectives for building trustworthiness and credibility. I also explained the ethical issues, informed consent, protection of participants from harm, right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of data and other ethical aspects, considered during the study as well as the limitations of the study.

In Chapter 3, the themes identified during data analysis on the journey of social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution will be related.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE JOURNEY OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS WITHIN UNISA AS AN ODL INSTITUTION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 an overview has been given of the background and rationale of the study, its goals and objectives, the research design and methodology, ethical considerations and clarification of concepts. Chapter 2 contains a detailed discussion of the Intervention Design and Development (IDD) model as well as how it was applied during the research study. The findings of the study are described in Chapter 3 (Research findings on the journey of social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution) and Chapter 4 (Research findings on the attributes of a good social worker and a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context).

The findings related to the journey of social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution are presented in a table with themes, sub-themes, categories and sub-categories, followed by a discussion with relevant storylines and literature control.

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3.2 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS AND SOCIAL WORKERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THIS STUDY

Data was gathered from a total of 71 participants who formed two samples. The first sample consisted of social work students representing each study level and who were interviewed in focus groups. The second sample consisted of five newly employed social workers who completed their studies at UNISA at the end of 2009 or January 2010 and were interviewed individually.

The biographical data of the social work students will be summarised in Table 3.1 and that of the social workers will be represented in Table 3.2.



Table 3.1 A summary of the biographical data of social work students who participated in the study (Total number of participants: 71)

Level one: focus groups		Level two: focus groups		Level three: focus groups		Level four: focus groups	
2		2		2		3	
Number of participants		Number of participants		Number of participants		Number of participants	
18		17		19		17	
Gender							
Male: 12				Female: 59			
Age of participants							
20-25 yrs	26-30 yrs	31-35 yrs	36-40 yrs	41-45 yrs	46-50 yrs		
28	11	8	14	8	2		
Family commitments							
Yes: 56 (parents, children and siblings)				No: 15			
Employment							
Full-time: 25		Part-time: 7			None: 39		
Place of residence when studying and not studying							
Residing in Gauteng when studying and not studying	Residing elsewhere when studying and not studying	Residing in Gauteng when studying and elsewhere when not studying			Non-applicable answer		
39	5	21			6		
Other studies completed							
Yes: 30 (social auxiliary work, lay counselling, nursing auxiliary, secretarial course, computer courses, pre-diploma in Performing Arts, Theology, BA(Hons) (Psychology), diploma in Education, management, diploma in Child and Youth Development, BA (Psychology/Criminology/Sociology), ABET, diploma in small business and computer skills, commercial catering, certificate in Human Resource Management, MA (Sociology) and Tourism.						No: 41	

Financial resources						
Own income	Parents or family	Spouse	NFSAS or loan	DSD or bursary	Employer	None noted
22	15	5	21	2	1	5

From the biographical information of the participants the majority were female which corresponds with the fact that social work in South Africa is a female dominated profession (Earle, 2008:46). Most of the participants were in the age group 20-25 (39%), followed by the age group 36-40 (20%). Most of the participants (55%) did not work, while a smaller number (35%) worked full-time and the least (10%) part-time. For all the groups, those who resided in Gauteng when studying and not studying were highest. Except for the second level groups, all participants reported high on family commitments. In total almost the same percentage of participants (31%) depended on their own income for study purposes, as those who used a study loan; e.g., NFSAS (30%). From Chapter 1, paragraph 1.1.2.1 it was clear that various factors could play a role in the throughput of students and challenges experienced by students, such as age, financial circumstances and family commitments. Therefore, it seems that this sample would contribute to a rich description of the needs of social work students studying within an ODL context.

Table 3.2 A summary of the biographical data of newly employed social workers who have participated in the study (Total number of participants: 5)

Gender					
Male: 0			Female: 5		
Age of participants					
20-25 yrs	26-30 yrs	31-35 yrs	36-40 yrs	41-45 yrs	46-50 yrs
0	0	2	1	1	1
Year of completion of studies					
End of 2009			Beginning 2010		
3			2		
Employers					
CMR (1), Catholic Women’s League (2), FAMSA (1), National Youth Outreach (1)					
Other studies completed					
Yes: 4 (PhD [Sociology], Office Administration Diploma, Marketing and Business Management, Security Certificate, BA (Welfare Science))				No: 1	

All the newly employed social workers who participated in the study were female, while their ages were almost equally distributed between the categories 31-35 years, 36-40 years, 41-45 years and 46-50 years. Three participants completed their studies at the end of 2009 and two at the beginning of 2010. All of the participants worked at NGOs, namely CMR, Catholic Women's League, FAMSA and National Youth Outreach. Four participants completed other studies which included a PhD (Sociology), Office Administration Diploma, Marketing and Business Management, Security Certificate, BA (Welfare Science).

In the discussion of the findings the views of social work students and those of newly employed social workers were discussed together, as in both the focus of the questions were on the unsatisfied needs and possible satisfiers for these needs experienced by social work students studying within an ODL context.

3.3 FINDINGS ON THE JOURNEY OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS WITHIN UNISA AS AN ODL INSTITUTION

Data was analysed based on the framework of Tesch (in Creswell, 2009:186) by both the researcher and the independent coder. After a discussion between the researcher, the coder and supervisor, a final table of themes and sub-themes were drawn up. The findings relating to the journey of social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution will be summarised in a table (Table 3.3) with the themes and sub-themes below, while a table of attributes of a good social worker and suggestions on how these attributes can be developed as well as suggestions on the life coaching programme will be presented in Chapter 4.

Table 3.3 Findings on the journey of social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution

THEME 1: SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS PROVIDED VARIOUS MOTIVATIONS FOR STUDYING SOCIAL WORK AND STUDYING AT UNISA AS AN ODL INSTITUTION

Sub-theme	Category
1.1 Social work students' motivation for studying social work	1.1.1 Social work students were passionate about helping people.
	1.1.2 Positive and negative past experiences motivated social work students to study social work.
	1.1.3 Volunteering or their work situation motivated social work students to study social work.
	1.1.4 Social work was considered an easy course.
	1.1.5 They were influenced by other social workers.

	1.1.6 Other motivations for studying social work
1.2 Social work students' motivation for studying at UNISA as an ODL institution	1.2.1 Social work students were employed.
	1.2.2 Social work students were older than most students at residential universities doing first degrees.
	1.2.3 UNISA was more affordable than other universities.
	1.2.4 Social work students had applied too late at other institutions.
	1.2.5 Social work students' applications at other institutions were unsuccessful.

THEME 2: SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS EXPERIENCED UNSATISFIED NEEDS RELATED TO THEIR ACADEMIC, PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN UNISA AS AN ODL INSTITUTION

Sub-theme 2.1: Social work students experienced unsatisfied needs related to their academic development

Category	Sub-category
2.1.1 Social work students' unsatisfied subsistence needs related to their academic development	2.1.1.1 Social work students did not have affordable and safe housing.
	2.1.1.2 Social work students did not have adequate finances to cover their study expenses.
2.1.2 Social work students' unsatisfied understanding needs related to their academic development	2.1.2.1 Social work students experienced a lack of career guidance and assistance in choosing the correct modules.
	2.1.2.2 Social work students identified a lack of selection procedures for social work students.
	2.1.2.3 Social work students experienced

	problems with study material.
	2.1.2.4 Social work students experienced a lack of computer, writing and studying skills.
	2.1.2.5 Social work students experienced a lack of clear communication within UNISA.
	2.1.2.6 Social work students identified a lack of sufficient facilities.
	2.1.2.7 Social work students experienced problems with lecturers.
	2.1.2.8 Social work students experienced a lack of access to books.
	2.1.2.9 Social work students experienced an inability to manage their workload.
	2.1.2.10 Social work students experienced needs regarding graduation and employment.
2.1.3 Social work students' unsatisfied identity needs related to their academic development	
2.1.4 Social work students' unsatisfied protection needs related to their academic development	
2.1.5 Social work students' unsatisfied affection (relationship) needs related to their academic development	
2.1.6 Social work students' unsatisfied idleness/leisure needs related to their academic development	
2.1.7 Social work students' unsatisfied freedom needs related to their academic development	

Sub-theme 2.2: Social work students experienced unsatisfied needs related to their professional development

Category	Sub-category
2.2.1 Social work students' unsatisfied subsistence needs related to their professional development	
2.2.2 Social work students' unsatisfied understanding needs related to their professional development	2.2.2.1 Social work students' lack of a driver's licence hampered their professional development.
	2.2.2.2 Social work students experienced an inability to write reports according to the requirements of the placement organisations.
	2.2.2.3 Social work students wanted to use their time effectively during workshops.
	2.2.2.4 Social work students experienced a lack of understanding of cultural differences.
	2.2.2.5 Social work students experienced supervisors and facilitators as unapproachable.
2.2.3 Social work students' unsatisfied identity needs related to their professional development	2.2.3.1 Social work students experienced a lack of clarity on the role of the social worker within the community.
	2.2.3.2 Social work students identified a lack of social workers as positive role models.
2.2.4 Social work students' unsatisfied participation needs related to their professional development	
2.2.5 Social work students' unsatisfied protection needs related to their professional development	
2.2.6 Social work students' unsatisfied transcendence needs related to their professional development	

Sub-theme 2.3: Social work students experienced unsatisfied needs related to their personal development

Category	Sub-category
2.3.1 Social work students' unsatisfied identity needs related to their personal development	2.3.1.1 Social work students were unable to promote their own emotional well-being satisfactorily.
	2.3.1.2 Social work students experienced an inability to deal with failure.

THEME 3: SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND SUGGESTIONS OF SATISFIERS OF THEIR NEEDS RELATED TO THEIR ACADEMIC, PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Sub-theme 3.1: Social work students' experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development

Category	Sub-category
3.1.1 Social work students' experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development within themselves	3.1.1.1 Social work students experienced self-knowledge as a satisfier for their needs.
	3.1.1.2 Social work students experienced time management and reflection skills as satisfiers of their needs.
	3.1.1.3 Social work students experienced positive attitudes as satisfiers of their needs.
	3.1.1.4 Social work students experienced the setting of goals as a satisfier of their needs.
3.1.2 Social work students' experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development within UNISA as a	3.1.2.1 Social work students experienced the library as a satisfier of their needs.

whole	
	3.1.2.2 Social work students experienced <i>myUnisa</i> as a satisfier of their needs.
	3.1.2.3 Social work students experienced tutor classes as satisfiers of their needs.
3.1.3 Social work students' experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development within the Department of Social Work of UNISA	3.1.3.1 Social work students experienced lecturers as satisfiers of their needs.
	3.1.3.2 Social work students experienced workshops as satisfiers of their needs.
	3.1.3.3 Social work students experienced supervisors/facilitators as satisfiers of their needs.
	3.1.3.4 Social work students experienced Bright Site as a satisfier of their needs.
3.1.4 Social work students' experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development within the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development of UNISA (DCCD)	3.1.4.1 Social work students experienced career guidance as a satisfier of their needs.
	3.1.4.2 Social work students experienced counselling as a satisfier of their needs.
	3.1.4.3 Social work students experienced workshops presented by the DCCD as satisfiers of their needs.
3.1.5 Social work students' experiences of other satisfiers of their needs related to their	3.1.5.1 Social work students experienced financial resources as satisfiers of their needs.

academic, professional and personal development	
	3.1.5.2 Social work students experienced support from family and friends as satisfiers of their needs.
	3.1.5.3 Social work students experienced peer support as a satisfier of their needs.

Sub-theme 3.2: Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development

Category	Sub-category
3.2.1 Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to academic development within UNISA as a whole	3.2.1.1 Social work students suggested satisfiers of their academic needs during the initial enquiries and the choice of the institution.
	3.2.1.2 Social work students suggested satisfiers of their academic needs during the pre-registration and registration.
	3.2.1.3 Social work students suggested satisfiers of their academic needs during the tuition and assessment phases.
3.2.2 Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development within the Department of Social Work of UNISA	
3.2.3 Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development within the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development of UNISA	

Sub-theme 3.3: Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their professional development

Category	Sub-category
3.3.1 Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their professional development within the Department of Social Work of UNISA	3.3.1.1 Social work students suggested that they be exposed to a wider spectrum of theoretical approaches and not only to PCA.
	3.3.1.2 Social work students suggested that a module on statutory work be included in the curriculum.
	3.3.1.3 Social work students suggested that a module on ethics be included in the curriculum.
	3.3.1.4 Social work students suggested students should be taught to write reports according to practice guidelines.
	3.3.1.5 Social work students suggested that they be exposed to practical work earlier in the course.
	3.3.1.6 Social work students suggested that they visit welfare organisations and do volunteer work.
3.3.2 Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their professional development provided by other people	

Sub-theme 3.4: Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their personal development

Category
3.4.1 Social work students suggested that counselling serve as a satisfier of their needs related to their personal development.
3.4.2 Social work students suggested that debriefing serve as a satisfier of their needs related to their professional development.

In the next section these themes will be supported by storylines from the focus groups of social work students and the interviews with newly employed social workers. The researcher will refer to appropriate literature to serve as literature control. She was unable to locate international studies with a focus on the specific academic, professional and personal needs of social work students within an ODL context. The departmental librarian conducted a literature search for books, e-books, articles in subject databases, e-theses and dissertations as well as e-newspapers. The results covered mostly comparisons between the demographics and academic performance of on-campus and off-campus social work students as well as the use of technology within distance education of social work (e.g. Bender, 2012; Oliaro & Trotter, 2010:329-344; Petracchi, 2000:362-376; Swenson, 2012). Therefore, the literature control in this chapter refers to research done in South Africa and specifically Unisa.

3.3.1 Discussion of themes

Five themes were identified by both the researcher and the independent coder, namely:

Theme 1: Social work students provided various motivations for studying social work and studying at UNISA as an ODL institution.

Theme 2: Social work students experienced unsatisfied needs related to their academic, professional and personal development within UNISA as an ODL institution.

Theme 3: Social work students' experiences and suggestions of satisfiers for their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development.

Theme 4: Social work students' perspectives on the attributes of a good social worker and suggestions as to how these could be developed in students.

Theme 5: Social work students made and implied various suggestions for a life coaching programme.

Themes 1, 2 and 3 will be discussed in this chapter, and themes 4 and 5 will be explored in more depth in Chapter 4.

THEME 1: SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS PROVIDED VARIOUS MOTIVATIONS FOR STUDYING SOCIAL WORK AND STUDYING AT UNISA AS AN ODL INSTITUTION

This theme was divided into two sub-themes, namely (a) motivations for studying social work and (b) motivations for studying at UNISA. Both students and recently qualified social workers were asked what motivated them to study social work. Although motivations for studying at UNISA were not asked in the interview guide, both students and recently employed social workers provided reasons. For many participants, UNISA was the first choice as tertiary education institution. For others UNISA was a second, but not preferred choice.

No distinction was made between the answers of social work students and those of newly employed social workers, as the same themes were addressed. Because English is not the first language of most of the participants, some of the formulations in the storylines have been corrected using square brackets to indicate where a word or phrase should be left out, while round brackets indicated where a word or phrase was inserted.

Sub-theme 1.1: Social work students' motivation for studying social work

This sub-theme is divided into the following categories:

- Social work students were passionate about helping people.
- Positive and negative past experiences motivated social work students to study social work.
- Volunteering or their work situation motivated social work students to study social work.
- Social work was considered an easy course.
- They were influenced by other social workers.
- Other motivations for studying social work.

Category 1.1.1: Social work students were passionate about helping people

Hope and Timmel (2007:17) refer to Freire who makes a connection between emotion experienced and the motivation to act.

“It is my passion . . . I want to work with people who are vulnerable, have disability. I have the passion to assist.”

“The other thing, out there you are interacting with people, you are helping people somewhere, somehow . . . That is what motivated me to register (for) social work.”

“I chose (to) be a social worker, it is a calling. Something I am passionate doing.”

These storylines illustrate that social work students decide to study social work due to their **passion for people** and a **desire to help others**. These storylines are supported by Lintvelt’s (2008:101) finding that 63% of the participants in her study wanted to become social workers to make a difference in other people’s lives. Earle (2008:88-92), who interviewed social work students from the University of Stellenbosch and the University of Limpopo, also identified a “calling” to work with people and help them, as motivation for studying social work. Waterman (2013:10) agrees that altruism or the need to help other people is a motivation to enter the field of social work.

Category 1.1.2: Positive and negative past experiences motivated social work students to study social work

The following is the storyline of a participant who cited a **positive past experience**:

“I think I always loved to work with people. I was a confidant for most people in our area. Those people who have problems, they will come and disclose their problems [with] (to) me. And I will always make sure I treat them with confidentiality. I think for me it was a right choice.”

The following participants had **negative experiences** that motivated them to become social workers to help others:

“For me it was from my personal background. My parents were divorced when I was in matric but it had been long coming. We grew up in a very violent domestic [situation] (home). My father was always beating me and I remember one time I had to report my father to the social workers and they called him in for a joint interview and he lied and

they believed him and I thought what kind of people are these? So I thought let me go study social work and that was basically what motivated me.”

“The other thing that motivated me was the way that I grew up and what I experienced, there were other people that are [under age of me] (younger than I) and they are not supposed to experience it. Then maybe by interacting with the children from single parents and to hear their experiences, if they were in need of being placed in foster care or an orphanage, I can have an input in helping them in my career.”

A student from Oxford University (Social work personal statements. 2013) also indicated that he/she studied social work due to a negative experience: “I have chosen to study a social work degree as it is a passion of mine to work with young people and provide opportunities for them that weren’t there for me. I’ve always had the responsibility of putting other people before myself and being there for others, from the age of thirteen standing in for my mom was my duty – where other children my age had regular tasks of house cleaning and regular chores, I also had the task of looking after my younger brothers and being there for my younger relatives. . .”

Category 1.1.3: Volunteering or their work situations motivated social work students to study social work

Volunteering can be described as any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something to benefit someone or the environment (Volunteering England, 2013). People in related employment, such as social auxiliary workers, child care workers or teachers also work with individuals or groups experiencing difficulties.

“Now I am working as a social auxiliary worker. I want to work with people who are vulnerable, have disability. . .”

“With me it was my choice. In my church I was working with children as a Sunday school teacher. I enjoyed it. I also volunteered as a counsellor.”

“My beliefs, my passion. I think personally I did a lot of voluntary work and I am always involved in some part of something in the community. So that helped me to gain the self-esteem and to persevere for these years that I was wanting to finish.”

These views correspond with Earle's (2008:89) findings that direct involvement in community projects largely influence students to be interested in the social work profession. Another student from Oxford University (Social work personal statements, 2013) states: "Having spent the last four years working in the social care field, I have come to realise that my passion lies in helping people who are less advantaged. I am currently taking an access to a higher education course to further my ambition to be a social worker ..."

Category 1.1.4: Social work was considered an easy course

Excerpts from the interviews attest to this as follows:

"It is also [the] easiness of social work. You look at the subjects. You actually see where your requirements are. Social work do not want scientific, like maths, physical science. You can do it."

"It's a fact that many people go for social work because they hear it's an easy thing to do."

These participants were of the opinion that social work is an **easier course** to study than some of the other courses at UNISA. The study on fourth level social work students of UNISA done by Lintvelt (2008:101) revealed that 21% of participants were unsure what social work was about when they started the course and thought that it would be an easy course to do. Earle (2008:92) indicates that social work is a profession that does not require matric maths and science.

Category 1.1.5: Social work students were influenced by other social workers

This experience was voiced as follows:

"My grandmother was a social worker. She was the only person who motivated me to do it."

Findings from Earle's study (2008:90) support the above storyline in that suggestions and inspirations of parents and grandparents of students involved in her study did influence their choice to study social work.

“I started doing volunteer work at Meals On Wheels and then I met Professor V who was still at the Department at the time and we had a chat and he said to me with my background, why don’t I just come and do social work and I was at that stage looking at an alternative career anyway because H was at school and I had time on my hands. So I said ok and I went and I did social work.”

“It wasn’t my choice. I didn’t have an idea what to do, at high school there was no career counselling. I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t have a choice. I will do social work as my sister’s friend is a social worker. At least I made love with it now.”

According to Waterman (2013:9), social work is a tangible career like teaching or being a fireman. Children observe social workers and learn about the profession in the same way they could come into contact with any other profession.

Category 1.1.6: Other motivations for studying social work

Other motivations can be inferred from the following quotes:

“I experienced a difficulty when choosing my career path, social work was not my goal. I saw myself to be a lawyer. When I look back two years I can call it fate. I choose it by [accident] (force), but I love it.”

“Social work was not my choice. I wanted to do teaching at UP, they didn’t have space, so I came to UNISA.”

“For me initially it was very difficult. I graduated BA in Psychology. And I was afraid to do social work because of lot of work I see social work students do. At a later stage I see without specialisation it is very difficult for me to grow, so I came back and register social work.”

Some participants were **unsure** of what to study or wanted to study something else and eventually ended up doing social work. These motivations to study social work were similar to those provided to Lintvelt (2008:102): Six percent of her participants indicated that they actually wanted to study something else and ended up studying social work.

Other reasons not discussed above but which were identified by Earle (2008:88) referring to students' choices to study social work, are career guidance, using the degree as a stepping stone to a career outside of social work as well the status, employment opportunities and working conditions of social workers.

Sub-theme 1.2: Social work students' motivation for studying at UNISA as an ODL institution

This sub-theme is divided into the following categories:

- Social work students were employed.
- Social work students were older than most students at residential universities doing first degrees.
- UNISA was more affordable than other universities.
- Social work students had applied too late at other institutions.
- Social work students' applications at other institutions were unsuccessful.

Category 1.2.1: Social work students were employed

Quite a large number of the students who participated in the focus groups (35%) worked full-time, while a smaller number (10%) worked part-time. The following storylines come from three different focus groups:

"UNISA was my first choice. If I attend UNISA it is [a] distance learning, like I can go to work and [in the] afternoon I can read. It was not difficult to choose this university."

"I find UNISA very important to study. At UNISA, as I am working I can get time to attend regularly, I can write my assignments, and read."

"For me it wasn't a difficult journey to study with UNISA. It is [a] distance learning and I am working full time. It is convenient."

These storylines are supported by Alpaslan (2012:14) who states that one of the motivations of students to choose UNISA as a study institution is that UNISA provides the working person with an opportunity for study. Students often have to work during the day and can only study after hours (About Unisa, 2013).

Category 1.2.2: Social work students were older than most students at residential universities doing first degrees

A large number of social work students who participated in the focus groups were more mature (45% fell in the category of 31-50 years).

“Because of the age, I am old [I study with UNISA]. My age is just a bit above, I have been from matric a long time ago.”

“I came to UNISA [after] 14 years after completing my matric.”

“I started in 2001 and then broke up in 2004 and then I finished in 2009.”

Students sometimes interrupt their studies. Alpaslan (2012:14) states that one of the motivations of students to choose UNISA as a study institution is that UNISA caters for mature students. The UNISA HEMIS statistics of 2009 (Subotzky, 2010) indicated that 49.6% of students were older than 30 years.

Category 1.2.3: UNISA was more affordable than other universities

Students can access **financial assistance** at UNISA and **the fees** at UNISA are not as high as at some of the residential institutions, as is demonstrated by the following excerpts from the participants:

“I wanted to go to Tukkies. UNISA was my second choice. Unfortunately due to finances I could not go there. UNISA was the one that was suitable to my pocket.”

“UNISA empowers its students . . . There is no limit of how you have passed your matric, but NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme) is there, to help you to reach your goal.”

“Coming to Unisa it was my choice. The fees are cheap. I know my parents will afford the fees if I don’t get NSFAS.”

Alpaslan (2012:15) also indicates students study through Unisa because it is seen as an affordable tertiary institution, especially by large numbers of students coming straight

from school. The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) is a body funded by the National Department of Education (NDE) which provides study loans to students who want to study at South African institutions of higher education, but can't afford it (Directorate of Student Funding, 2013). Although students can apply for a NSFAS loan at any university, access to NSFAS seems to motivate students to study through UNISA.

Category 1.2.4: Social work students had applied too late at other institutions

Students revealed that they were **too late** to apply at other institutions:

"It was my last choice. In matric I applied for journalism, but I was not interested in it. I was too late to register somewhere else. I had no choice. I had a different perspective about UNISA. I didn't want to come here."

"For me it was a matter of having no other choice. I was supposed to be in varsity in 2007, 2008. Back home most of the lecturers at home went on strike. I had to come here. Most of the universities already closed their registration. I was only left with UNISA. It was my last option."

Being too late for registration at other universities is mentioned by Lintvelt (2008:73). Of the participants in her study, 12% felt that UNISA was their only option due to the fact that they didn't qualify for other universities, applied too late at other universities or that UNISA was the only institution offering the Social Work course as part of distance learning.

Category 1.2.5: Social work students' applications at other institutions were unsuccessful

Students often apply at UNISA after they were **unsuccessful** at other institutions. This can be illustrated by the following statements from participants:

I wanted to do teaching at UP, they didn't have space, so I came to UNISA. I didn't know what UNISA is all about. I was so stressed with long distance learning."

"I went to WITS first and social work was my choice, but there were those selection tests and I failed. Then I chose UNISA."

These storylines are supported by Alpaslan (2012:15) who states that UNISA provided access to tertiary education to students who would otherwise not meet the prerequisite entry requirements at other universities. Also see the reference to Lintvelt (2008:73) under the previous category.

Discussion of Theme 1

It seems that some participants chose social work because they were passionate to assist people. Some identified past experiences (positive and negative), voluntary work, influence from others and seeing social work as an easy course as reasons for their career choice. Other participants were unsure of what to study or wanted to study something else and eventually ended up doing social work. A few students did not take responsibility for their choice and felt they had somehow landed in social work accidentally.

UNISA was the first choice of learning institution for most of the participants. They chose UNISA as an ODL institution due to the fact that residential universities were too far away; they were working; they were already more mature or found UNISA to be more affordable. Some students felt compelled to study at UNISA because they applied too late at other institutions, were not selected or could not afford the fees at other universities.

The socio-critical model for explaining, predicting and enhancing student success written by Subotzky and Prinsloo (2011:177-193), as described in Chapter 1, refers to students and UNISA as a learning institution, as “situated agents”. “Situated” implies that the attributes and behaviours of the students and learning institution are shaped by the structural conditions of their historical, geographical, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds as well as circumstances, while “agents” indicates that both enjoy relative freedom to develop, grow and transform their attributes to achieve success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:184).

From these findings it seems that students’ choice of social work as a study discipline and UNISA as an ODL institution is influenced by their historical, geographical, social-economic and cultural backgrounds and circumstances. Although social work and UNISA were not the first choice for all social work students, it seems that most students are now happy with their choices. This fit, however, was not always intentional. To achieve success

it is essential that the student “fits” with his/her choice of a career and place of study (Kumar, 2007:108; Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:177-193).

THEME 2: SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS EXPERIENCED UNSATISFIED NEEDS RELATED TO THEIR ACADEMIC, PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN UNISA AS AN ODL INSTITUTION

The findings of this theme emerged from the discussion of social work students’ experiences related to their “student walk” within UNISA were arranged, using the fundamental human needs from Max-Neef’s taxonomy of fundamental human needs or poverties. Needs, as described by Max-Neef (n.d.:201), should not only be seen as deprivation, but it should also be recognised that needs engage, motivate and mobilise people. Therefore, a need for participation is, for example, a potential need for participation.

These unsatisfied needs were organised according to the students’ academic, professional and personal development, as these categories of needs were identified in the work done by Lintvelt (2008) and Lawlor (2008). It also forms the basic categories of student support (Mashiapata, 2010a; Kumar, 2007). Therefore, the findings of this section are described according to three sub-themes, namely:

- Social work students experienced unsatisfied needs related to their academic development.
- Social work students experienced unsatisfied needs related to their professional development.
- Social work students experienced unsatisfied needs related to their personal development.

Sub-theme 2.1: Social work students experienced unsatisfied needs related to their academic development

Within the context of this study, academic development refers to growth related to all aspects of the students’ study experiences, including literacy, study skills and resources necessary to facilitate their studies, such as a place to stay when studying, books and access to lecturers. This sub-theme is divided into seven categories (cf. Table 3.3, Chapter 3).

Category 2.1.1: Social work students' unsatisfied subsistence needs related to their academic development

Max-Neef (n.d.:2006) identifies subsistence needs as needs for health, adaptability, food, shelter, work and a social setting. Within this section, subsistence needs would refer to the students' need for shelter, food and an adequate income to provide for these needs and study expenses.

This category is divided into two sub-categories:

- Social work students did not have affordable and safe housing.
- Social work students did not have adequate finances to cover their study expenses.

Sub-category 2.1.1.1 Social work students did not have affordable and safe housing

Most of the students (55%) who participated in the study resided in Gauteng when studying and not studying, while fewer students resided in Gauteng when studying and elsewhere when not studying (39%). The following storylines illustrate the students' need for affordable housing:

“Sometimes you find that you are paying rent and the next day the agent comes to lock the flat because the flat owner didn't pay the rent . . . The electricity is very, very expensive. It is very difficult if you stay in Sunnyside.”

“They are living with eight other people in a flat; things like that and all of that impacts literally.”

Many of the students interviewed stayed in Sunnyside, an overcrowded area in the inner-city of Pretoria. In a research study undertaken by Alpaslan (2010:144-163), it was found that students residing in Sunnyside were exposed to overcrowding, being victims or witnesses to crime, exposure to high rentals, exploitation by landlords and letting agencies. These students were also exposed to the realities of drugs, beggars, prostitution and street children. Students also travel from far to attend workshops which may extend over a few days.

“Even that one of subsistence. We have students coming from Mpumalanga they need [shelter] (a place) to stay, going home, coming here. When they come here they are tired.”

Lintvelt (2008:85) explains that living conditions can have a huge impact on the studies of a student. It determines what the study atmosphere is like, how much time there is for studying and how motivated the student is.

Sub-category 2.1.1.2 Social work students did not have adequate finances to cover their study expenses

From the biographical details of participants, we know that some students depend on their own sources of income, others on loans and still others on their parents but many do not have adequate finances, as illustrated in the following storylines:

“[Others, we](Some of us) live far from town. You need something from the library. You don’t have money. You have to travel. Those obstacles they hold you back.”

“Even walking to go to the main campus it is very strenuous. If you have your own transport, it is easy.” (implying that he/she lacks money for transport)

“I even struggle to get the money to come to the workshops. Just R50 to come this side. I have to borrow money from my neighbours. It is just like that.”

Students lacked money for transport. In Lintvelt’s (2008:83) study quite a number of participants commented on there not being accommodation for students coming from afar. Students spend a lot of time travelling to the workshops and have to leave home early (one participant already leaves at 02:45) and return home very late.

Participants also shared that they did not have the financial means to buy the necessary **study material** needed for their studies:

“I go to Van Schaik and I find out the book is a lot more than I have in my pocket.”

“We want our portfolio’s to be beautiful. It needs to be typed. For one page it is R10,00. Can’t I just write. But your portfolio is not professional, but you don’t have the money. We can’t even download pictures from the computer. When you give it to a facilitator, they think maybe you are lazy. We want to do it, but we can’t afford [really them] (it).”

“For one page to be typed at the internet cafe cost you R8,00. What if you have to type 40 pages for an assignment? It cost you a lot, especially research.”

From the UNISA 2011 Student Satisfaction Survey (Tustin, Visser & Goetz, 2011), it seemed that students were not satisfied with the financial support they received; i.e., bursaries provided by the Directorate of Student Funding (DSF), Eduloan and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

A lack of adequate funding can influence student success. Earle (2008:120) refers to a circular relationship between limited access to finances and academic success. Not only are students' chances of success limited, but they are also put under severe stress by formal financial sources, such as banks not to fail. According to Breier (2009), the major reason for students leaving university prematurely is finances – not having enough funds to pay for their studies.

Category 2.1.2: Social work students' unsatisfied understanding needs related to their academic development

Max-Neef (n.d.:206) refers to the need for understanding as a need for curiosity, literature, teachers, educational policies and settings of formative interaction. Applied to the context of open and distance learning, students' understanding needs refer to needs for information, study skills and support from lecturers or tutors.

This category was divided into ten sub-categories (cf. Table 3.3, Chapter 3).

Sub-category 2.1.2.1 Social work students experienced a lack of career guidance and assistance in choosing the correct modules

The students voiced their concern in this regard as follows:

“When I was in high school there were people from different companies telling you . . . Most people going into Social Work [they don't know](didn't have information). Things like career guidance. It really helps.”

“In the first year when I saw how broad the field of social work is it was quite a shock for me . . . There is just so much the career can offer.”

Students wanted more information on **social work as a career** and also on choosing the **correct modules**:

“And registration, they must have information about registration. How long are you going to study for social work and the workshops you are going to do e.g. in the first year, second year there is no workshops, there are tutors.”

“We wish that some outline can be [made] (drawn) about the modules . . . To know this module can be aligned with this one. Which one is suitable for my career.”

These concerns correlate with findings of other studies within the Department of Social Work as well as the wider UNISA. Alpaslan (2012:21) found that students were dissatisfied with the lack of support during registration and receiving the wrong information on subject or module choices. Some students shared that they discovered in their fourth year that they did not have the necessary modules (Alpaslan, 2012:21). The 2011 UNISA Student Satisfaction Survey reported that students were dissatisfied with the efficiency of student advisors and the quality of curricula advice (Tustin, Visser & Goetz, 2011).

Sub-category 2.1.2.2 Social work students identified a lack of selection procedure for social work students

Most of the residential universities in South Africa have specific selection criteria to which social work students, wanting to enrol for the BSW degree, have to comply, such as a psychometric assessment, personal interview or a language test (Herbst, 2013; Nolte, 2013; Reyneke, 2013). This has not been the case with the Department of Social Work at UNISA, as UNISA promotes open access to learning.

“I think maybe there should be a selection process in social work because we are working with people’s lives. . .”

“. . . I feel strongly about getting rid of people who are not psychological compatible for this kind of work because they have destroyed too many lives.”

“I don’t like the idea of selecting, maybe not at first year, second year and third level, but definitely when it comes to fourth year . . . It becomes a profession and if you want your profession to hold up its head and say look at me, then surely you must in some way have a selection procedure?”

These students feel that selection of students will protect the well-being of clients and the integrity of the profession. A participant in Lintvelt’s (2008:74) study recommended that the numbers of students studying social work at UNISA should be limited to address “overcrowding”. Alpaslan (2012:30) quotes a student stating that capping of student numbers will ensure that academic standards at the Department of Social Work are not compromised.

Sub-category 2.1.2.3 Social work students experienced problems with study material

In the past, study material was handed to students during registration. For the last few years all material is mailed to students.

‘You don’t receive your study material. As a first year student you don’t know exactly what is going on.’

“Sometimes you [find that] (have an) assignment or exam next week and you receive a tutorial package this week. You have lot of pressure to manage until you write an exam or submit an assignment.”

“After you register, they do not give you your material. They should give it to us rather than send it [to the post].”

In the study done by Lintvelt (2008:73-75), 31% of the participants did not receive their study material in time or at all. Alpaslan (2012:21) refers to feedback of students complaining that they sometimes received tutorial letters after an assignment was due or an exam was written. However, from the 2011 Student Satisfaction Survey it seems that students were satisfied with the study guides received (Tustin, Visser & Goetz, 2011).

Sub-category 2.1.2.4 Social work students experienced a lack of computer, writing and studying skills

The following comments from social work students underscore the lack of these skills:

“Most of us are new to computers, even this year it is the first time we do computers and we are struggling. With self-help computers we will not know where to go. You will have to ask those ones (registration assistants) to help you to complete your registration, 'cause you can't.”

“There were computers but because we were not computer literate it was even more difficult for me.”

“Even in communication skills, learning how to talk and engage in level four when you start engaging. Other lecturers will be surprised and ask how did you reach [this far] (this level) if you don't even know how to spell or write simple English.”

The literature control confirms this lack of skills. In her conclusions, Lawlor (2008:104) draws attention to the poor quality of the report writing skills of fourth-level social work students as well as the low levels of English literacy evident in the completed questionnaires. Students who participated in her study also expressed a need for computer literacy. Earle (2008:135-139) indicates that poor language skills has an influence on social work education in South Africa, as the medium of instruction at universities is English as is that of textbooks, while English is the second or third language of most social work students.

Sub-category 2.1.2.5 Social work students experienced a lack of clear communication within UNISA

Students can communicate with representatives of the institution face-to-face, by phone, e-mail or myUnisa (my Studies@Unisa, 2012:65). At the time of data collection, UNISA still had a **call centre**, which was closed down shortly after. Some participants gave strong feedback about the call centre:

“And the phone. If you phone, they put you on hold. There has not been one time that I phoned and they helped you.”

“When they change, they must inform us. They said last year students have to do ten modules, this year they [alter] (change), we have to do eight modules, but we don't know . . . there is no one explaining to us.”

“When nobody listens. If you have a problem and nobody listens.”

Participants felt unhappy about the fact that communication between the students and the institution was sometimes **confusing**. They felt as if **nobody** at UNISA wanted to **hear** them.

Alpaslan (2012:22) also reports frustration from participants to communicate with the institution, although the focus was more on difficulties experienced with technology, such as struggling to get a *myUnisa* password or a difficulty to logon to *myUnisa* or *myLife*. Students complained against the closure of the call centre, with the result that they had received no response on queries (Alpaslan, 2012: 22). During the 2011 Student Satisfaction Survey “quality of service in handling of enquiries about studying at UNISA” was rated very low (Tustin, Visser & Goetz, 2011).

Sub-category 2.1.2.6 Social work students identified a lack of sufficient facilities

Facilities include computers, printers and venues. These different aspects of this need were highlighted by the students:

“So not everybody have access to computers.”

“Here at Sunnyside campus there must be some computers where we can access Internet on it. Even if you can use it for one hour per student. That intranet we just use it to chat with other the students on myUnisa, to check e-mail, that is not helpful. They must have other computers where we can access Internet.”

Although many students do have access to computers and the Internet, the opinion of the participants was that many students still don’t have enough access or that **access was too limited**.

“We can’t type and print. There are no printers. You either type or save or e-mail it.”

“If you have to print ten pages and you don’t have money, it is a problem. Maybe if you print 2 pages, it is 90c, it is ok. It depends on how many pages you have.”

Participants complained that students don't have the **funds or facility to print** out their work and that making photocopies is very expensive.

“Here at UNISA you have to come early in the morning. At seven to get space. Later it is crowded. You can't even hear yourself.”

“Even with supervision it is difficult to get a place to study. It is difficult to get a place to study as student social worker.”

A **need for venues** for studying and study groups, which includes venues to study in individually, as an informal study group and as an organised supervision group was identified.

These storylines correspond with the response of participants in Lintvelt's study (2008:74) who stated that there was not enough study space at the campus and in the library. Lintvelt (2008:129) stresses that many students study full-time and prefer to study at the campus, as there isn't always space at home. Alpaslan (2012:24) reports a lack of resources, especially at regional offices which include spaces, computer laboratory facilities, workshops and tutorial classes. One student who participated in this study stressed that the computer laboratory at Mthatha regional office is always full with students studying computer-related courses.

Sub-category 2.1.2.7 Social work students experienced problems with lecturers

Although the role of lecturers at an ODL institution differs from that of lecturers at a residential university, it is important that students have easy access to lecturers. In a study related to the role of lecturers at UNISA in on-line discussions, students voiced their expectation that lecturers should clarify difficult concepts, assist with assignments, provide general guidance, answer student questions and initiate online discussions (Van den Berg, 2009:5). Participants in this study shared their experiences in the following storylines:

“You have to understand they (the lecturers) are busy. They have their families. But they are here for us. You know they are busy. In your mind you have the idea they are here for me. I have to come first.”

“Sometimes you call the secretary to make an appointment with the lecturer. You find they are busy. You keep on trying and trying. Maybe they went to do a workshop at Cape Town or Durban. You are running out of time and you need to do this. You become angry. The anger is building up in you.”

Most participants felt that **lecturers were always busy** and did not really have time for them. Concerns about inaccessibility of lecturers are also reflected in the literature. Lintvelt (2008:79) asked participants to rate lecturers according to accessibility. From her sample, 43% of the participants rated accessibility as “good”, while 15% of participants wanted lecturers to be available to help them with problems concerning the course. Some participants felt that lecturers sometimes did not see students as important enough (Lintvelt, 2008:81). During the 2011 Satisfaction Survey students were not satisfied with the availability of their lecturers via telephone, myUnisa, e-mail or during office hours (Tustin, Visser & Goetz, 2011).

Students voiced their experience of receiving **feedback** from their lecturers:

“Maybe we submit the assignment at the same time, then somebody receive a feedback and I didn’t receive a feedback. I become angry. Then I ask myself: “Where is my feedback?”

“When coming to the Department of Social Work for our SCK’s, for now we don’t get anything. Beside “I wish you the best” at the end of the assignment.”

It seems that the students felt angry and disappointed. In the study done by Lintvelt (2008:79), feedback from lecturers was rated by 37% of the participants as “good”. The item “promptness of feedback on assignments” was rated below average during the 2011 Student Satisfaction Survey (Tustin, Visser & Goetz, 2011).

Sub-category 2.1.2.8 Social work students experienced a lack of access to books

The storylines below attest to this:

“You have to go to the library and if you are staying at Hammanskraal, it is too far to come to town. You don’t have money either to come to town. Some of the books you don’t [get it] (find) at some of the libraries especially at the community libraries.”

Participants felt that **libraries were not within reach** of students.

“Sometimes you come here at the library you find the books you are looking for are not available, they are very few and other students have already taken it. You have to write the assignment and there is not time.”

The perception exists that the libraries do not make provision for **enough literature**. One of the groups complained that the recommended books were not available for **a long enough period** to work on their assignments properly:

“After two hours we must bring the book back. They must use the same strategy as the main campus so that they can borrow us the book for a long time.”

Students’ discontent with the availability of books at UNISA is voiced through other studies as well. In the study done by Lintvelt (2008:77), 40% of the participants claimed that they had problems to get hold of their prescribed books. They focused on the availability of prescribed books in bookshops and not in the library. As far as library services were concerned, only 19% of participants were not positive. A few participants (8%) felt that the libraries did not make provision for enough books or that books were outdated. Alpaslan (2012:23) quotes students who have complained about not having adequate access to books, books which are outdated and libraries which are too far from where they stay.

Sub-category 2.1.2.9 Social work students experienced an inability to manage their workload

A large percentage of students who participated in this study (42%) were involved in either full-time or part-time work. Managing one’s workload while both working and studying can be difficult, especially if you are studying through an ODL institution.

“It makes me sad, when there is a lot of work and [you] (I) cannot manage. It frustrates [you] (me). Last night I didn’t sleep the whole night, I was doing this, thinking if this is right, counselling those. Over and over again. It gets frustrating.”

“What makes me angry, (is) (a) too [much] (heavy) workload. Many things are expected from us, I cannot cope sometimes. I become angry for (them) giving us too much work.”

“There is too much work. I don’t know how it can be reduced. There is an overload. You can’t do all three methods in one year, unless you want to kill yourself.”

Participants (79%) in Linvelt’s study (2008:74) indicated that their biggest concern was studying on their own and keeping up amidst all their responsibilities.

Sub-category 2.1.2.10 Social work students experienced needs regarding graduation and employment

The last stage of the journey of becoming a social worker is **graduation and employment**. Only the newly employed social workers could comment on this, as the social work students had not reached this stage yet.

“Having been placed here (at her place of employment) for my fourth year was great because I got to know everyone and then the employment opportunity came up for me, I continued working here, so that was very easy for me, I didn’t have to go out and look (for a job), which a lot of other social workers had to do.”

“. . . I knew I was accepted . . . When the results were out I had failed and I was having a supplementary . . . Then they said they will keep me but you know they were not willing for me to carry on but because there were no-one . . . Then she (supervisor) is the one who stood by me until the whole management understood that they can keep me.”

“. . . Some of them say that you don’t graduate if you don’t have a driver’s licence. I think it is nice to have it before you complete your studies.”

For one social worker her practical placement ended up in a job opportunity, while the other did obtain a job even though she had to do a supplementary exam. The third social worker stressed the importance of students obtaining a driver’s licence before completing their studies.

Employment of social work students is also addressed in other literature sources. Participants in Lintvelt's study (2008:107) were positive about the possibility of work in South Africa. They stated that there were many job opportunities, but realised that the salary of social workers was low. Although participants recognised the possibilities of job opportunities overseas, only 2% had made some enquiries about work overseas. In her study, Earle (2008:144) asked social work students from the University of Limpopo and the University of Stellenbosch about their career aspirations. While first-year students were not clear about it yet, fourth-year students generally had a good idea of the areas of practice in which they wanted to work.

Category 2.1.3 Social work students' unsatisfied identity needs related to their academic development

In the taxonomy of fundamental human needs, Max-Neef (n.d.:206) refers to the need for identity as a sense of belonging, self-esteem, habits, values and settings where one belongs. Within the context of studying within an ODL context it refers to how the students perceive themselves relating to their academic development.

What stood out clearly as an identity need of students was the participants' **need for balance between work and studies**. As mentioned under paragraph Chapter 3, paragraph 3.2, a large percentage of students who participated in this study (45%) were involved in either full-time or part-time work.

"You have so much responsibility at work. You feel out of touch, you feel as if you are almost losing your job. You feel caught up between the two worlds."

"At third level there were dates clashing. I said to myself if I had to choose between work and studies, I will choose work. It gave me peace. It took me out of the battle, I had to prioritise. You can't put it at the same level."

Working students, especially at the fourth level, found it difficult to fulfil the demands of work and studies. This created an inner conflict for students. Lintvelt's study (2008:91) indicates that 39% of the fourth-level participants in her study worked full-time, while 26% worked part-time.

Category 2.1.4 Social work students' unsatisfied protection needs related to their academic development

Max-Neef (n.d.:206) included care, insurance systems, social security, health systems and a living space in his description of protection needs. In the context of this study, protection needs refers to the students' needs to stay and travel in a safe environment when they are busy with their studies. This need also links with the students' need for subsistence.

"My flat is safe, but if I come to school and go back, that is when it is not safe. Especially close to the exam I go to school at night. (When) I go it is quite dangerous, there are thieves out there. Sunnyside is not safe."

"Now it is better, it is summer. In winter you have to find somebody to accompany to the buss. You will be hijacked."

". . .last year I had a laptop, but somebody stole it. Now I have nothing. It is not safe in the location, you can't travel with a laptop. That is why I need a job so that I can have a place to stay."

From these storylines it is clear that participants felt **threatened by the crime** in their environments.

These utterances on safety correspond with comments made by participants in Lintvelt's study (2008:87). All the participants in her study who stayed in cities were concerned about crime, compared to 58% of participants who stayed in towns and 33% who stayed in rural areas.

Category 2.1.5 Social work students' unsatisfied affection (relationship) needs related to their academic development

Within Max-Neef's (n.d.:206) taxonomy of needs, affection needs are described as tolerance, friendships, family, partnerships, intimacy and spaces of togetherness. In this study, "unsatisfied affection needs" refers to students' need to spend quality time with their family or loved one despite the demands of studying.

The following utterances refer to this need:

“I don’t spend enough time with my children. I want to pass, I want my degree. It is also for them. I cannot help it. I have to go through. But it does influence the relationships.”

“I felt bad. One weekend my family was planning a trip. They just decided to exclude me. They were packing and I said: ‘What about me?’ They said, ‘You are busy with your books.’ It was very hurtful. After they left I said, ‘I don’t miss them, at least I have my time.’”

“Even friends, girlfriends and boyfriends. Also boyfriends. They complain that we no longer see them.”

The workload of participants had a **negative influence on the time they could spend with their family, partners and friends.**

According to Lintvelt (2008:46), most of the participants in her study (75%) were involved with someone special and she concluded that students had to put in a lot of time and effort to build and maintain those relationships. This could become a problem if the partner is not positive about the studies.

Category 2.1.6 Social work students’ unsatisfied idleness/leisure needs related to their academic development

Max-Neef’s (n.d.:206) description of leisure includes curiosity, sensuality, games, parties, day-dream, fun, play and spaces of closeness. Relating to their academic development students’ need for leisure can be described as a need to relax and have fun while being a student.

“The idleness, we don’t have much time. We don’t have time for parties. On weekend we have to catch up (with) [you] (our) school work. (During) [In] the week [you] (we) do not have much time to do [your] (our) work.”

“Especially this year. I spend most of my time with my books. Fourth level. I don’t have a time to shop or buy groceries. I steal some time and go to church. After church I go to work.”

“This supervision on Saturdays, it took my life away. More especially because I come from Limpopo. I am from a very big family. I missed some of the most important functions. There was nothing I could do. I told myself, after it is finished I will go back and participate at home.”

Participants felt that there was **no time to just relax**. They shared that they had to schedule this to make sure that they have time for themselves.

The above concerns were also mentioned by participants in Lintvelt’s study (2008:91) – most of the participants (76%) had other responsibilities over and above their studies which included taking care of family members and households. Household responsibilities included cooking, cleaning, doing washing, taking care of children and other family members as well as financial management at home. Little time is left for idleness or recreation.

Category 2.1.7 Social work students’ unsatisfied freedom needs related to their academic development

The description of freedom needs within the taxonomy of fundamental human needs (Max-Neef, n.d.:206) includes autonomy, boldness, equal rights, choice, committing oneself and temporal/special plasticity. Within this context it refers to students’ freedom to do what they want to do as well as financial independence.

The following utterances reflect on this unsatisfied need:

“When I am here I have freedom, do whatever I want, but when I am at home, I am in a cage. So I can’t even go out. My dad asks where are you going? Even financial freedom. Parents give you very little money. They don’t understand that you have to buy clothes.”

“I love snooker, but Mom is against it. I turn 25. I don’t go to a tavern, I don’t drink, but she does not want us girls. Where there is snooker, there is a tavern, I love snooker. I can’t go.”

Participants **felt trapped between dependence and independence**. They enjoyed being independent when at UNISA, while families were trying to keep an eye on them when at home.

“What makes me happy, after completing my studies, I will be saying ‘I will be independent. I will have my own money, not dependent on my parents. I will be able to do whatever I want’.”

“And freedom. Hey! You don’t have much freedom! Especially when it comes to financials (finance) you don’t. You are still studying so you don’t have much money. So you are still dependent on your parents to give you money but you have self- determination.”

These participants referred to **financial dependency** and shared how difficult it was to be still dependent on families for their needs.

These findings are supported by Lintvelt’s study (2008:98) in which 53% of participants were concerned about being a financial burden on their families. Earle (2008:122) stresses the importance of access to finances to social work students, as it impacts on the ability of students to complete their course successfully.

Discussion of Theme 2, Sub-theme 1

It seems that most unsatisfied needs in this section were identified in the **area of “understanding”** which refers to education. If the UNISA model for enhancing student success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:184-189) is used to make sense of the findings, it seems that most of the needs are linked to the **“institution as agent”**; e.g., needs concerning career guidance and selection, registration, study material, a lack of communication with UNISA, a lack of facilities, inaccessible lecturers and inadequate feedback from lecturers.

A few needs identified in the area of “understanding” resided in the “student as agent”, e.g. sufficient housing, sufficient finances to cover study costs, a lack of skills, and an inability to manage their workload. Although these needs resided in the students, participants seemed to still expect the satisfiers to come from UNISA.

Needs or poverties in other areas, such as a need for balance between studies and work (identity), needs to interact with families and friends (affection), a safe environment (protection), free time (idleness), to be independent, and financial freedom (freedom) resided within the domain of “**the student as agent**”.

For students to be successful, they need to take responsibility for their own journey, be self-reliant and proactive (Kumar, 2007:40). They need to recognise themselves as “agents” and not expect UNISA as an institution to take responsibility for them.

Most of the needs discussed under the different categories, such as the need for finances, the need for clear information during registration, lack of access to books, inadequate availability of lecturers, the influence of studying through an ODL institution on the students’ social lives have been recognised and written about extensively **in literature**. Some needs seem to be less familiar; e.g., needs to more information about social work as a career during the initial phase of enquiry as well as students’ need for independence and freedom.

Sub-theme 2.2: Social work students experienced unsatisfied needs related to their professional development

Social work students were asked: “What support or resources, in your view, do social work students need to successfully prepare them for the social work profession?” The responses referred to their needs related to their professional development.

When participants spoke about their needs related to their professional development, they specifically referred to their **needs as social work students at UNISA** as an ODL institution, since social work is a work integrated learning (WIL) course in which students need to learn not only knowledge, but also skills and values.

These needs of social students differ on the different levels. First-level students have to do a practical assignment which necessitates them to go out and speak to people, requiring basic communication skills. During their second level, students have to hand in a portfolio giving evidence of practical skills like getting to know a community. On the third level, social work students have to attend regular workshops where they role play, using communication and intervention skills, and start with report writing requiring writing

skills. They also submit a portfolio of evidence at the end of this level, requiring an integration of theory with the practice done during the workshops. During the fourth level, students attend regular workshops and do their practicals at a welfare organisation once a week where they work with “real clients for the first time” which requires them to apply all the knowledge and skills they have learned so far. It can, therefore, be expected that the needs of social work students may differ from those of students following a purely theoretical course. Not all ten needs, as derived from Max-Neef’s taxonomy, were linked to the needs related to the social work students’ professional development.

This theme consists of seven categories (cf. Table 3.3, Chapter 3).

Category 2.2.1: Social work students’ unsatisfied subsistence needs related to their professional development

In Chapter 3, Category 2.1.1, Max-Neef’s description of subsistence needs was applied to students’ academic development. Relating to their professional development, it refers to money needed to cover expenses related to doing their practical work, especially during the fourth level.

“. . . I am travelling a long distance from home . . . [During the third] (To go for) supervision I had to wake up early and catch the bus at 5 o’clock . . . The alternative was that I stayed in Pretoria.” (implying that it costs money to travel or to stay over)

“Also transport, I spend a lot of money on transport, my community is in Mamelodi. FAMSA has a car in Mamelodi, but I have to move here from town and leave from Mamelodi. Sometimes I do not have transport money and I can’t disappoint my community.”

Participants needed **money to travel to the organisations** where they did their practical work and to attend weekly **supervision**.

“I can’t afford it. I am driving here and seeing clients, seeing clients for them, going to my community. For my community I had no white board or anything to write on, it was so difficult. I went to

board donated just so I could work with my community because I couldn't work with that in my community because I couldn't afford to buy big white pieces of paper anymore."

Groups and projects done at the organisations also had cost implications for which some students could not provide.

In her conclusions Lintvelt (2008:115) highlights the concern of most of the fourth-year participants in her study, namely the cost implications of doing practical work at a practice organisation. Students are mostly responsible for their own costs, except when they are placed at organisations which would assist them in some way. Many students make use of loans but then have to repay it from a small salary when they start working.

Category 2.2.2 Social work students' unsatisfied understanding needs related to their professional development

The social work students' understanding needs related to their professional development refer to their needs for information, skills and support required to do their practical work.

This category includes seven sub-categories (cf. Table 3.3, Chapter 3).

Category 2.2.2.1 Social work students' lack of a driver's license hampered their professional development

An important part of social work practice is physically getting out into the communities to see clients, conduct groups and facilitate community development projects. Many organisations will not employ social workers without a driver's license (Earle, 2008:142).

"Having a driver's license (is) very important because without a driver's license you can't go out to see your clients."

"Some of them (universities) say that you don't graduate if you don't have a driver's license. I think it is nice to have it before you complete your studies."

"And also maybe the students must [make] do fundraising towards that and identify one of the driving schools which will work with the University."

These participants suggested that students should obtain **drivers' licenses** before they finish their studies.

A vast majority of social work graduates do not have a driver's license due to the fact that it is expensive to pay for lessons and the test. Obtaining a driver's license requires access to a vehicle which is often very difficult for social work students from a poor background (Earle, 2008:142).

Category 2.2.2.2 Social work students experienced an inability to write reports according to the requirements of the placement organisations

The Department of Social Work uses the person-centred approach as the basis of their training. Students are expected to write their process reports from this perspective (Botha, 2012:78).

“The way it is written at UNISA, is not the way that they want us to write in the organisations or to the courts . . . We do not get enough practice to do it in the way it is in practice.”

“When we walk in an organisation they [like] tell you your theory is not going to work here, (you) can't even write a proper report for us.”

Some of the participants complained that the format of the reports they had to write for UNISA is based on the person-centred approach and was not according to the **format** expected at the organisations.

Exit level outcome 5 of the BSW degree states that social workers need to be able to produce and maintain records of social work interventions, processes and outcomes. According to the associated outcome criteria, reports should contain details of intervention activities, processes and outcomes according to the formats agreed upon or the prescribed formats (SAQA Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work, n.d.).

Category 2.2.2.3 Social work students' wanted to use their time effectively during workshops

The participants raised various issues concerning the attendance of workshops:

“The days of workshops. UNISA is a distance learning (institution). People are working . . . To ask so many days from your work place. They put you under pressure.”

Although many participants felt the workshops are great learning tools, some of them, mostly fourth-level students, felt that the workshops were **too time-consuming**.

“To me the third year was a repetition of the second year. It was there to help students who still do not know PCA. To me it was a complete wastage of time. I could have used my time better in learning the Child Care Act.”

A number of participants from the more senior groups felt that the workshops eventually became a **waste of time**, as it becomes too repetitive or because many students did not prepare for the workshops.

In 2009, the workshops for the second-level students were terminated due to the large number of students. Second-year students were angry and worried that this would negatively influence their development as social workers.

“(When I heard) the second years last year said they had workshops. This year UNISA cancelled the workshops. We have a problem. They talk about empathy. The workshops were going to help us.”

Frustration with workshops was also voiced by other social work students but different reasons for this frustration were voiced. Alpaslan (2012:29) reports that students were dissatisfied with workshop facilitators who did not know the person-centred approach or who were so person-centred that no work was done because fellow-students were unprepared. Students felt very frustrated when fellow-students arrived unprepared at workshops and were unwilling to participate (Alpaslan, 2012:29).

Category 2.2.2.4 Social work students experienced a lack of understanding cultural differences

Participants commented on this experience as follows:

“If they (Department of Social Work) can do a proper module on cultural social work. Even when working from PCA and you are non-judgemental, it’s so hard because you

don't understand culture. I spoke to my contact person again yesterday and she keeps on trying to get me to understand that I must stop thinking from my western way and that sometimes they (people from other cultures) do things that is normal from their culture and that somewhere I have got to say 'ok that is the way they live, he is not in much danger'."

". . .it's marrying your PCA and law with culture because there comes a point where it might be normal for their culture to beat their child or for circumcision and all sorts of things but the law says no."

". . .The difference in culture is big and you can be so empathetic but it just doesn't make sense to you."

Participants underlined the **importance** for social work students **to understand culture** to do their work effectively.

Earle (2008:127) stresses the importance of social work students learning how to deal with racially, culturally and socio-economically diverse client systems. Social workers should , according to exit level outcome 14 of the BSW, be able to analyse human behaviour with regard to the intersections of race, class, culture, ethnicity, gender, differential abilities and sexual orientation (SAQA Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work, n.d.).

Category 2.2.2.5 Social work students experienced supervisors and facilitators as unapproachable

Within the Department of Social Work facilitators are people contracted by UNISA to facilitate the workshops on Level 3 and Level 4, while supervisors are contracted to meet with small groups of fourth-level students to assist them with the integration of theory and practice as well as to liaise with the contact persons at the placement organisations and the lecturers (Botha, 2012:iv, v).

Although there was positive feedback from some participants about the support received from supervisors and facilitators, others reported that they were **unapproachable** and that participants **did not have good relationships** with them.

“Also the facilitators (are providing support). That is what makes me understand more of this profession. But not all facilitators. Others when you ask them, they become rude.”

“It depends a lot on your supervisors (and) your attitude to your job. I’ll take for instance a fellow student who had at third year level a very bad experience with the supervisor (facilitator) and it influenced her so negatively that she didn’t want to carry on at fourth year and it was a heck of a job saying to her but that was third year, its fourth year now, let’s carry on.”

“The facilitators they are not user-friendly. I can tell you.”

These excerpts correlate with the study done by Lawlor (2008:79), finding that 21.43% of the fourth-level students who participated in the study indicated a need for more support from supervisors.

Category 2.2.3 Social work students’ identity needs related to their professional development

Students’ unsatisfied identity needs related to their academic development were described in Chapter 3, Category 2.1.3. Related to their professional development identity needs, refer to how the students want to perceive themselves as persons becoming social workers. This category has two sub-categories:

- Social work students experienced a lack of clarity on the role of the social worker within the community.
- Social work students identified a lack of social workers being positive role models.

Sub-category 2.2.3.1 Social work students experienced a lack of clarity on the role of the social worker within the community

The participants voiced this concern in the following storylines:

“Social workers are not given a platform like other professions. It seems their role is minimum. The community perceives social work [going for them] (having a function) when you are in need of a financial situation like to provide grants. They don’t see social workers as the backbone of the country.”

“What makes me angry is the way I hear the voices of the community towards social workers, this gives me the point that the community don’t understand our social work values . . . I hear people saying you are the one who give the people grants and maintenance. . .”

“What makes me sad is the fact that I am going to be a social worker . . . and clients come with the mind that you are expected to give them advice when they are having a problem.”

It seemed that participants on the first level reflected a lot on how social workers are seen by the community. Their **need for clarification regarding the role of the social worker** in the community was linked to feelings of sadness and anger.

The lack of understanding among the general public as to what social workers know and are able to do with the limited resources they have, is also underlined by Earle. Due to the small numbers of social workers in certain government departments and NGOs, social workers have to perform many general tasks sometimes not linked to a field of specialisation (2008:31). This can also contribute to a lack of clarity of the role of the social worker.

Sub-category 2.2.3.2 Social work students identified a lack of social workers being positive role models

Students’ perception of a lack of social workers as role models was expressed as follows:

“The clinic. I don’t like the service. It is very worrying. When you are a social worker they say you can change the policy. I wish I can do something. People in the morning (they) bring their kids but they wait until late . . . They don’t respect people. They are employed to do whatever they are ordered to do. They do not deliver it freely and with respect to the people.”

“The system makes me sad. What makes me sad, I see a lot of social workers who do not have the right attitude and don’t really care the way they should.”

“. . .there are social workers that go in and judge people. They judge people that ‘you are a bad mother, you are a bad this and that. . .’ ”

Participants were aware of the **negative behaviour** they observed from **social workers in practice**. They expressed a need to do something about this but seemed to feel helpless even before entering the profession.

The study done by Earle (2008:36) confirms the poor image of social work during the past ten years and states that many social workers are suffering a crisis in professional identity. This negative image does not only affect social workers, but also social work students.

Category 2.2.4 Social work students' unsatisfied participation needs related to their professional development

Max-Neef (n.d.:206) includes adaptability, receptiveness, respect, rights, becoming affiliated and settings of participative interaction in his description of participation as a fundamental human need. In relation to their professional development, this need refers to fourth-level students' relationship with the organisations where they are placed to do their practical work.

“If [you] we go to organisations, it is as if we are a burden to them. We are lot of work.”

“‘Here are the PCA’s. They can’t give you anything. I have my own workload. You are stressing me’. Where do they expect us to get the information?” (implying that the organisations are negative about the person-centred approach).

“If you ask them (people working at the placement organisations) about management, they ask, ‘What do you want to do with management, you are not a manager. You will start from a junior post’.”

Participants expressed the need for the **placement organisations** to be **more receptive** to students. Many of the fourth-level participants felt as if they were a burden to the organisations where they were doing practical work.

The study by Lawlor (2008:103) indicated insufficient networking between the Department of Social Work, the contact person at the practical work organisation and the UNISA supervisor. The roles of the student and the contact person at the organisations were not

clear – 24% of the participants in this study reported that they experienced difficulties due to the lack of communication between UNISA and the contact person.

Category 2.2.5 Social work students' unsatisfied protection needs related to their professional development

Students' protection needs related to their academic development were described in Chapter 3, Category 2.1.3. In this section, it refers to students' need to feel safe when doing their practical work.

“Like going out to the community where you are worried that you are not safe. Like if you go there and you are worried that if something happens to me who are responsible, if I maybe I have to be taken to the hospital and I don't have money to pay for the hospital. Then who is going to pay that bill when I am lying there? Because I remember in one workshop when we asked, then the facilitator said you just go out there at your own risk. Whether you get robbed or what happens to you is none of UNISA's business, so you have to make sure you are safe at all times. Then how do I do that?”

“They (social workers at the placement organisation) say that you don't have to take your cell phone with you. How can I go to that place (community) without a cell phone? I have to use public transport to get to that place without a phone and I can't manage but she says no, dress like them (people of the community). I can wear jeans like them but still they know that this one does not belong here and still, if they want to do something they can just do anything they want to.”

“Yes sure you can say that you are with the organisation but you are not really with the organisation, you are a student. So that organisation does not have my best interest at heart and if something goes wrong, they are not going to back me up.”

Fourth-level participants who were doing their practical work in organisations expressed a need to **feel safe** when going out in the community and to know that UNISA takes **legal liability** for them when they are working in the field.

Category 2.2.6 Social work students' unsatisfied transcendence needs related to their professional development

The transcendence need, which was not originally included in the fundamental human needs taxonomy, refers to a person's spiritual need or need to provide meaning to a specific situation (Schenck, 2008:8). In this context, it refers to the meaning social work students give to the work that they do. This category links with Chapter 3, Sub-theme 1.1, namely students' motivation to study social work.

"What makes me sad is the suffering people are going through. Especially those who are traumatised. You don't know what peoples are going through. That is very sad. While I eat, there are people who sleep hungry."

"The community out there, there is not a big change. You want to see a big change and bring a big change. Will I be able to change the suffering out there?"

"Another thing is seeing orphans, you want to help but you don't know how to go about [it]."

Participants in two of the first-level groups expressed a **need to make a difference** to the pain and poverty in the world. One participant doubted whether she would be able to really change the suffering of people.

Literature consulted also implies a transcendence need of social work students. In her study, Lintvelt (2008:101) indicated that most of the participants (63%) wanted to study social work to make a difference in other people's lives. These participants were of the opinion that the course prepared them to do just this. The most common reason given by participants, both students and practising social work, males and females, black and white, for studying social work is a "calling" of wanting to help other or making a difference (Earle 2008:89).

Discussion of Theme 2, Sub-theme 2

Participants only used the **categories of subsistence, understanding, protection, participation, identity and transcendence** to describe their professional needs as social

work students. The needs or poverties identified were spread between the different areas. “**Shaping conditions**”, as described in UNISA’s student success model (Subotzky & Prinsloo 2011:184), could also be identified as **other role players**, like the organisations where students did their practical work, while the community and social workers within the profession were linked to the identified poverties. Participants also focused on the interaction between themselves, UNISA as an institution and the other role players mentioned earlier.

The need to write reports, as required by the organisations, to use workshop time effectively, to better understand culture, for supervisors and facilitators to be more approachable as well as legal protection were all linked to the institution, and specifically the Department of Social Work, as agent, while the need for money for practical work and obtaining a driver’s licence were seen as **within the domain of the student**. Participants expected the community to be clearer about the role of social workers and social work students, wanted placement organisations to be more involved and liaise more with the Department of Social Work, and desired social workers to be better role models. Once again it seemed that many needs or poverties “belonged” to either the institution or other role players.

In order to reach their “aspirations” or goals, students need to have clarity on what is expected of them in order to enter their profession (Kumar, 2007:229). They then have to compare who they are and what skills they have with what will be expected of them as social workers. To be able to become a good social worker, the student needs to have knowledge of various contexts in which social work is practised and the resources which can be used to assist clients (SAQA Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work, n.d.; Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:186).

Aspects such as a lack of money to do practical work, a need to have a driver’s license, specific needs regarding workshops, poor access to supervisors and facilitators, poor liaison between UNISA and the contact persons at organisations have been described in **literature** consulted. However, participants have also highlighted a need for UNISA to take legal liability for students doing field placements and to write reports during the fourth level in the same format as organisations do.

Sub-theme 2.3: Social work students experienced unsatisfied needs relating to their personal development

Personal development in this section refers to growth related to aspects of the students' personal experiences including self-knowledge, self-esteem as well as physical and emotional well-being.

The question in the interview guide underlying this section was: "What support or resources do social work students within UNISA, as an ODL institution, need to grow on a personal level?" Participants only identified **identity needs** of the student.

Category 2.3.1 Social work students' unsatisfied identity needs related to their personal development

This category consists of the following sub-categories:

- Social work students wanted to promote their own emotional well-being.
- Social work students experienced an inability to deal with failure.

Sub-category 2.3.1.1 Social work students wanted to promote their own emotional well-being

In this context, emotional well-being refers to the ability to cope with your own personal problems and trauma. The following statements reflected this need:

"If we want to be a professional social worker, we need to deal with our own issues first."

"It will be easier if we can be given a chance to deal with our own experience. You can't help people find closure if you don't have it yourself."

"In my previous group one of my members [she had] lost her husband and it was not easy for her to cope with those things like losing someone and studying at the same time. She also had a child so she had to take care of the child which made studying hard and also coping with the loss, so it was not easy."

Participants agreed that students needed to be aware of and cope with their **own personal issues**, as this influences the work that they do with clients.

Previous studies supported this belief. In Lintvelt's (2008:124) study, the participants were of the opinion they needed to sort out their personal lives before they could be ready to enter practice. Eighty percent of UNISA's fourth-level students surveyed by Lawlor (2008:58) saw the availability of counselling as essential for dealing with unresolved personal issues. Lawlor (2008:106) stressed that social work training evoked unresolved issues in the students' own life which could impact their ability to offer effective services to clients, if not attended to.

Sub-category 2.3.1.2 Social work students experienced an inability to deal with failure

When you study, you might fail an assignment, an exam or a module. It was not easy for participants to **deal with failure**.

"What makes me worried is when I do not meet the required standard of the work. I feel like I am not serious with my work."

"What makes me worried is when I didn't finish my work. Am I going to pass the exam because I was not able to do all the job?"

"Like failing one module twice. I ask myself: really how can I fail one module twice? I did it and I fail(ed) it, I did it and I fail(ed) it again. The lecturer or the markers, if they see I am failing, is there any help maybe they can assist (me) with. Because it really takes a lot of time. It makes me angry. If I failed, not knowing what I was expected to write so that I will be able to write the module and excel in it."

They felt they needed support but also a means to deal with failing.

In Lintvelt's study, 36% of the participants were concerned not to disappoint family members or other significant people in their lives, while 29% were concerned about disappointing themselves. Lawlor (2008:92) indicated that participants in her study wanted to ensure success by establishing a better fit with their field work placement by growing on a personal and a professional level.

Discussion of Theme 2, Sub-theme 3

In comparison with the previous sub-themes, according to this sub-theme, participants seemed to find it really difficult to focus on themselves as the “student as agent” (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:184). They seemed to find it **difficult to separate their “personal selves”** from that of being students and specifically social work students. It might also be that students were not used to reflect upon themselves, their own strengths and weaknesses as well as goals. Only two personal needs were identified, namely to promote their own well-being and to deal with failure. Lawlor (2008) and Lintvelt (2008) both refer to these personal needs in their studies.

In UNISA’s socio-critical model for student success **domains and modalities of transformation** are identified (Subotzky & Prinsloo 2011:187). In order to reach a better throughput rate, change for **students** must occur in the **intrapersonal** and the **interpersonal domains**. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the **intrapersonal** domain refers to individual attributes required for successful study. This domain includes positive attitudes and beliefs, self-discipline, motivation and confidence. The **interpersonal** domain refers to social interaction which students must master for successful study, including communication and interpersonal skills, cultural and diversity issues, power relations, assertiveness, critical reflection and self-knowledge derived from interaction.

For the institution, change occurs in the **academic, administrative and non-academic domains of the institution**. The first two refer to the core activities of teaching, research and community engagement, while the latter refers to the institutional culture, power relations, micro-politics, inter-group and dominant ideology.

From the findings in Theme 2, it seems in order to find satisfiers for all the needs or poverties identified, change needs to occur in both the student as agent and the institution, UNISA, as agent. The students need to grow in an intrapersonal domain which refers to their personal needs, namely to promote their own well-being and to learn how to deal with failure. They need to grow in an interpersonal domain, as identified under the sections on study needs and professional needs, such as to gain balance between studying and work, to interact more with families and friends, to know more about different cultures, and to better understand the community’s expectations of a social worker.

In order to grow on a personal and interpersonal level, students need to have self-knowledge or self-awareness. This corresponds with Subotzky and Prinsloo's (2011:187-188) view that success is shaped by "attribution", "locus of control" and "self-efficacy". In order to be successful students, they need to be responsible for their own journey, be self-reliant and proactive (Kumar, 2007:40). They need to see themselves as "agents" and not expect UNISA as an institution to take responsibility for them.

Firstly, UNISA has to improve in an academic domain, namely to ensure that lecturers are more accessible, feedback is given in time and proper tutoring is provided; secondly, in an administrative domain by ensuring, among others, effective registration services, access to study material and facilities; finally, in a non-academic domain which will include the provision of adequate student support and a culture of service.

According to UNISA's success model (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:185), there should be a **mutual responsibility** for this **transformation**. This implies that students should have knowledge of the institution, knowing what is required at each step of the student walk; e.g., making informed choices of qualifications and courses, understanding the learning and assessment expectations, and mastering competencies necessary for successful study regarding time management, self-study skills and determination. The students need to know where, when and how to access resources such as lecturers, administrators and other support staff.

The institution, on the other hand, needs knowledge of the student, such as understanding and addressing students' individual and collective needs, having clear academic and non-academic profiles on students, including their backgrounds, readiness for study and risk factors.

The focus of the next theme is findings regarding the participants' experiences and suggestions for satisfiers of their unsatisfied academic, professional and personal needs.

THEME 3: SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND SUGGESTIONS OF SATISFIERS OF THEIR NEEDS RELATED TO THEIR ACADEMIC, PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

This section will focus both on support or satisfiers participants used to fulfil their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development as well as suggestions regarding possible satisfiers.

This theme will be discussed according to four sub-themes:

- Social work students' experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development
- Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development
- Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their professional development
- Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their personal development.

Sub-theme 3.1: Social work students' experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development

Most of the participants at the various levels experienced success along their journey and were coping with studying social work within UNISA as an ODL institution. This implied that they had satisfiers of their needs or poverties, that they successfully used resources to achieve them. One of the questions in the interview guide was: "Which support or resources have you, as a social work student within UNISA as an ODL institution, accessed in the past? Please refer to resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA."

A similar question was given to newly employed social workers looking back on their journey. Since many of the satisfiers fulfilled academic, professional and personal needs, a distinction was made between **satisfiers within the participants; UNISA as a whole; the Department of Social Work; the Directorate of Counselling and Career Development of UNISA** as well as **other satisfiers**.

Participants' needs differed; they also coped differently. What was a need for some participants, were voiced as satisfiers for others. One satisfier often satisfied various needs. This correlates with Max-Neef's (n.d.:199) statement: "There is no one-to-one correspondence between needs and satisfiers. A satisfier may contribute simultaneously to the satisfaction of different needs, or conversely, a need may require various satisfiers in order to be met."

This category will be divided into five sub-categories:

- Social work students' experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development within themselves
- Social work students' experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development within UNISA as a whole
- Social work students' experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development within the Department of Social Work at UNISA
- Social work students' experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development within the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development of UNISA
- Social work students' experiences of other satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development.

Category 3.1.1 Social work students' experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development within themselves

Studying social work within an ODL context demanded from participants to be self-motivated and to use satisfiers within themselves. Not a lot of literature could be found on satisfiers within social work students. This seemed to be a contribution of this study.

The following sub-categories were identified:

- Social work students experienced self-knowledge as a satisfier of their needs.
- Social work students experienced time management and reflection skills as satisfiers of their needs.
- Social work students experienced positive attitudes as satisfiers of their needs.
- Social work students experienced the setting of goals as a satisfier of their needs.

Sub-category 3.1.1.1 Social work students experienced self-knowledge as a satisfier of their needs

Self-knowledge or self-awareness is very important in a successful life-career journey, as it defines the kind of person one is and wishes to become (Kumar, 2007:77). The following excerpts underline this opinion:

“Based on understanding. I attended the workshops, I have gained an understanding of myself.”

“I think also if you understand yourself as a person, it helps you to make informed decisions.”

“A solution to (that one of) making a career choice yourself, . . .you first have to evaluate yourself, based on your values and experiences of life. Who are you, what do you want to be, who do you want to see yourself in a few years to come? So you have to evaluate yourself. I can see you as a social worker but you are not a social worker. Each and every person is the centre of him- or herself. So you have to evaluate yourself. That is where you can make a better choice.”

By understanding themselves, participants felt they could make informed decisions which included the choice of social work as a career.

Sub-category 3.1.1.2 Social work students experienced time management and reflection skills as satisfiers of their needs

Participants referred to personal skills they could use to satisfy their needs:

“I have to have a time table and I have to follow the time table. If I say Monday I have to do Antropology from 6 to 7, I have stick to it.”

“It comes with planning your time. I have tried it, believe me. It is very, very hard to stick to a time table. Monday I have to do this, something else comes along.”

Time management was experienced as a satisfier for participants. Students had to change their daily programmes to fit their studies within their lives (Lintvelt, 2008:114).

“Everything you do you have to self-reflect. After every assignment you had to self-reflect. What did you experience? What did you do wrong? What could you do differently? It became part of the way you work. It becomes part of you, standing back looking at your own process. It can become a tool to start with the first years.”

“What irritated me a lot in the beginning of the study was the fact that you have to self-evaluate constantly. But I think it stretches you, to do it.”

The participants reported **reflection** as a satisfier of their needs. Although some of the participants were also irritated by the fact that they constantly had to self-reflect during the course of their studies, they admitted that this was a good learning experience. Self-reflection, which can be described as a process of turning experience into learning, is central to the professional growth and development of social work students (Moore, Bledsoe, Perry & Robinson, 2011:545).

Sub-category 3.1.1.3 Social work students experienced positive attitudes as satisfiers of their needs

Positive attitudes can include various experiences; e.g., perseverance, self-motivation, a belief in oneself and being proud of oneself. Many participants underlined the importance of positive attitudes.

“We have overcome a lot. So we are so determined that we will overcome this.”

“Endurance. As much as it is so hard, you just have to move through. Even if you have to go to sleep at one am or two am. The next day you are tired, you just force yourself to move through.”

Perseverance was experienced as a satisfier of participants' needs.

“Being self-motivated. Being disciplined it was really helpful. To be able to discipline myself. I know I need to study, I need to do work. I am supposed to submit this assignment on time. Know what is expected of me. Doing that.”

“The personal growth for me was amazing. The self-determination. I wasn’t a very disciplined person before, but I started doing it. I saw the fruit of being disciplined, planning.”

Self-motivation, which includes self-discipline, was seen as an important satisfier of the students’ needs.

“Believing in yourself.”

“I build a new identity for myself and I like it. I used to have things about myself. Now I feel like have an identity, a new one and I am keeping it.”

A believe in oneself was also reported as a resource along the journey of studying social work.

“It makes me feel proud, many time people ask what do you study and then they say “What?” To me I actually feel proud to say I do social work, regardless of their opinion, as many people do not see it as a nice profession to enter. I actually feel proud to say it.”

“Although my dream is not yet met, I still have modules left, I am proud of what I have done.”

Due to that hard work and commitment they showed, many of the participants were in a position of really **feeling proud** of what they had achieved and of being social work students. This helped them to keep on working.

“Willpower” is highlighted by Lintvelt (2008:35) as an important part of the “student self” of participants studying social work within an ODL context. A total of 36% of the participants described themselves as “strong”, using words like “self-determined”, “self-motivated”, “confident”, “hard worker”, “committed” and “perfectionist”.

Sub-category 3.1.1.4 Social work students experienced the setting of goals as a satisfier of their needs

“The process of forming and implementing personal and collective aspirations, deciding and planning ahead, essentially determine the quality of experience in every area of life –

practical, academic, personal, professional and organisational” (Kumar, 2007:226). Setting various types of goals motivated participants along their study journey.

“What makes me happy is when I am finished I will be working with clients. That is my passion. What I wanted from the beginning is to work with people. I want to interact with people.”

“I think for me, one day I will be a professional. One day I will be able to help people in a positive way. I see the light. I know I am going somewhere. I am doing something about my life. I will be a professional someone, I become fulfilled, that is everything.”

These storylines reflect the **setting of long-term professional goals**. When they are social workers, they will be able to live out their passion.

“When I pass my exam I am hopeful that one day I will have my social work degree.”

“The fact that I am already doing my second year and I am doing well. It gives me hope that I will succeed in social work.”

Therefore, **short-term professional goals** kept students going. Passing an exam, module or a year served as motivation to the participants to carry on.

“One day I will be a qualified social worker and I will be able to provide for myself. That is what makes me hopeful. One day I will reach the end of the road.”

“What makes me happy, after completing my studies, I will be saying ‘I will be independent. I will have my own money, not dependent on my parents. I will be able to do whatever I want’.”

Setting long-term personal goals was experienced as a satisfier of participants’ needs. Being a social worker will enable participants to be independent financially.

“If I think back on the time I studied, even if I would not be a social worker, I would have done it again. If I think back on my whole life, it feels to me as if it was the time I came alive. A whole new world opened to me. I learned a lot.”

“The personal growth for me was amazing.”

Short-term personal goals assisted participants in working towards reaching their long-term personal goals. Growing as a person was seen as a resource along the journey, as can be noted from the storylines above.

Lintvelt (2008:114) concluded that students found it difficult to stay motivated when they felt alone, studying within an ODL context. Most of the participants in her study said that they had focused on their goal of becoming a social worker to keep them going.

Category 3.1.2 Social work students’ experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal needs within UNISA as a whole

Students’ experiences differed. What some would identify as a need, others would see as a satisfier.

Three sub-categories were identified:

- Social work students experienced the library as a satisfier of their needs.
- Social work students experienced *myUnisa* as a satisfier of their needs.
- Social work students experienced tutor classes as satisfiers of their needs.

Sub-category 3.1.2.1 Social work students experienced the library as a satisfier of their needs

Some participants shared **positive experiences** about the library, as is demonstrated by the following statements:

“They are giving us library orientation. . .”

“. . .the library (which) is excellent . . . the library is good.”

These findings are similar to those in Lintvelt's study (2008:76). Most of the participants (69%) gave positive feedback about the libraries. They indicated that the service was good, and that it was nice and quiet to study there.

Sub-category 3.1.2.2 Social work students experienced myUnisa as a satisfier of their needs

myUnisa is UNISA's online support system which consists mainly of learning and teaching tools (Sithebe & Myburg, 2006:1). The following storylines speak to myUnisa as a satisfier:

"It (myUnisa) will be useful, but due to money issue students will be discouraged and not have access to it, but for me it is a best option."

"I am using myUnisa for my assignments and everything."

"MyUnisa is also helping. . ."

Information from studies in the wider UNISA correlated with the view of the participants quoted above. Alpaslan (2012:20) referred to participants who stressed the importance of myUnisa in facilitating communication between lecturers and students. SMS and myLife were also mentioned as helpful. According the 2011 UNISA Student Satisfaction Survey, students were satisfied with the availability of study material on myUnisa and the general use of myUnisa (Tustin, Visser & Goetz, 2011).

Sub-category 3.1.2.3 Social work students experienced tutor classes as satisfiers of their needs

UNISA's Open Distance Learning Policy (2008:3) describes tutoring as a broad range of teaching, mentoring, coaching and monitoring activities that guide students in all aspects of the learning process. Participants verbalised their experience of tutoring as follows:

"They (tutors) help us with the content of the modules we are doing. We have a chance to ask questions."

“I am fine with SCK’s (social work) tutorial classes. Especially Mr M, he is a brilliant tutor and I enjoy his classes. I connect [myself] with other students. We do something like a discussion groups, we answer previous social work question papers.”

“I was using the (study) method we used at high school. You had to read all the chapters. The book was so [big](thick). I was reading it like that. I wasn’t even going to my tutorial guide. I explained it to our tutor ... He sat down with me in the cafeteria. He taught me how to study. He said: ‘If you are going to study like this, you are not going to make it.’ And he made time after the lessons and sat down with me and showed me how to study.”

Participants were in general **very positive** about the tutorial classes presented by the Department of Social Work.

The remarks of the participants are similar to what have been expressed by students in the study by Alpaslan (2012:20). They voiced their satisfaction with tutor classes which helped them to understand and study easier. Yet, the 2011 UNISA Student Satisfaction Survey reflected students’ dissatisfaction with tutor services (Tustin, Visser & Goetz, 2011).

As from 2013 UNISA is phasing in a system of e-tutoring where an e-tutor will facilitate online delivery of tutorial material, manage students’ learning experience online, facilitate students’ interaction with peers online, and provide students with academic and technical support online (UNISA, 2012a). This is a new development within UNISA which might serve as a further satisfier of study needs of students.

Category 3.1.3 Social work students’ experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development within the Department of Social Work of UNISA

Once again students’ experiences differed. What some would see as a need, others would see as a satisfier (cf. Chapter 3, sub-category 2.1.2.7 and sub-category 3.1.3.1).

The following sub-categories are included:

- Social work students experienced lecturers as satisfiers of their needs.
- Social work students experienced workshops as satisfiers of their needs.
- Social work students experienced supervisors/facilitators as satisfiers of their needs.

- Social work students experienced Bright Site as a satisfier of their needs.

Sub-category 3.1.3.1 Social work students experienced lecturers as satisfiers of their needs

The excerpts below attest to this:

“And the lecturers which were brilliant and open and if I phoned and said I needed help, I got help. So in that sense I think the support was fantastic from the lecturer’s side.”

“For now communicating with our lecturers and supervisor. For me it is easier. I am no more afraid. Before I was not aware that I can communicate with them anytime as long as I make an appointment.”

“You can call your lecturer. (Laughing). We do get support from the Department, but sometimes we don’t use it. We went there once and it was easy to get hold of her. (Laughing).”

Lintvelt (2008:79) found that 40% of the fourth-level participants in her study felt that the attitude of academic staff and supervisors was “good”. This also referred to lecturers’ willingness to assist students. Some participants in Alpaslan’s (2012:9) study described lecturers as “friendly”, “professional” and “efficient”. They believed that the staff cared for their students (Alpaslan, 2012:19).

Sub-category 3.1.3.2 Social work students experienced workshops as satisfiers of their needs

Workshops create an opportunity for students and lecturers to meet face-to-face. Participants voiced their experiences of workshops as follows:

“It is very useful to do workshops in a group. It is one of the resources.”

One of the positive outcomes of the workshops was that students had the opportunity to **meet other students** and to work in groups. Some participants also felt that the workshops were a **great learning tool**, as the following utterances attested:

“Also the workshops themselves. They really anchor us. It helps us a lot. We are what we are because of the workshops. If you are alone there and you start to reflect, it will be chaos.”

“By coming to workshops [and as your journey since] we (get to) know each other, you learn not to be judgmental. The theory, you even incorporate it into your own self.”

Participants in Lintvelt’s study (2008:80) found workshops to help them to feel less isolated and more in contact with lecturers. In her study, students asked for more than one workshop in some of the modules. Alpaslan (2012:20) refers to storylines of social work students who appreciated the role of workshops in gaining practical experience.

Sub-category 3.1.3.3 Social work students experienced supervisors/facilitators as satisfiers of their needs

In discussing the participants’ experiences about workshop facilitators, it became clear that some of the participants had very positive experiences while others had negative experiences. The following were some positive comments:

“For studying the support I get is from facilitators and other students. Without feeling threatened or being judged. It is easier to communicate with them. They know what I am going through.”

“In third year level I also got stuck and I phoned S (supervisor) and said ‘help’ and she was more than willing to help. S was a great source of information and a great source of assistance to me. She also kept me on the straight and narrow (path) because I have a tendency to branch off and she said ‘come back, refocus’.”

“I was extremely lucky that I had brilliant supervisors at second year, at third year and then again at fourth year. If your quality of supervisors is of that calibre, I think you are through, any student will get through.”

Participants felt that facilitators and supervisors were guiding students, and ensured quality practical education.

In her study, Lintvelt (2008:79) requested feedback from fourth-level students on the staff of the Department of Social Work which included workshop facilitators (then called workshop supervisors) and supervisors. Both facilitators and supervisors fell into the “good” category. Participants in the 2011 *myUnisa* study suggested that the Department of Social Work should appoint competent staff, referring to markers, facilitators, supervisors and lecturers. They recommended that the performance of these members of staff should be evaluated (Alpaslan, 2012:30).

Sub-category 3.1.3.4 Social work students experienced Bright Site as a satisfier of their needs

A number of students are placed at Bright Site which is a **service learning centre** established by the Department of Social Work. These students receive additional input in the form of training and experiential learning. The participants shared their experiences of Bright Site:

“I can say the support we have is Bright Site [thing]. It helps us.”

“We learned a lot from this project. We learned about what we don’t know. We came to know about the practical part of our studies here at VUDEC (building where Bright Site is housed). We didn’t know what community work is, we didn’t know what group work is until we came here. It was very much helpful.”

“Speaking as a person working here now and having to deal with Bright Sight, I think Bright Sight does a phenomenal job but that’s my knowledge now of what they do there and that has been tremendous.”

Comments about the Bright Site project proved to be very positive. Participants were of the opinion that the services rendered were of a high quality. These comments have been confirmed by a research study done by Du Plessis (2011:131) on the experiences of fourth-level social work students placed at Bright Site. Participants of that study mentioned that they had received a lot of internal support at Bright Site and specifically from supervisors, the contact person, lecturers, fellow students, administrative support and counselling.

Category 3.1.4 Social work students' experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development within the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development of UNISA (DCCD)

While **not all participants were aware** of the services rendered by the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development of UNISA, others referred to the career guidance, counselling and workshops as resources used. There is no specific literature available on the use of the services of the Directorate specifically by social work students.

The sub-categories discussed here are:

- Social work students experienced career guidance as a satisfier of their needs.
- Social work students experienced counselling as a satisfier of their needs.
- Social work students experienced workshops presented by the DCCD as satisfiers of their needs.

Sub-category 3.1.4.1 Social work students experienced career guidance as a satisfier of their needs

Some participants shared their **positive experiences** with career guidance received at UNISA:

“Maybe you are confused; you do not know which modules you have to do. Then they show you if you do this, you should take these modules.”

“But you get those career tools that sort of guide you a little bit that yes, maybe you should go into this industry or not. I did . . . and it was fascinating to see that I am [righ]t in the right place studying what I should be studying.”

“She said you know what, I understand [like] you look like maybe you are shy or you are quiet. What are the choices that you have on your mind before you choose Industrial Psychology? I said nursing and social worker . . . She said I think that social work[er] is the best for you.”

Sub-category 3.1.4.2 Social work students experienced counselling as a satisfier of their needs

Some participants referred to counselling services rendered by DCCD:

“I know UNISA has this counselling service. People can be referred there.”

“You can go for counselling but I have not heard about it or used it.”

“Yes I know them (DCCD) but really I never approached them for anything.”

It seemed that participants were aware of the counselling service provided by DCCD, but that **none** of them **has made use** of personal counselling.

Sub-category 3.1.4.3 Social work students experienced workshops presented by the DCCD as satisfiers of their needs

A few participants shared that they had attended some of the workshops presented by the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development of UNISA. The following storylines reflect their positive experience of these resources:

“In my first year I attend the one on time management, how to plan your studies. That was very helpful. The other one they teach you about skills, on how to write in English, punctuation and stuff like that. It helped me.”

“They were really helpful and for me I was doing sociology and I had to do essays and they were so bad at first but since I have attended those classes (writing skills) I have improved a lot.”

They specifically mentioned workshops on **time management and writing skills**.

From the 2011 Student Satisfaction Survey (Tustin, Visser & Goetz, 2011), it seemed that students were not satisfied with peer collaborative learning facilitated academic literacy workshops and individual services provided by DCCD (then DCCAD). The survey supported the view that, although students who used the support services of the DCCD were mostly satisfied, not all students were aware of these resources.

Category 3.1.5 Social work students' experiences of other satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development

The following sub-categories were identified:

- Social work students experienced financial resources as satisfiers of their needs.
- Social work students experienced support from family and friends as a satisfier of their needs.
- Social work students experienced peer support as a satisfier of their needs.

Sub-category 3.1.5.1 Social work students experienced financial resources as satisfiers of their needs

Participants used a variety of resources to pay for their studies.

“Most of us (have study loans). From NSFAS. It is easy to get a loan. A bursary is hard to get. We did apply and got no response.”

“My husband has been paying for me but we have also been receiving help from Pete’s father. I had to save to provide for myself this year and I did some part time work this year which I had to stop because I couldn’t deal with the pressure.”

“For the first four years I paid myself. Then my work kicked in and said they will pay. For the last three years they paid. But it is also a pressure, because you cannot fail now. It is a major resource.”

Some participants took out **loans**, others supported themselves by **working** or having their own businesses. Some participants’ **family** provided for their studies, while a few got a bursary from the Department of Social Development.

Data gathered by Lintvelt (2008:94) indicated that almost half of the participants in her study (49%) paid their own studies, while smaller numbers were supported by their parents (13%) and relied on loans (8%). The rest were supported by spouses, other family members, employers and bursaries. According to the 2011 UNISA Student Satisfaction Survey, students were not satisfied with the financial support, such as bursaries received from the Directorate of Student Funding (DSF), Eduloan and the National Student

Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) (Tustin, Visser & Goetz, 2011). This could be because not all students are aware of these resources and therefore, they are underutilised.

Sub-category 3.1.5.2 Social work students experienced support from family and friends as a satisfier of their needs

The storylines below bear testimony to the support received from family and friends:

“I have my parents, they are supportive, my siblings, my friends.”

“There is this uncle of mine. He just graduated at UNISA last year. He is my role model, he is always encouraging me, he says: ‘Study hard and you will make it.’”

“My friends. All of my friends [are] (have) graduated and are working. They say: ‘Work hard you are going to make it, don’t give up’.”

Lintvelt’s study indicated that most of her participants (73%) had received support from people close to them, like a partner, family, parents, siblings and children. Participants identified emotional support, help around the house, financial assistance and encouragement to finish their studies. Participants (13%) also referred to the role that friends play in supporting them. Only a few participants (2%) indicated that they did not have any support.

Category 3.1.5.3 Social work students experienced peer support as a satisfier of their needs

Participants described how important it was for them to meet **other students** and to support one another:

“You start to identify with other students. You belong.”

“For me the group (was important). The people know who does social work. When you find it difficult to do an assignment, or are anxious about the portfolio. If they are doing the same course, it is easy. You ask them and they tell you.”

“For studying the support I get is from facilitators and other students. Without feeling threatened or being judged. It is easier to communicate with them. They know what I am going through.”

Only 10% of participants in Lintvelt's study stated that they had support from UNISA staff and co-students. This figure seems to be quite low, taking into consideration that it included UNISA staff. One of the largest difficulties encountered by students is to study on their own with no peers available. However, workshops facilitate the forming of strong bonds with peers (Lintvelt, 2008:114).

According to the 2011 Student Satisfaction Survey (Tustin, Visser & Goetz, 2011), students were not satisfied with peer collaborative learning facilitated by DCCD. This might indicate that students tend to form their own support groups and are not aware of or fully utilising the services of DCCD in this regard.

Sub-theme 3.2: Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development

Although a percentage of participants felt their needs related to their academic development were fulfilled, others made **suggestions** on how their needs or poverties could be better fulfilled.

Three categories can be distinguished:

- Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development within UNISA as a whole
- Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development within the Department of Social Work of UNISA
- Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development within the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development of UNISA.

Category 3.2.1 Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development within UNISA as a whole

Reference was made to **three of the stages** of the study journey:

- Social work students suggested satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development during the **initial enquiries**.
- Participants suggested satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development during the **pre-registration and registration** phases.

- Social work students suggested satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development during the **tuition and assessment** phases.

Sub-category 3.2.1.1 Social work students suggested satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development during the initial enquiries and the choice of the institution

UNISA introduced the concept of a “student walk” to explain the process of studying through an ODL institution. Through making initial enquiries students learn more about UNISA and how ODL works (UNISA, 2013a).

Storylines which confirm this sub-category are:

“The staff of UNISA [they] should go to high schools and spread their message. Other universities do it. How UNISA is operating. What is happening, is that a lot of students are frightened.”

“Career expo. You want students to go to the UNISA table.”

A suggestion was made that UNISA should participate, like other universities, in **career expos** at schools to inform potential students about open and distance learning.

Sub-category 3.2.1.2 Participants suggested satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development during the pre-registration and registration phases

During the pre-registration and registration phases of the “student walk” students apply and register if their application has been successful (UNISA, 2013a). Responses of participants included the following suggestions:

“I think a solution is that there must be some workshops before the registration process where they train you, if you do this course you have to take these modules.”

“They must give applicants a date to give them background, this is what you can expect in January, this is what your package will look like, this is your white card. So that you don’t waste time with the package.”

“At least, they must introduce us to all the resources at UNISA . . . They must tell us where we can get that.”

Participants felt **orientation sessions** before and when students register can lessen the confusion that especially first-level students experience. Information on resources can also make a difference.

“It will be better if they allocate people who are responsible for the Department (of Social Work), who have experience.”

“They should employ people who have some experience (in social work).”

“If they can strengthen their student advisory to talk one language.”

Trained staff, especially with knowledge of the field of social work, assisting with registration could save students time, money and frustration, as is suggested by the utterances above.

These suggestions correlate with recommendations made by participants in Lintvelt’s study (2008:75) who suggested that “ground staff” should be better informed and trained as well as that more staff should be employed during registration. Alpaslan (2012:31) refers to students’ recommendations that career guidance should be compulsory for all students and that the Department of Social Work should place people who know the requirements for social work at the registration helpdesk.

Category 3.2.1.3 Social work students suggested satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development during the tuition and assessment phases

During the tuition and assessment phases of the “student walk” students receive their study material, plan their activities, study independently, do assignments and write exams (UNISA, 2013a). The following suggestions were made regarding the role of tutors:

“I want to attend every Saturday. We are only attending every second Saturday.”

“If a tutor comes once a week and you come ask something, you can highlight the questions you have . . . If the tutor comes once a week to help us.”

“Especially in fourth year because you need a supervisor, you need a tutor. Because your supervisor focuses on integration of theory and practice and your tutor focuses on your theory.”

First-level participants suggested that **tutorial classes** should be presented every week instead of every second week. Third- and fourth-level students wanted tutorial classes to be extended beyond the first and second level.

A few suggestions were made about the availability of **computers and printers**, as can be confirmed by the following comments:

“I wish they can allow us to print. Maybe like for example SCK 103 we have to print the one tutorial letter. You can just check on myUnisa, but you can’t print it . . . And the intern cafe is very expensive.”

“It is preparing you for the world of work because there you must type your reports and if you don’t have access or you don’t know anything about computers it is going to be difficult for you. So if you do it in the third or fourth year it is easy for you.”

“(Fourth level students should) have computers or have access to computers”.

Although participants can access the Internet in the library, they suggested that a **wider access to the Internet** would facilitate their progress:

“They have intranet. In addition to that we as students need to have access to internet.”

“Here at Sunnyside campus there must be some computers where we can access internet [on it]. Even if you can use it for one hour per student. That intranet we just use it to chat with other the students on MyUnisa, to check e-mail, that is not helpful. They must have other computers where we can access internet.”

These three aspects namely tutorial classes, the use of computers and the internet link with UNISA's framework for student support (UNISA, 2012a). From 2013, UNISA will be offering not only e-tutoring but also one compulsory online module, called a signature course, per college, which entails that all students have to complete one fully online module before completing their qualifications (UNISA, 2012b).

Category 3.2.2 Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development within the Department of Social Work of UNISA

Suggestions made about satisfiers within the Department of Social Work were not clearly linked to the stages of the study journey:

"Something like a helpdesk at the Department (of Social Work). Somebody that will be there and available through the day. Somebody you will be able to reach that will be helpful."

"In between you must have a help desk or something serving as a maintenance of students' emotions, challenges or whatever."

Participants were of the opinion that a **departmental helpdesk** could lessen frustration by providing easier access to information and assistance with administrative problems.

Participants in Lintvelt's study (2008:129) voiced the same frustration and complained that the reception at the Department of Social Work is not up to standard. There was no proper indication of where the reception desk was and there was no receptionist in the office adjacent to the Head of the Department (HoD). When a new HoD was appointed in 2012, two secretaries moved into the office next to that of the HoD. In the Proposal for Implementing the Conceptual Framework for Student Support at UNISA (2011:12a) a need is identified for dedicated departmental hotlines to provide administrative support.

"One of the things that will help is pamphlets. People come to register, ma be have pamphlets explaining what social work is all about."

"Compile a DVD. It will help a lot and be a part of the material they give you like calendars . . . And registration they must have information about registration. How long

are you studying for social work and the workshops, you are going to do the work on until the fourth year. First year, second year, there are no workshops, there are tutors. . .”

A suggestion was made that more **information** be made available regarding **social work** and the **journey of becoming a social worker** through brochures and DVDs, as the storylines above confirm.

Lintvelt (2008:130) has recommended that instead of having separate tutorial letters for each module, all administrative aspects of the Department should be included in one tutorial letter; thus, guiding the students on what happens at what stage of their academic year. This recommendation referred only to the fourth year and such a general tutorial letter, *Tutorial Letter SCK 4009/301: Overview of the fourth year* (UNISA, 2011b), was part of the students’ study material. During 2012 the researcher was part of team, consisting of students from the Bright Site Learning Centre and colleagues who developed an hour long DVD on the journey of social work students within UNISA. This DVD is distributed amongst first-year students from 2013 and offers students information on the diversity of the social work career, what is required of them during their study journey and offer them an opportunity to assess whether they have chosen the right career (Department of Social Work, 2012).

Participants were of the opinion that **pre-registration counselling**, specifically referring to the choice of Social Work, could assist students to make the right decisions:

“It could make it better to maybe have some kind of pre-counselling when people want to choose social work.”

“So if it could maybe be a separate department and when you enquire about that you can come and have a little counselling session where it is all explained to you.”

The recommendation of participants reported by Alpaslan (2012:31) correlates with the utterances made by students quoted above. They stated that career guidance and assistance of well-trained career counsellors who know social work are important. Alpaslan (2012:31) adds his own recommendation that the brochure of the Department should be clearer and more user-friendly, and should be accompanied by a CD or DVD, clearly explaining

menus of modules to be taken. Choosing the wrong modules prolongs students' study time and costs.

Sub-category 3.2.3 Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development within the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development of UNISA

Participants made the following suggestions related to the services of the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development of UNISA:

"Maybe once at a week when I come to Sunnyside, I will see a poster on a notice board saying there was a workshop. The date has passed. If they can send us SMS's, saying here is something going on at this time, this place."

Clear advertising of services rendered by DCCD can improve students' access to these services.

"Maybe even recommend it (workshops presented by DCCD) after the first batch of assignments have been marked. Then the markers can see what person would benefit."

Lecturers can **refer students to the services of DCCD**, as is clear from the suggestion made above.

In the study done by Earle (2008:84), some student participants from the University of Stellenbosch indicated that although the Student Counselling Centre renders a comprehensive support service to students, it is not as widely known as it could be.

Sub-theme 3.3: Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of needs related to their professional development

This sub-theme is divided into two categories:

- Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their professional development within the Department of Social Work of UNISA
- Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their professional development provided by other people.

Category 3.3.1 Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their professional development within the Department of Social Work of UNISA

Participants felt strongly that more satisfiers were needed to fulfil their needs to grow and develop into good social workers. Various suggestions were made. This category is divided into six sub-categories (cf. Table 3.3, Chapter 3).

Sub-category 3.3.1.1 Social work students suggested that they be exposed to a wider spectrum of theoretical approaches and not only PCA

The person-centred approach deals with the self or identity of a person, group or community and looks at experiences which the client cannot allow into his/her conscious mind (Grobler & Schenck, 2009:4).

A number of participants voiced the following opinions regarding the Department of Social Work using only the person-centred approach (PCA) as a theoretical model:

“And try and offer a broader spectrum instead of just the PCA.”

“Women who are coming from a different University or somewhere else they are using multi-approaches and it is faster for them to do the sessions.”

“Just giving them the information that in a different university they are doing different kinds of approaches. It is not only PCA and how to handle those people.”

Participants, therefore, felt that only presenting **PCA** as practical model was **too limited**. Lawlor (2008:105) investigated the applicability of PCA to the requirements of the field. This did not appear to be a stumbling block. Dissatisfaction was site-specific where the placement setting used a different theoretical model or was voiced by supervisors or contact persons who were of the opinion that students should also draw from other theories. Alpaslan (2012:33) quotes a participant stating that students should be exposed to other schools of thought and not only PCA. During 2012, the Department of Social Work was audited by the SACSSP. In preparation for the audit, the Department did a self-assessment. One of the areas identified for improvement was to also expose students to other theoretical models (UNISA, 2012c:153).

Sub-category 3.3.1.2 Social work students suggested that a module on statutory work be included in the curriculum

Statutory work is a specialised field in social work aimed at improving the social functioning of individuals, families and communities by applying administrative procedures described by a written law of a legislative body (New Dictionary of Social Work cited by Kleijn, 2004:18).

Participants, both social work students and newly employed social workers, agreed on the following:

“And when you need to take a child away in practice, what do you need to look at. Those are the things you need in practice.”

“What I found very difficult was the statutory (work) because I came in with absolutely no statutory experience whatsoever and I had to do a 16(2) in my first month, which is an extension of foster care ... but I found the statutory (work) being left a bit (not included in the curriculum of the Department of Social Work).”

“Definitely, statutory work and the Childcare Act and your basic practical stuff. You learn how to do an interview, you learn how to do counselling, you learn how to do process notes but you don’t learn how to do any statutory work; how the Child Care Act works.”

This learning need has already been identified in the study done by Lintvelt (2008:105) when 20% of participants referred to knowledge of statutory work as a learning gap. Lawlor (2008:104) indicated that students, supervisors and contact persons consulted in her study agreed that UNISA social work students should be more knowledgeable regarding statutory work. Students also need to be able to apply knowledge on statutory work in practice. The 2012 self-assessment of the Department of Social Work confirmed this gap and statutory work, specifically various laws applicable to the different fields of social work, will be addressed in the new curriculum which will be developed from 2013 (UNISA, 2012c:262).

Sub-category 3.3.1.3 Social work students suggested that a module on ethics be included in the curriculum

Ethics is very important in social work, as it is a mission-driven and value-based profession. The mission of social work is to enhance the well-being of people and empower people to fulfil their needs. It is based on values like respect, integrity, social justice and service (NASW Illinois Ethic Committee, 2013). The importance of ethics is also stressed by the participants, as it is proven by the following quotes:

“Maybe do it (ethics) as part of a subject but really spend time on it, not just the one day workshop.”

“I think perhaps, ye, to keep them focused but the work ethics is a situation of starting from the beginning and saying these are the parameters with which you do things and then sticking to it. . .”

“I think maybe the ethics should be emphasized from the first year so that they (social work students) can understand what kind of profession they are in.”

It was suggested that a **full module** be devoted to ethics and that students be taught boundaries, e.g. sticking to deadlines for assignments to learn work ethics, as it is reflected by the utterances above.

Although a fourth-year module “Supervision and Ethics” already exists, the departmental self-assessment team has indicated that more focus should be placed on ethics (UNISA, 2012c:97). During 2012 the researcher was part of a committee which set guidelines for a departmental disciplinary guideline document on unacceptable academic behaviour of students as well as unethical behaviour when doing their practical work at organisations.

Sub-category 3.3.1.4 Social work students suggested that writing reports be taught according to practice guidelines

There were many suggestions pertaining to writing reports:



“We write in columns. If you can change the format. Just do it in the way the organisations want us to do it. Instead of writing it in the organisation and UNISA format. Do not write it in columns.”

“Maybe those reports that we write now, write them in the third year. In the fourth year we do it in the way the organisations expect us to do.”

“The case work reports that we are writing are totally different from what we are writing now [at the employment] (when employed).”

Participants suggested that UNISA use the **format of reports used by organisations**, as the report writing style at UNISA is too time consuming on fourth-year level and also not acceptable to the organisations.

In the 2012 self-assessment of the Department of Social Work, a recommendation was made that students should be able to assess clients and write reports according to specification in the different fields (UNISA, 2012c:153).

Wade (2009:506) includes the issue of language skills with report writing and suggests that the UNISA Department of Social Work and the Department of English could work together to develop a course that is geared for social workers. She suggests that this course could focus on report writing, compiling process notes from case studies, expanding vocabulary for feelings, experiences, values and perceptions as well as grammar and presentation skills.

Sub-category 3.3.1.5 Social work students suggested that they be exposed to practical work earlier in the course

Due to the large number of students with whom the Department of Social Work needs to deal, students are only placed at a welfare organisation during their fourth level. Participants recommended that **practical work start earlier**:

“Another thing the practical work can start earlier, maybe on second level. It is hard at this stage of fourth level, to practice advanced empathy. If you can start earlier, maybe on second and third level. Then you will know how to work with people.”

“It (practical work) should start earlier on and not only in fourth year, and now you are thrown in the deep end.”

“So maybe exposure from first year level onwards or maybe just from second year, more exposure to actual working situations.”

It is suggested that students get involved with clients and organisations as early as the first level or at least from the second level.

Fourth-level participants in Lintvelt’s study (2008:106) were asked what they still need to prepare themselves for before going into practice. More than half of the participants (55%) suggested they still need to work more in a practical setting with real clients and a small number (9%) said integration of theory and practice.

Sub-category 3.3.1.6 Social work students suggested that they visit welfare organisations and do volunteer work

Participants also suggested that students **visit organisations** in the area where they stayed, as is demonstrated by the following excerpts:

“Maybe going to different areas of work like (the Department of) Social Development for a week . . . so that they (students) can see how they (social workers) work and what are the things they are doing there at their work place. If they are doing intake, to show them how to do intake.”

“Where we reside, give us a letter, so that we can go to that institution so that we can see the 16(2), section 33, so that we can see how to render services to our client, to have a picture before we do the real practicals.”

Participants suggested that students **volunteer** at organisations; also, to get a feeling of what is really happening in practice and whether they have made the right career choice.

“Say in [you] (the) second and third year they (students) must volunteer at an organisation . . . Even if they just dish out bread and jam, just to get to know how the system works.”

“I think giving students chances to go and volunteer. If it has to be emphasised that somebody has to volunteer to get the feeling, to see if they are in their right space. If the person can feel no, no, no, this is not my line then she will shift the focus before even going for the fourth year. Seeing what kind of social worker life is out there.”

Participants in the study discussed by Alpaslan (2012:35) also suggested that students be exposed to practical work earlier, already from their first year by doing voluntary work at welfare organisations. As part of the departmental self-assessment it was suggested that students do voluntary work in their first and second year as a way of exposing them to practice earlier (UNISA, 2012c:236).

Category 3.3.2 Social work students’ suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their professional development provided by other people

Participants felt that placement organisations could play a bigger role in supporting them on a professional level.

“It may be better if the contact person can get one day training from UNISA so that they really know what is expected of them.”

“They must place us in an environment where they (social workers at the organisation) want to help us. They must make sure we are doing what we are supposed to be doing.”

“If they (the placement organisation) have a contact person ask: ‘Do you have clarity of what is expected of you?’ If you ask a person to do this and it is against her beliefs, she will not do it.”

Some of the fourth-level participants suggested that the Department of Social Work at UNISA should ensure that **organisations where students are placed** have a positive attitude towards students, and that the organisations know what is expected of them and the students.

Lawlor (2008:108) recommended that CPD (continuing professional development) points could be offered as an incentive to contact persons and UNISA supervisors to attend training workshops and to complete questionnaires as part of continuous research. In 2012,

CPD points were allocated to both supervisors and contact persons in the Pretoria area and supervisors in the Durban area who attended training.

Sub theme 3.4: Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their personal development

Two categories were identified describing satisfiers of the students' needs related to their personal development:

- Social work students suggested that **counselling** serve as a satisfier of their needs related to their personal development.
- Social work students suggested that **debriefing** serve as a satisfier of their needs related to their professional development.

Category 3.4.1 Social work students suggested that counselling serve as a satisfier of their needs related to their personal development

Although **none** of the participants **used the counselling services at UNISA**, many of the senior student participants as well as the social worker participants made suggestions on how this could benefit students:

"It will be easier if we can be given a chance to deal with our own experience. You can't help people find closure if you don't have it yourself."

"The other resources which they must give support to students is counselling. Along the way we are facing some of the challenges, maybe somebody has passed away during your fourth year and it is not easy to cope with that."

". . .can't there be someone there for me that I can just call and say I am here, which [way] I can do without feeling threatened that they think I am stupid or that I can't handle my work."

Personal issues and difficulties experienced during the studies should be addressed in a safe space. This will enable students to help others.

Various suggestions were made as to who should be **responsible** for the counselling. Lecturers, ex-students and supervisors were mentioned as options:

“I think probably certain people who can come and volunteer who have been students. Yes, who can volunteer and counsel students. It will even help us to keep our skills and even in that moment you can (even) share some of your own difficulties and how we managed to put them past us.”

“I think it can be any of the three (ex-students, lecturers, supervisors) because it will have to be voluntarily I think. Just as long as they have been through that road.”

“Maybe you must have a counselling department within Department of Social Work and the supervisor, because he or she is close with the student.”

Lecturers and supervisors who participated in Earle’s study (2008:123) agreed that students should deal with their own personal and social problems before they can adequately deal with the personal and social problems of others. Lawlor (2008:111) has indicated that UNISA social work students often manned the student counselling services at UNISA, which was therefore not seen as a safe resource to them. She recommended that the Department of Social Work needed to consider other ways to enable students to be assisted.

Wade (2009) stresses that the lecturer is not a counsellor, but suggests that master’s students could provide counselling or that students from higher levels could provide peer counselling to students at lower levels. She also suggests that workshops take the form of therapy groups, and that organisations which render counselling at low costs be identified and recommended to students.

Category 3.4.2 Social work students suggested that debriefing serve as a satisfier of their needs related to their professional development

Some of the fourth-level students suggested that students should be debriefed after practical work:

“The Department must acknowledge what we are going through. Doing counselling for the whole year as a student and being confronted with all the issues you have never came across. At the end of the year they leave you just like that. It is a little bit unfair. If you can call all of the case work students together and just have some fun. Just to debrief them from all the things they have been confronted with the whole year.”

“Maybe do it (debriefing) in a smaller group like the supervision groups, decide together on what they want to do.”

“Maybe towards the end of the year as today, we make a date when we all come together. Say when we come together, when it is part of our end of the year supervision. Together with our supervisor.”

The goal of the debriefing would be to work through experiences encountered during the year, and to celebrate and have fun.

Discussion of Theme 3

Participants identified satisfiers or resources for their needs which they were already utilising or had already utilised and made suggestions on what could be done to improve their journey as students. As far as satisfiers **in themselves** were concerned, students referred to self-knowledge, skills, goals and a positive attitude. They found that facilities **within UNISA**, such as the library, computers, *myUnisa* and tutor classes facilitated their success, as did positive input from lecturers, facilitators, supervisors and the Bright Site project from the **Department of Social Work**. Support from **others** was also identified; e.g. from family, peers and financial resources. Suggestions for satisfiers focused on the **different aspects of the student journey or pathway**. Participants suggested that career expos and more information on social work as a career would assist during the initial phase of enquiry, while exposure to more intervention theories, statutory work, ethics and quality input from supervisors could facilitate success during the tuition and assessment phases.

Identified and suggested satisfiers corresponded with other research done in this area as well as the departmental self-assessment done in 2012. What some students suggested as satisfiers already existed; so, it seemed that students were not always aware of existing resources. In this regard Subotzky and Prinsloo (2011:186) referred to the importance that **“sufficient mutual knowledge”** was acquired and translated into effective action at each point of the student walk. In this way a closer alignment or fit could be achieved between the students and the institution. Students needed to know about existing satisfiers and the institution needed to keep in touch with its students’ needs in order to provide satisfiers, where applicable. Kumar (2007:182) refers to “opportunity” as the external world where

students can explore options within and outside the curriculum which may fit their strengths, interests and priorities.

It seems that participants find it more difficult to identify satisfiers of their needs **inside themselves** than outside. This may indicate that students do not always take full responsibility for their own growth and development but expect change to come from outside or from the context of the learning institution. According to Subotzky and Prinsloo (2011:187-188), success is shaped by “**attribution**”, “**locus of control**” and “**self-efficacy**”, as was discussed in Chapter 1. Both the students and institution need to believe in their ability to succeed – thus, to provide or find the satisfiers to fulfil the study, professional and personal needs of the students. According to Kumar (2007:81), self-knowledge is essential to student success. They need to know their profiles or MAP – Motivation, Ability and Personality – to be able to use their inner resources.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, an overview was given of the biographical details of participants. Three of the five themes identified during data analysis were discussed, namely:

- Social work students provided various motivations for studying social work and studying at UNISA as an ODL institution.
- Social work students experienced unsatisfied needs related to their academic, professional and personal development within UNISA as an ODL institution.
- Social work students’ experiences and suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development.

The UNISA model for enhancing student success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:177-193) was used to interpret the findings.

In the next chapter the rest of the themes identified during data analysis will be discussed, namely:

- Social work students' perspectives on the attributes of a good social worker and suggestions as to how these can be developed in social work students.
- Social work students made and implied various suggestions for a life coaching programme.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF A GOOD SOCIAL WORKER AND A LIFE COACHING PROGRAMME FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS WITHIN AN ODL CONTEXT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 highlighted the findings on the motivations of why students study social work and why they study through UNISA; the academic, professional and personal needs of these social work students (Theme 1 and 2) as well as satisfiers or sources of support identified and suggested by the participants (Theme 3).

Chapter 4 captures the participants' perceptions of the attributes of a good social worker and suggestions on how these attributes could be developed in social work students. Suggestions on the core elements of a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context, possible methods of delivery as well as the manner of presentation of this support programme (Theme 4 and 5) are included in this chapter.

4.2 FINDINGS ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF A GOOD SOCIAL WORKER AND A LIFE COACHING PROGRAMME FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS WITHIN AN ODL CONTEXT

In the rest of this chapter the related themes, sub-themes, categories and sub-categories are summarised in a table, storylines are presented and compared with literature.

Table 4.1 Findings on the attributes of a good social worker and a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context

THEME 4: SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF A GOOD SOCIAL WORKER AND SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW THESE CAN BE DEVELOPED IN STUDENTS

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category
4.1. Social work students' perspectives of the attributes of a good social worker	4.1.1 A good social worker has a sound knowledge base.	4.1.1.1 A good social worker has a sound theoretical knowledge base of social work.
		4.1.1.2 A good social worker has a practical knowledge base.
		4.1.1.3 A good social worker has a thorough self-knowledge.
		4.1.1.4 A good social worker has to undergo continuing professional development.
	4.1.2 A good social worker has a variety of appropriate skills.	4.1.2.1 A good social worker has effective intervention skills.
		4.1.2.2 A good social worker has effective administrative skills.
	4.1.3 A good social worker has an attitude of service.	4.1.3.1 A good social worker has the desire to help people.
		4.1.3.2 A good social worker is patient, friendly

		and kind.
		4.1.3.3 A good social worker is able to set boundaries.
		4.1.3.4 A good social worker is willing to give time to clients.
		4.1.3.5 A good social worker is willing to learn from clients.
		4.1.3.6 A good social worker practices self-control and does not abuse power.
	4.1.4 A good social worker has a clear set of values that results in appropriate ethical conduct.	4.1.4.1 A good social worker respects all clients.
		4.1.4.2 A good social worker adheres to confidentiality with clients.
		4.1.4.3 A good social worker is non-judgemental towards all clients.
		4.1.4.4 A good social worker allows all clients self-determination.
		4.1.4.5 A good social worker's personal values are in line with his/her professional values.
4.2 Social work students' suggestions as to how these	4.2.1 Attributes of a good social worker can be	

attributes can be developed in students	developed through students dealing with their personal problems.	
	4.2.2 Attributes of a good social worker can be developed through written assignments as part of course work.	
	4.2.3 Attributes of a good social worker can be developed through supervision.	
	4.2.4 Attributes of a good social worker can be developed by students building on who they are.	
	4.2.5 Attributes of a good social worker can be developed through self-reflection.	

THEME 5: SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS MADE AND IMPLIED VARIOUS SUGGESTIONS FOR A LIFE COACHING PROGRAMME

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category
5.1 Social work students made suggestions on the core elements of a life coaching programme.	5.1.1 A life coaching programme should include the development of self-awareness.	5.1.1.1 A life coaching programme should facilitate students to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses.
		5.1.1.2 A life coaching programme should focus on the students' personal

		problems.
	5.1.2 A life coaching programme should include guidance on career and module choices.	
	5.1.3 A life coaching programme should include reflecting on the attributes of a good social worker.	
	5.1.4 A life coaching programme should link students to available resources.	
	5.1.5 A life coaching programme should include planning skills.	
	5.1.6 A life coaching programme should include reflection.	
	5.1.7 A life coaching programme should encourage self-motivation.	
	5.1.8 A life coaching programme should facilitate the integration of theory into the students' lives.	
	5.1.9 A life coaching programme should create awareness of the broader context of social work.	
5.2 Social work students made suggestions on the method of delivery of a life	5.2.1 A life coaching programme could be implemented through	5.2.1.1 A life coaching programme could be implemented through

coaching programme.	personal contact.	contact with lecturers.
		5.2.1.2 A life coaching programme could be implemented through contact with supervisors.
		5.2.1.3 A life coaching programme could be implemented through contact with tutors.
		5.2.1.4 A life coaching programme could be implemented through contact with senior students.
		5.2.1.5 A life coaching programme could be implemented through contact with student groups.
		5.2.1.6 A life coaching programme could be implemented through contact with counsellors.
		5.2.1.7 A life coaching programme could be implemented through contact with welfare organisations and social workers in practice.
	5.2.2 A life coaching programme could be implemented through electronic means.	5.2.2.1 A life coaching programme could be implemented through <i>myUnisa</i> .
		5.2.2.2 A life coaching programme could be

		implemented through a DVD.
		5.2.2.3 A life coaching programme could be implemented through Facebook.
		5.2.2.4 A life-coaching programme could be implemented through e-mail.
	5.2.3 A life coaching programme could be implemented through study material.	
5.3 Social work students made suggestions on the manner of presenting a life coaching programme.	5.3.1 A life coaching programme should be fun and creative.	
	5.3.2 A life coaching programme should assist students to consolidate their experiences of their study journey at the end of each year.	
	5.3.3 A life coaching programme should emphasise students' responsibility for their own growth.	
	5.3.4 A life coaching programme should reach all students.	
	5.3.5 A life coaching	

	programme should create a safe place.	
	5.3.6 A life coaching programme should specifically focus on students at risk.	

In the following section the themes, as set out in the table above, are discussed.

4.2.1 Discussion of themes

Two themes will be discussed, namely (a) participants' perspectives on the attributes of a good social worker and their suggestions as to how these can be developed in social work students as well as (b) participants' suggestions on a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context.

THEME 4: SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF A GOOD SOCIAL WORKER AND SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW THESE CAN BE DEVELOPED IN STUDENTS

One of the questions in the interview guide was: "Describe the personal and professional attributes of a good social worker." As part of the probing, participants also came up with ideas on how these attributes could be developed in social work students.

Therefore, this theme consists of two sub-themes, namely social work students' perspectives on the attributes of a good social worker as well as social work students' suggestions as to how these attributes can be developed in students.

Sub-theme 4.1 Social work students' perspectives on the attributes of a good social worker

This sub-theme is divided into the following categories:

- A good social worker has a sound knowledge base.
- A good social worker has a variety of appropriate skills.

- A good social worker has an attitude of service.
- A good social worker has a clear set of values that result in appropriate ethical conduct.

Category 4.1.1 A good social worker has a sound knowledge base

Four sub-categories were identified as part of the first sub-theme. A good social worker should:

- Have a sound theoretical knowledge base of social work
- Have a practical knowledge base
- Have a thorough self-knowledge
- Undergo continuing professional development.

Sub-category 4.1.1.1 A good social worker has a sound theoretical knowledge base of social work

The theoretical knowledge base in social work consists of theories illuminating the understanding of people, the role of the social worker and practice approaches (Trevithick, 2008:7).

Students voiced their opinion in this regard as follows:

“Because of the experience and the environment they will be exposed to, they will be able to make theory part of their lives. I will have theory as my bullet proof [armour].”

“I will think of somebody having a lot of knowledge. Especially in specific areas. The knowledge part is very important.”

“Even other approaches. You go out into the world, you are trained PCA and other people are trained differently. You need to know which theory you work with and why. You also need to know the other theories in order to be able to incorporate that which fit yourself.”

Participants highlighted the importance of knowledge of different areas or fields and a variety of theoretical approaches, as is indicated by the storylines above.

The Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], 2013) states that social work students should, at the end of their first social work professional qualification, have been exposed to four conceptual components which includes the domain of the social work profession, the domain of the social work professional, methods of social work practice as well as the paradigm of the social work profession.

The Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) registered at the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work. n.d.) sets 27 outcomes to be achieved by students before registration. The required knowledge is specified in the associated assessment criteria (criteria used to assess whether the outcomes have been reached) of the various outcomes; e.g., knowledge of the nature of client systems and their dynamics, appropriate theoretical frameworks, knowledge of research, understanding of key elements, functions and principles of social welfare and social work.

Sub-category 4.1.1.2 A good social worker has a practical knowledge base

Practical knowledge refers to the use of known knowledge and the way new knowledge is created (Trevithick, 2008:15).

The participants also indicated that it is necessary for a good social worker to be able to put the theory he/she has studied into practice:

“(You are a good social worker) . . . when you can relate the practice to the theory you have.”

“To have a holistic picture of the situation, of the person, facilitates participation, being very practical . . . (A good social worker is) someone who can incorporate these things.”

“I think if you want to achieve something you must learn very hard and be able to put theory in practice.”

Social work standards and outcomes confirm these convictions. In the Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession (IFSW, 2013) the section covering methods of social work practice specifies the importance of sufficient practice

skills in assessment, relationship building and the helping process to achieve the goals of the programme for intervention, use of research skills as well as the application of social work values, principles, knowledge and skills to promote care, respect and responsibility amongst members of a society.

The 27 outcomes of the BSW registered at the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work. n.d.) are written in the form of outcomes to stress the importance of practicing knowledge; e.g., “develop and maintain professional social work relationships with system” and “assess client systems’ social functioning”.

Sub-category 4.1.1.3 A good social worker has a thorough self-knowledge

Self-knowledge or self-awareness is the ability to observe oneself objectively and extend beyond a skill to include personal beliefs, feelings, experiences and behaviours (Kumar, 2007:77-78).

“The understanding of yourself on a professional side and a personal side, if you understand yourself on a professional side, you get to respect your ethics.”

“For me understanding my values. Who am I, where am I coming from? I am a wife, I am a mother. I need to come here and do what I am supposed to do.”

As part of self-knowledge it is important for social workers to **know their professional and personal values**, as explained through the utterances above.

“The ability and desire to grow on the part of the social worker and to self-reflect. If you want to grow and to develop, then you have to self-reflect. To be able to really self-reflect and change.”

“To evaluate myself as a counsellor as how I was interacting with the child. It helps me that on each day I learn a lot because when I [introspect] (reflect on) myself by evaluating myself, I end up realising that, in that part as a counsellor maybe I made a mistake.”

According to the participants, a good social worker **reflects** on him- or herself and his/her **own interaction**.

“Knowing what you want to do with your life, some people choose social work to find this is not their interest. Knowing yourself, knowing what you want to do.”

“Like me as a human being, finding out who I am and what I am like.”

A good social worker knows his/her **interest/passion**. One of the participants voiced the importance of a good social worker as **knowing his/her goals**:

“If you understand that life is changing. The experiences you had today, are not going to determine who you are in the future. Irrespective of whatever challenges you have faced. Even your background, if [I] (you) come from a poor family, [I] (you) can still become a professional somebody as long as you know who you are. Understanding yourself. Knowing your goals. . .”

The participants were of the opinion that a good social worker should know or be aware of his/her values, patterns of interaction with others, interests and goals. Dettlaff, Moore and Dietz (2006:3) refer to literature confirming that social workers who are self-aware, who have the ability to know personal attitudes, values, strengths and limits, can be more successful practitioners. They also identify social workers’ ability to perceive how others respond to them as a crucial component of self-awareness or self-knowledge.

Personality type is described as one of the factors known to have a significant impact on relationships with others. In his guide, *Successful Social Work Education*, Barsky (2006:15) underlines the importance of social work students knowing why they have selected social work as a profession and continuously assess themselves against the outcomes of their training course. Good social workers have a passion for the profession and set the requirements of the profession as goals guiding their learning and practice.

Sub-category 4.1.1.4 A good social worker has to undergo continuing professional development (CPD)

In South Africa, CPD refers to “a statutorily determined process that requires persons registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) to obtain a specified number of points annually in order to maintain ethical and high-quality service by attending or participating in activities of a professional nature in order to remain registered with the SACSSP” (Lombard, Pruis, Grobbelaar & Mhlanga, 2010:107).

One of the focus groups saw social workers **keeping up to date** with new information as essential:

“Updating yourself with current information. Things keep on changing. Be open for [new] ideas.”

“Also when you are out there, already a social worker. That is a lifelong learning. . .”

A newly employed social worker shared her experience of coming into practice and continuing the learning process:

“. . .When you start out [as] a social worker you know that little bit and then you get to know and you work with a supervisor and the learning process never ends, it is like a continual learning process and you must be open to it.”

Literature confirms the role of lifelong learning in social work. “Social work education does not end when you complete your degree. Social work education is a life sentence, as social workers who do not continue to learn are destined to lose their competence as a practitioner. Without learning, knowledge becomes outdated, skills slip, self-awareness blurs, and critical thinking stagnates” (Barsky, 2006:287).

With a more positive perspective, Higham (2006:177) recognises the importance of continuing development so that newly qualified social workers can move from “competence” to “expertise”. She also recognises the difficulty busy social workers, who are immersed in practice, experience to find ways to continue their own development.

Category 4.1.2 A good social worker has a variety of appropriate skills

Two sub-categories can be distinguished, namely (a) that a good social worker has effective intervention skills and (b) that a good social worker has effective administrative skills.

Sub-category 4.1.2.1 A good social worker has effective intervention skills

“Social work intervention is a strategy by social workers to offer intervention to individuals, families and groups which enables them to meet their needs and issues” (Ask, n.d.).

Although not much was said about the various skills, participants referred to a variety of necessary skills, as was demonstrated by the different storylines below:

“I realise as a social worker you need to be an attentive listener. If you are an attentive listener, you will be able to hear what the client is saying. You will be able to remember what the client told you, you will be able to respond back your understanding from the client’s frame of reference.”

“You have to be a good listener. You have to attend to the person. If you fail to do that you will not be able to be a good helper.”

“Listening and patience. They go together.”

Most participants have agreed that a good social worker **listens** well.

“Creating a safe space.”

A good social worker can **create a safe space**.

“You have to add empathy to the perfect social worker.”

A good social worker can use **empathy** well.

“Understanding your skills, like understanding immediacy. When you get to a point where you are challenged, knowing how to put those skills into practice.”

A good social worker uses **immediacy**.

“In one of my reports my supervisor said, ‘F, you focus too much on the negative, where are the positives?’ and that was a lesson.”

A good social worker can recognise the **clients’ strengths and potential**.

“Being creative. Sometimes to get through to the client if there is a block you need to do weird things and you have [got] to think out of the box, so being creative is important.”

A good social worker is **creative**.

Skills needed to practice social work are specified in the exit level outcomes of the BSW. One of the 27 exit level outcomes of the BSW registered at the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work. n.d.) is to “develop and maintain professional social work relationships with client systems”. Two of the associated assessment criteria are implementation of social work principles at the individual, family, community and organisational level as well as the creation of enabling environments for clients to develop their full capacity. The participants were referring to their prescribed book on the person-centred facilitation: process, theory and practice (Grobler & Schenck, 2009), focusing on creating a safe space for clients through unconditional positive regard, using basic skills of listening, empathy and attending as well as the advanced skills of immediacy, advanced empathy and identifying discrepancies.

The second exit level outcome of the BSW (SAQA Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work. n.d.) reads: “. . . assess the client system’s social functioning”, while one of the associated assessment criteria refers to the analyses of needs and strengths of client systems from the perspective of an appropriate theoretical framework.

One of the critical cross-field outcomes (outcomes applicable in various fields) of the qualification is to collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information. This implies the ability to be creative and “think outside the box” (Johnston, 2009:646).

Sub-category 4.1.2.2 A good social worker has effective administrative skills

As far as administrative skills are concerned, participants referred mainly to time management skills. The following statements attest to this opinion:

“Waiting for reports and requesting reports and a month down the line [we] (you) still don’t have it and then you have [got] to phone again [and that kind of thing], especially from social workers in other provinces.”

“You either don’t get feedback or you have to wait six to eight months for a screening report. If you cannot do it in time just let them know and say that you cannot do it, can you make another date for it.”

“And how to manage their time is important, like having due dates for reports. If he or she (works at an) [has] organization we are giving you a week time frame to write your report, [make] (write) that report. So that in the world of work it is going to be easy for that student and she will be knowing that there is a due date for everything.”

Newly employed social workers felt strongly that social workers in practice lacked time management skills and that it was essential to develop this skill in social work students.

Outcome 22 of the BSW (SAQA Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work. n.d.) reads: “. . .demonstrate understanding of roles, functions, principles and characteristics of management and administration within social service delivery”. The associated assessment criteria require knowledge of management roles, skills and procedures.

In an article on the transition from student to employee within the context of a statutory social work organisation, the importance of new employees meeting deadlines is emphasised. A suggestion is also made that more time should be spent to teach social work students time management skills (Hay, Franklin & Hardyment, 2012:7-8).

Category 4.1.3 A good social worker has an attitude of service

The participants identified six characteristics of a good social worker. These features can also be seen as descriptions of an attitude of service, referring to the social worker's willingness to put the needs of the client first.

Sub-category 4.1.3.1 A good social worker has the desire to help people

The following storylines picture social workers as having a passion to help people:

"I think the desire to help people, that is very important, without the desire to help you will just be doing the same thing all over again, just routine, waking up, going to work."

"Another thing social work students must do, is to love this field or job of social work, [than] (not) to love [of] the benefits of the work, but to love the whole of this work of social work."

"Passion for your job, a passion for helping people ['helping' in inverted commas] but empowering people if you want to use that term rather."

These characteristics are confirmed by literature consulted. On the web-sites of some South African universities, a person who will be suitable to study Social Work is depicted as somebody who has a genuine interest in all people, irrespective of race, gender, beliefs and values. This student is concerned about people's problems and needs (UNISA, 2012e; University of Venda, 2010:6). In a study done in the United Kingdom (UK), service users were asked about their expectations of social workers working in the field of palliative care. They valued social workers who were responsive to their needs, but also those of their families or the group of people linked to them (Beresford, Croft & Adshead, 2008:1399).

Sub-category 4.1.3.2 A good social worker is patient, friendly and kind

According to Blennberger (2011:11), examples of ethical qualities in social work include a basic attitude of respect, friendliness and equality. The following excerpts describe a good social worker's attitude towards his or her clients:

"The patience to help people."

“People must feel free, being amongst you. They must not feel that you are a scary person. You must be approachable.”

“So just do your work and do it well and be friendly to the clients.”

A good social worker is **kind and approachable** towards clients.

Service users highlighted the importance of a social worker being kind, warm, compassionate, caring, sensitive, thoughtful and showing empathy. They stressed the importance of the relationship with the social worker, while some described the social worker as their friend (Beresford et al., 2008:1393-1395).

Sub-category 4.1.3.3 A good social worker is able to set boundaries

Participants were of the opinion that boundaries are important when working with people:

“You know there are always limitations, (a) boundar(y)[ies] that you don’t have to cross. This is my role as social worker. . .”

“Always to be able to have boundaries, to recognise the personal power of the social worker, to be assertive to say this is my boundaries. Otherwise you are going to lose it. If you are there for everyone and everything. At the same time to be open.”

“Be flexible in your boundaries.”

These boundaries have to be flexible to accommodate clients.

The importance of setting boundaries is confirmed in the literature. Service users appreciated social workers being flexible in setting their boundaries (Beresford et al., 2008:1395). They valued it that social workers sometimes went beyond what was expected of them, by, for example, visiting a family who has lost a member on the night of the loss.

Codes of ethics also assist social workers to know where to set boundaries in their relationships with clients, colleagues, employers and the community (SACSSP, 2012).

Sub-category 4.1.3.4 A good social worker is willing to give time to clients

The following storylines link with the previous perception that the boundaries of social workers should be flexible:

“Maybe the client was helped by your colleague. The client comes again when your colleague is not available. Help them if you can. Don’t say, ‘This person is not available, come again’.”

“Even the willingness to sacrifice the time because maybe when the client comes and needs your help and you don’t have the time [maybe its ten to four], so you must have that willingness to sacrifice.”

“A willingness to go that extra mile if necessary. I know you work set hours but if it’s required, you go the extra mile.”

This attribute of a good social worker is confirmed by literature. Being given enough time, social workers emerged as being central to service users. They valued that social workers were available and accessible should they need their services. It seemed that service users did not overwhelm social workers with calls for help but felt safe to know they would be available (Beresford et al., 2008:1398).

A study done in 2002 with the National Occupational Standards in the UK (cited by Higham, 2006:31) assessed the expectations that service users and carers have of social workers. One of the expectations was that social workers had to give individuals, families, carers, groups and communities sufficient time to work with them properly.

Sub-category 4.1.3.5 A good social worker is willing to learn from clients

Participants were of the opinion that a good social worker is open to his/her clients’ input and willing to learn from them, as is clear from the following assertions:

“You must have a teachable spirit, be willing to learn from others.”

“A willingness to admit that you are wrong and that you are always learning. You have never kind of ‘arrived’.”

These assertions correspond with the views of service users. Having a say or being recognised as being the expert of their lives is very important to service users (Beresford et al., 2008:1396; Higham, 2006:31-35). Service users and carers expected social workers to recognise their expertise about their own situation (Higham, 2006:34). Recognising the expertise of another person, implies the willingness to learn from them.

Sub-category 4.1.3.6 A good social worker practises self-control and does not abuse power

Situations arise in social work that involve ethical dilemmas. Social workers have to treat clients with respect and create a positive relationship in a job that has unavoidable elements of control (Blennberger, 2011:6). The following remarks were made by participants in this regard:

“To me (a good social worker is) also someone that doesn’t get satisfaction from other people’s hurt because this comes again to the power thing. Also how they (social workers) gossip, it’s like they swim in it, it’s terrible.”

“Sticking to your [ethical] SACSSP guidelines are very important, not getting upset with other social workers [laughs], which is in the SACSP guidelines so you are not supposed to do that.”

“Self-control, don’t get cross which is very difficult but yes, don’t get cross.”

Participants warned that social workers should not put personal gain first.

The literature consulted confirms the rights of clients. The importance of being involved in all meetings between social workers and individuals, families, caregivers, groups and communities in order to develop and/or maintain independence were emphasised by service users and caregivers (Higham, 2006:33-34).

The Code of Ethics (SACSSP, 2012.) states that the social service practitioner must maintain a professional relationship with the client; acknowledge the client’s right of self-determination; take the client’s rights into account, even in his/her absence and respect the client’s right to decide whether or not to co-operate with the social worker.

Category 4.1.4 A good social worker has a clear set of values that result in appropriate ethical conduct

All social workers have to make difficult ethical choices in their practices and should consider ethical codes as well as their own value system to guide their decisions (Higham, 2006:113). Students who participated in the study recognised the role that professional ethics and personal values play in the life of a good social worker.

This category consists of five sub-categories:

- A good social worker respects all clients.
- A good social worker adheres to confidentiality with clients.
- A good social worker is non-judgemental towards all clients.
- A good social worker allows all clients self-determination.
- A good social worker's personal values are in line with his/her professional values.

Sub-category 4.1.4.1 A good social worker respects all clients

Participants underlined the value of respect as follows:

“Respect is most important. You first have to respect yourself and other people. You have to work with people. Respect can play a major role.”

“As a professional somebody you need to respect people. Not to [put threat] (treaten) [on] people. So that you can empower them, they can feel free, if they have challenges, they can feel free to share with you.”

“Respect for every single person that walks in the door. It doesn't matter who they are, what they are, you respect your clients. You treat them with dignity, you treat them with respect.”

Respect is a central value in social work and can be described as acceptance of the client as a person who is able to direct him- or herself. A social worker will show respect by refraining from judging the client. He/she will rather try to understand the client irrespective of whether he/she approves of the client's behaviour. The social worker also doesn't try to avoid the client's pain but enables him/her to work through it (Grobler &

Schenck, 2009:38-40). Service users pointed out that relations with health and welfare services can often be disempowering. For this reason, they saw being treated respectfully by social workers as a strength (Beresford et al., 2008:1397).

Sub-category 4.1.4.2 A good social worker adheres to confidentiality with clients

According to Grobler and Schenck (2009:43), confidentiality means that what has been said will remain private and will not be repeated to someone else. Participants agreed on the importance of confidentiality:

“You must be confidential.”

“You have to be able to keep a secret. You can’t reveal the client’s information.”

“As a social worker you have to be able to keep a secret. If your client comes to you and say things which is bothering him, and you go and tell the next person, people will say: ‘That social worker, you can’t trust him, he will tell the whole community, you have AIDS . . .’ Keeping secrets is very, very most important.”

These utterances of participants are in line with the Code of Ethics (SACSSP, 2012), stating that a social service practitioner should maintain the client’s right to confidentiality. Service users and caregivers expected social workers to respect confidentiality and explain when there is a need to share information with others (Higham, 2006:32). Confidentiality is, however, a controversial issue and often requires the social worker to make difficult ethical decisions; e.g., whether it is in the best interest of the client to share specific information or not. Grobler and Schenck (2009:44) believe the key to solving these dilemmas lies in involving the client in taking these decisions.

Sub-category 4.1.4.3 A good social worker is non-judgemental towards all clients

Refraining from judgement can be seen as part of respect. The social worker should not impose his/her values on others or condemn behaviour which is offensive to him/her (Grobler & Schenck, 2009:40). The following storylines refer to the value of being non-judgemental or accepting clients unconditionally:



“Being a social worker you should not judge people maybe (because) of their status or how much they earn.”

“Listen(ing) to everything that people is saying and not judging other people irrespective of their values, cultures, their background.”

“Their uniqueness. Their difference. The uniqueness of people. That we are totally different. To be aware that every individual is unique. Whether they have HIV/ Aids or if they are poor but they are unique. So you have to deal with them all differently.”

Being non-judgemental implies the acceptance of human diversity. Outcome 9 of the BSW (SAQA Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work. n.d.) reads as follows: “. . .demonstrate social work values while interacting with human diversity”.

The associated assessment criteria refer to the awareness of different viewpoints and values, the ability to appreciate these in relation to one’s own viewpoints and values, sensitivity for diversity reflected in assessments and interventions, team work and referral to resources in line with the client’s unique needs. Service users appreciated the help they had gained from being able to express their feelings without the social worker being judgemental (Beresford et al., 2008:1397).

Sub-category 4.1.4.4 A good social worker allows all clients self-determination

Social workers ought to strive to help their clients to develop the capacity to come to their own decisions as far as this does not involve a threat to the freedom of other people (Blennberger, 2011:8). Participants voiced their conviction that clients should be trusted to make their own decisions:

“To make people aware of the ownership of their own situation. To be free, to participate freely.”

“(It is) [N](n)ot about me knowing everything. I am not an expert, you are stupid. You should show them, I am not an expert. We are together in this.”

“So that you can empower them, they can feel free, if they have challenges, they can feel free to share with you.”

The importance of self-determination is stressed by service users and theory. Service users and caregivers stressed the importance of a good social worker acknowledging their expertise and agenda by involving individuals, families, caregivers, groups and communities in setting their own goals and planning an intervention strategy (Beresford et al., 2008:1396; Higham, 2006:32-36). Self-determination is a central concept in the person-centred approach with the view that people tend to move forward in the direction of growth. Social workers should allow their clients to decide how they perceive their worlds, how to fulfil their needs, which values to hold, and if and how to develop their selves (Grobler & Schenck, 2009:42-43).

Sub-category 4.1.4.5 A good social workers' personal values are in line with his/her professional values

Participants seemed to differ about whether personal values should mirror professional values, as can be seen from the following two excerpts:

“ . . .but if I can make sure that my personal values are in line with my profession.”

“ . . .You get to respect your values as a professional person. It doesn't mean you will let go of your personal values, of whatever you value on a personal level. If you understand both, you will be a good professional social worker.”

This divide is also visible in the literature. Sevenhuizen (cited by Earle, 2008:118) states that professional values cannot be separated from personal values, but that professionals should personally commit to these values as a way of life. Wiles (2011:36-51) investigated the conflict that some codes of ethics create between the personal and professional identities of students by expecting that social workers and students behave in- and outside of work in a way suitable to the profession. She argues that the same life experience that brought some students to social work may put them in the “regulatory spotlight” and make it difficult to reconcile their personal and professional identities. Grobler and Schenck (2009:40) recognise a distinction between personal and professional values. They state that a social worker needs to know his/her own values, and develop openness and self-acceptance in order to be congruent and not judge or condemn clients for living out values different from their own.

Discussion of Theme 4, Sub-theme 1

The description of a good social worker by Clark (cited in Earle, 2008:93) almost serves as a summary of the characteristics of a “good social worker” or prospective social worker as someone who has a “heart for people”, who wants to help others, who has an “ear for listening”, who knows how to make maximal use of minimum resources, who is good at decision-making, who can think on their feet, who is able to communicate clearly and with confidence with a diversity of people, who is emotionally balanced and does not carry heavy personal baggage, who does not suffer from mental illness, who has a high sense of responsibility and who will “never think that there is nothing to be done”.

As in the previous chapter, the socio-critical model for understanding and enhancing student success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011) was used to make sense of the findings. The attributes of a good social worker refer to the definition of “success” as portrayed in the model (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:188) – social work students could see success as completing their degree, developing the attributes of a good social worker in order to fit the requirements of employers or may celebrate personal growth even if they did not complete their degree. Their definition of success will influence the individual goals set by students although the outcomes required by the BSW and the general perspective of what a good social worker should do and be like, also influence the goals towards which social work students would work. This picture of success will be compared with the student’s identity and attributes. This includes knowledge of the self as situated agent, the self with capital and habitus which, in turn, include aspects like the student’s background and previous experience, strengths and weaknesses, attitudes, assumptions and values. The student then has to confirm his/her choice of social work as a profession, and set goals on how to fill the gap identified between the picture of success and the picture the student has of him- or herself.

Sub-theme 4.2 Social work students’ suggestions as to how these attributes can be developed in social work students

Although the participants found it easier to identify the attributes of a good social worker than to make suggestions as to how these could be developed in social work students, a few ideas did emerge.

This sub-theme consists of five categories:

- Attributes of a good social worker can be developed through students dealing with their personal problems.
- Attributes of a good social worker can be developed through written assignments as part of course work.
- Attributes of a good social worker can be developed through supervision.
- Attributes of a good social worker can be developed by students building on who they are.
- Attributes of a good social worker can be developed through self-reflection.

Category 4.2.1 Attributes of a good social worker can be developed through students dealing with their personal problems

Participants voiced their opinions on this topic as follows:

“. . . You are going to face a rapist and if you have been raped yourself. If you are not congruent, you are going to burst out towards that person and be judgemental. Be real. Don't pretend or don't suppress emotions. Deal with yourself, your emotions. Face your challenges and know yourself so that you can help others.”

“It will be easier if we can be given a chance to deal with our own experience. You can't help people find closure if you don't have it yourself.”

“Some people come with experience they have never dealt with . . . to find closure. You can't help people find closure if you don't have it yourself. It is other obstacles, if we can get closure. I am torn apart. If you can start with us, start by healing. Then we will be able to help others.”

Participants suggested that social work students need to learn to deal with their own problems, especially if they work with people with similar issues. However, a study done at the University of the Western Cape contradicts the view of participants. Dykes (2011:521) investigated the perception that the high incidence of adverse childhood experiences of social work students, including emotional, sexual and physical abuse, family members abusing alcohol or drugs, imprisonment and family violence impacts on their learning, and compromises their future professional and ethical practice. She found

that the majority of participants in her study overcame certain experiences on their own with positive outcomes and showed personal strength, willingness to help others gaining skills and community participation. She does, however, suggest that students who do not prevail and may harbour emotional scars should be helped so that they do not enter the profession in order to make sense of their traumatic experiences and have a negative impact on clients.

In contrast to Dykes (2011:521), Lawlor (2008:111), Lintvelt (2008:125) and Wade (2009) found that students are negatively influenced by trauma, such as death in the family, violence and family breakdowns. They recommended that these students be referred for professional help which could be at the student counselling service, peer counsellors or at organisations which render counselling at low cost.

Category 4.2.2 Attributes of a good social worker can be developed through written assignments as part of course work

Two aspects are covered in this theme, namely time management and reflection. Newly employed social workers suggested the following as far as assignments are concerned:

“So in a way that if you think of how to prepare them (social work students), so that they must know that even in your fourth year when you do your process notes, that there is a deadline to the process notes, that they must (stick) to that.”

“Just do the things you are supposed to do, like assignments, and do it on time. So just do your work and do it well and be friendly to the clients.”

To ensure that students learn to manage their time effectively and take responsibility, lecturers should be stricter on due dates of assignments.

Social work students often have many demands claiming their time, for example assignments, working at their placement organisations, and attending to personal and family needs. Time management is one of the most important skills to learn when studying social work. Students should learn to diarise due dates for assignments and keep to it (Barsky, 2006:166).

One first-level focus group referred to an assignment which required them to reflect on themselves and social work as a profession, to reflect on whether they have made the right career choice:

“An assignment for SCK103 (now SCK1503), whereby it gave us a challenge to rethink, to look for yourself, to see if we want to turn back.”

In her study, Dykes (2011:529) used an assignment to give students the opportunity to reflect on their traumatic experiences. She states that “learning professional behaviour can be facilitated by an appropriate and modern curriculum design”.

Category 4.2.3 Attributes of a good social worker can be developed through supervision

Participants agreed that supervisors play an essential role facilitating the development of good social workers, as the following statements indicate:

“It depends a lot on your supervisors, your attitude to the job . . . your supervisor is crucial for working with the student because you develop quite a close bond . . . and they make an impact on you as a person and it motivates you to become like them, to be as committed as they are.”

“I was extremely lucky that I had brilliant supervisors at second year, at third year and then again at fourth year. If your quality of supervisors is of that calibre, I think you are through, any student will get through.”

One participant stressed the responsibility of the students to make good use of supervision:

“The other thing that I have learned is that sometimes the facilitator or the supervisor they can be very good. But if the students are not going to make use of them, then goodness, no one can appreciate (a good supervisor).”

Literature indicates that the relationship between a supervisor and a student is a fundamental element of a student’s professional development during practical placement. Dettlaff et al. (2006:72-73) refer to various authors indicating that the quality of this

relationship has a significant effect on the student's learning, satisfaction with the practical placement and overall success of the field placement. They refer to research indicating that students' perception of the quality of field instruction is the most significant factor contributing to the satisfaction with the practical placement.

It was also found that supervisees who were liked by their supervisors received higher quality supervision and psychological support. In their own study, Dettlaff et al. (2005:71) found that students who shared certain personality types with their field instructors rated the overall quality of their relationship significantly higher than those who did not.

Category 4.2.4 Attributes of a good social worker can be developed by students, building on who they are

The following storylines speak to this:

"It starts within yourself. You know I love working with people or I hate working with people. You know your temper. I can't handle this, I can handle this. It is about knowing yourself, what you can handle. You just add on what you already have, just make it professional. You have grown up respecting people, small people, elder people, young ones. You grew up with that value. Now you are adding on it, just taking it from a personal to a professional level."

"Being aware of yourself and your shortcomings and knowing what it takes to become a good social worker. . ."

Participants suggested that students should know themselves, be aware of who they are, their strengths and weaknesses, and then build what they need to be as good social workers, on who they already are and what they already have.

Literature confirms the above storylines. Social workers do not only bring professional skills and knowledge to practice, but also their "selves". Students should become aware of the self that they bring to practice, but also use this self intentionally in the way they build a relationship with their clients, apply theory or serve as role models to their clients (Reupert, 2009:765-777).

In a workbook, *Successful Social Work Education, A Student's Guide*, Barsky (2006:168) advises students to identify their strengths and develop their confidence by building on their strengths.

Category 4.2.5 Attributes of a good social worker can be developed through self-reflection

Through self-reflection social workers and students may develop the capacity to understand their own feelings, beliefs and behaviour while it occurs, and learn to behave in more flexible ways. They can also learn to understand their own biases in relation to their personal worlds. Self-reflection is important in cultural sensitive practice (Furman, Coyne & Negi, 2008:71-73).

“The ability and desire to grow on the part of the social worker (and student) and to self-reflect. If you want to grow and develop, then you have to self-reflect. To be able to really self-reflect and change. . .”

This quote implies that students need to do self-reflection throughout their study journey and their careers as social workers.

When asked what would hinder the development of attributes of a good social worker, one participant referred to a lack of self-awareness:

“Maybe it is because we are not self-aware of ourselves. You don't know how to come to the situation of being self-aware.”

The importance of reflection in development of practice or experiential knowledge has long been acknowledged. Schon (cited in Misha & Bogo, 2007:531) distinguishes between “reflection in practice” where practitioners reflect on what they do while engaging in the activity and “reflection on practice” which entails reflection after the experience.

Discussion of Theme 4, Sub-theme 2

In this section, the importance for students to work through personal problems, supervision, integrating professional and personal growth in the curriculum, and self-

reflection were emphasised. The link between the process of personal and professional development of social work students within an ODL context and the socio-critical model for success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011) will not be discussed here, but only in the next discussion.

THEME 5: SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS MADE AND IMPLIED VARIOUS SUGGESTIONS FOR A LIFE COACHING PROGRAMME

Life coaching was described to participants as a process of facilitating self-awareness, setting goals, and facilitating personal and professional development. Participants were then asked which core elements should be included in a life coaching programme aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context and how such a programme should be implemented. Some comments may also imply satisfiers which could be included in a life coaching programme.

Three sub-themes were identified:

- Social work students made suggestions on the core elements of a life coaching programme.
- Social work students made suggestions on the method of delivery of a life coaching programme.
- Social work students made suggestions on the manner of presenting a life coaching programme.

Sub-theme 5.1 Social work students made suggestions on the core elements of a life coaching programme

This sub-theme includes nine categories. Suggestions were made that a life coaching programme should focus on the self of the student, including self-knowledge, strengths and weaknesses, personal issues, the student's life story as well as interpersonal skills.

Category 5.1.1 A life coaching programme should include the development of self-awareness

Two sub-categories were identified as part of self-awareness, namely reflecting on strengths and weaknesses, and focusing on personal problems.

Sub-category 5.1.1.1 A life coaching programme should facilitate students to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses

Participants underlined the importance of self-reflection in the following statements:

“To a large extent your self-awareness and reflection presupposes awareness . . and a willingness to be critical of yourself and a willingness to recognise your flaws and recognise your weaknesses and your strengths . . . A lot of times people have a false belief in themselves and they don’t want to recognise that they might have a bit of a flaw or they might be weak in this area or whatever that has to be overcome. . .”

“Being aware of yourself and your shortcomings and knowing what it takes to be a good social worker. . .”

One participant referred to his/her own weakness:

“My worry is my short temper. I have to be patient with clients. I keep on asking (telling) myself. If I am a qualified social worker, I will have to be patient with people. I will have to put my issues aside and deal with the clients. I have to deal with my shortcoming now.”

Students emphasised that a life coaching programme should facilitate the awareness of strengths and weaknesses. Facilitating self-awareness is part of the early stages of coaching, irrespective of the approach or model being used (Driver, 2011:17; Janse van Rensburg, 2009:145-193; Mumford, 2007:29; Starr, 2011:237). In order to set goals, clients need to know who they are, what they want to change and what resources they have. Some coaches focus on strengths and weaknesses, e.g. by doing a strengths assessment, information is gained on which strengths clients are currently using, which are under-used as well as identifying areas of weakness (Driver, 2011:21).

Other coaches facilitate self-awareness by identifying areas in the client’s life that they want to change as well as their values and belief systems (The Coaching Centre, 2009). Differences in personality profiles, learning and thinking styles, decision-making styles, and issues of diversity and cultural differences can also be addressed (Janse van Rensburg, 2009:145-193). Self-awareness can be cultivated by the coach asking questions, the client completing a profiling exercise or tool, or keeping a learning diary (Starr, 2011:236-237).

Sub-category 5.1.1.2 A life coaching programme should focus on the student's personal problems

Participants shared the following:

“When we share it (our personal issues) it becomes lighter. Participation should be more emphasised in social work.”

“You will even pressurise yourself: ‘I am a student social worker, I must be able to handle this.’ Sometimes I put myself in an edge, ‘I don’t want to do this anymore.’ You need somebody to say: ‘It is ok, we have been here, we know.’ Just listen, we know.”

Sometimes participants just need somebody to listen to them, as is apparent from the storylines above.

A suggestion was made that the life coaching programme focus on the student's **life story or background**. One participant felt this was already done at workshops:

“. . . Like me as a human being, finding out who I am and what I am like . . . It was done through self-assessments where you are asked to self-assess things. Also workshops like the story of my life, you had to do it and you had to see how you grew as a person and a student.”

Although listening is one of the most important coaching skills, a clear distinction is made between coaching and counselling. Coaching deals with the client's present and seeks to guide the client into a more desirable future, while counselling deals mostly with the client's past and trauma where a client seeks healing (The Coaching Centre, 2009:13). Also see Table 1.3 in Chapter 1 explaining the differences between coaching, counselling, mentoring and consulting.

However, should a client need counselling, a coach will refer him/her for counselling. Coaching does not focus on a client's past in order to work through unfinished business, but rather on information of the client's background, or his life story may be used to develop self-awareness of his/her own uniqueness, strengths, weaknesses or goals (Schwarz & Davidson, 2009:127).

Category 5.1.2 A life coaching programme should include guidance on career and module choices

“Selecting a career is one of the most important choices that is made during one’s lifetime” (Rullo, 2011:25).

Participants made the following suggestions:

“It could make it better to maybe have some kind of pre-counselling thing when people want to choose social work. Before the deadlines when things come in that they can actually have someone. Not on registration day because those people are so busy.”

“But you get these career tools that sort of guide you a little bit that yes, maybe you should go into the industry or not. I did that I think in my first year of social work and I was still working as well and I did one (a career assessment) and it was fascinating to see that I am in the right place studying what I should be studying. That was quite nice as well, so just career assessments and the quality that you have got. It’s not really a psychological assessment, it just sort of guides you.”

“Can’t you perhaps involve the Psychology Department and use their students to do the assessments?”

Participants felt that **career counselling** and selection, maybe even on the third or fourth level, would assist students to make the right decision. **Personal or career assessment**, self-administered or administered by somebody else, can also facilitate an informed career choice, as suggested by the above accounts.

Work is one of the important life areas on which life coaching focuses. Life coaches assist their clients to select the right employment, compile a CV, prepare them for job interviews and finding employment (Mumford, 2007:141-176; Nelson-Jones, 2007:177). Depending on the life coaches’ educational backgrounds, they do not always have the skills to perform psychometric assessments which could be valuable in making career choices. Clients may, therefore, have to be referred to trained career counsellors (Martin, 2001:196).

One participant suggested that students should understand as from the first level why they do specific **modules** and where these fit into the bigger picture of the journey in becoming a social worker:

“ . . . If I do one, I can’t remember the contents of what was happening after I finished the other modules and it was a bit difficult when we go to level 4 because we were just reading to pass and when we got to level 4, then reality struck and it was difficult.”

Perrault and Coleman (2004:47-64) advocate that supervisors or field instructors of social work students be trained in coaching methods in order to integrate coaching into educational supervision. As part of the process they advise that supervisors and students look wider at students’ career choices, inquiring about the students’ passions, why they have entered social work and also the reason for choosing the practicum setting. The supervisors would start the supervisory process by setting learning objectives with the students, and pinpointing these objectives in relation to the practicum and the social work profession; thus, providing a bigger picture. The same process can be followed as far as theoretical modules are concerned.

Some participants voiced their opinions on selection criteria for the BSW:

“Even if you do psychological tests that test people before they go that way (choose BSW). Or maybe in the second or third year. . .”

“I am going to put my head on a block and say yes (selection plays a role). I don’t like the idea of selecting, maybe not at first year, second year and third year level but definitely when it comes to fourth year.”

“ . . . I feel strongly about getting rid of people who are not psychological[ly] compatible for this kind of work because they have destroyed many lives.”

These participants feel strongly that a **selection process** should be part of career guidance. They also saw selection criteria as a way to protect clients. This opinion is in line with practices at various universities. Various social work departments at universities in South Africa either use psychometric, aptitude or language tests, or interviews to select their

students, such as the University of Pretoria, the University of the Free State and the North-West University (Herbst, 2013; Nolte, 2013; Reyneke, 2013).

As an ODL institution, the Department of Social Work at UNISA has not been able to set selection criteria for their students but is now, due to a continuous increase in student numbers, negotiating with the College of Human Sciences to implement selection criteria.

Category 5.1.3 A life coaching programme should include reflecting on the attributes of a good social worker

The participants expressed themselves as follows:

“I think you must include characteristics of a good social worker from the first year and the skills which are needed as a social worker.”

“Being aware of yourself and your shortcomings and knowing what it takes to be a good social worker. . .”

They suggested that knowing what to strive for, will give direction to their process of professional development, as supported by the utterances above.

In life coaching, clear goals steer the developmental process (Mumford, 2007:126-127). In order to obtain a qualification in social work in South Africa, students need to prove that they have attained the 27 outcomes set for the BSW qualification (SAQA Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work. n.d.). Students can form a picture of who they want/need to become by volunteering at welfare organisations, observing “a day in the life of a social worker”, interviewing social workers working in various fields, and working closely with their supervisors and the contact person at the organisation where they are placed for practical work (Is a career in social work a good idea?, 2012; University of Venda, 2010:7).

Category 5.1.4 A life coaching programme should link students to available resources

Kumar (2007:28) refers to resources as “opportunities”. She distinguishes three levels of opportunities, namely (a) students’ ability to access immediate, short-term opportunities to strengthen skills; (b) an analytical assessment of the extent of “fit” between their profile

and the chosen career as well as (c) a macro-awareness of the demands of the world of work.

Participants shared their suggestions in the storylines below:

“To add on to that of career guidance, is the lack of information to resources on the campus. A lot of things are here at school, but we don’t know where to find them and we do not have enough information to get them. A solution is to look for information yourself. . .”

“The Department can link us with some financial resources, some computers, with human resources.”

“To make us aware of our resources we have around us. I know UNISA has this counselling service. People can be referred there.”

According to the participants, the Department of Social Work can support them by creating awareness of and linking them to institutional resources.

The suggestion of participants corresponds with one of the fundamental principles of coaching, namely that the client is resourceful. The coach facilitates awareness and development of the client’s inner resources or strengths (Driver, 2011:31; Mumford, 2007:62-63).

With reference to learning within an ODL context, Prinsloo (2009:94) refers to Pizzolato who indicates that students should be able to “locate themselves”, to assess their risks and resources, and establish their own locus of control in order to increase their chances of success. These resources include networks of support and resources within the learning institution.

The University of South Carolina (Robison & Gahagan, 2010:26-29) involves students struggling with academic success and engagement on campus with a coaching framework of self-assessment, reflection and goal-setting. An academic plan and/or an engagement plan which includes the use of existing institutional resources are mapped for the students.

Category 5.1.5 A life coaching programme should include planning skills

Planning, and specifically planning or managing time, was identified as a potential component of a life coaching programme, as it was articulated by the following statements by participants:

“. . . I learned to manage my time effectively so I can get the results I need.”

“You can help them to plan their time better.”

“Stressing ‘being on time’.”

Planning forms an integral part of the life coaching process (Mumford, 2007:141). After the client has identified his/her goals, a plan for action has to be developed. Questions such as the following could be asked as part of the question framework (Rostron, 2009a:55-84): “What are your options?”, “What can you do differently?” or “What action steps can you take?”

In the University of South Carolina’s framework for coaching students for academic and engagement success, planning is considered essential. Students participate in the planning process which includes the development of tangible documents with academic and engagement plans as well as strategically mapping out their engagement and academic activities (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010:27). If it is identified as a need or an obstacle to success, time management can also become a theme of life coaching (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House & Sandahl, 2007:231).

Category 5.1.6 A life coaching programme should include reflection

The following storylines attest to this:

“Have something for the first years when they come in. For me what was lacking in the first year. If there would have been some kind of encouragement to get together and to get to know other UNISA students . . . It would have made of difference in the first few years.”

Participants referred to reflection which could focus on the future, the past and the experiences in the process of becoming a social worker.

Reflection should focus on **looking forward**. Participants felt that meeting other first-level students could have encouraged them, as is clear from the excerpt above.

“. . . That can be very helpful (debriefing) and also reflecting back on our learning process, every time. . .”

“The Department must acknowledge what we are going through. Doing counselling for the whole year as a student and being confronted with all the issues we have never come across. At the end of the year they leave you just like that. It is a little bit unfair. If you can tell all of the case work students to come together and just have some fun. Just to debrief them from all the things they have been confronted with.”

“Maybe towards the end of the year as today, we make a date when we all come together, when it is part of our end of the year supervision. Last year we wanted to do something to thank our supervisor, but after our evaluation we all disappeared.”

Reflection should focus on **looking back**. One fourth-level group felt particularly strong about looking back and dealing with what they have experienced during their practical work.

Perrault and Coleman (2004:53-54) describe reflective support for students as a vital component of their coaching approach for supervising students. “Reflection necessitates looking back and determining how a particular point was reached. Honest reflection demands the courage to examine personal beliefs and challenge the assumptions and traditions underpinning these beliefs. By comparison, dreaming entails looking towards the future, stretching our willingness to venture into uncertainty. Creating this forward vision requires a base of practical knowledge, previous experience, traditions and beliefs . . . Coaching involves both looking to the future through dreaming and looking to the past through reflection.”

Reflecting on the future or looking forward, implies setting goals which is one of the most important steps in coaching (Whitmore, 1992:41). The literature refers to many aspects of goal-setting; e.g., identifying the types of goals such as short-, medium- and long-term goals; “towards goals” which expresses what the client wants, and “avoidance goals”

which is about what clients are trying to get away from (Driver, 2011:41; Nelson-Jones, 2007:24).

Other authors distinguish between “performance goals”, “learning goals” and “fulfilment goals”, while others identify criteria for “good goals” being specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timed, enthusiastic, natural, understood and prepared (Mumford, 2007:142; Williams & Menendez, 2007:20).

Looking forward or backward is sometimes part of transition; for example, at beginning or ending a study career. Rituals may be used as part of life coaching to delineate a meaningful life change (Schwarz & Davidson, 2009:297-303).

“Could there not be ways that I can use to say I am here, or can’t there be someone there for me that I can just call and say I am here, which way I can do without feeling threatened that they think I am stupid or that I can’t handle my work.”

“If there was a programme for students where we can experience debriefing, what we experience during our journey, like maybe if you can speak to somebody telephonically, a professional in UNISA. . .”

“I think that students do have a need to talk about the things that they go through because what I have experienced with supervision and workshops is that a lot of time goes into (discussing) frustration (of students)”.

Reflection should focus on **the process of becoming a social worker.**

Social work students can feel overwhelmed by the demands of theory and having to perform within a practical setting. There seems to be a need for an “accompanying place” where thoughts, feelings and dilemmas could be observed, and sense could be made of experiences without students being evaluated. Although supervision is meant to be such a place, students could feel assessed since the supervisor usually has an input on marks given (Birnbaum, 2008:837-838). She suggests mindful meditation as being able to create such a place, but a life coaching programme could also fulfil this function.

Category 5.1.7 A life coaching programme should encourage self-motivation

By focusing on self-motivation, participants recognised the responsibility students have to create their own success:

“Self-motivation, it takes courage for you to do whatever you want to do. You can get support from others, but you need to know this is what I want. You also need to persevere. . .”

“Helping us to never give up. You guys can always highlight the fact that as students we always have things to give. So we must not just go down with that (give up).”

“You can also facilitate our learning pace. By encouraging us to be self-motivated.”

In coaching, motivation is used to help people to rise to their best. A coach cannot motivate a client, but can create the conditions for motivation, namely to ensure that the client has clear goals, believes that he/she can achieve them and knows what to do next (Driver, 2011:34-35). Perrault and Coleman (2004:52) state that motivation and autonomy are central processes of training and supervision. Coaching, as a method of training, encourages the development of autonomy through reflective questioning and stimulating critical thinking. According to them, “dependence in a coaching relationship is not likely since independence and autonomy are the cornerstones of effective coaching practice”.

Participants suggested that the life coaching programme focus on **dealing with success and failure** which forms part of self-motivation, as is accounted by the following storyline:

“Along the way sometimes you can feel hopeless. You fail some of the modules and you decide you want to drop out. But if you are there for them, coaching them, then they won’t do that. They will be having time to come to you and say I am experiencing a problem with this and this and this and then you advise them and you coach them. It is not the end of the world, don’t be hopeless, move on with life, study hard, change your attitude towards your courses and everything and it will help with that also.”

Defining and dealing with success and failure are part of the coaching process. Coaches celebrate success with their clients and assist them to see failure as an opportunity to grow (Mumford, 2007:83, 117; Schwarz & Davidson, 2009:320; Whitworth et al., 2007:93).

Participants suggested that the life coaching programme focus on assisting students to **recharge** themselves:

“ . . . Having the means to pick yourself up, like you feel you are a client, you can do this to recharge. To have ways to make yourself better. If you deal with people’s problems every day, they strain you, they become part of you, it is not that you close the door and say bye-bye. . . ”

All of the above aspects link with **resilience**. Resilience refers to a person’s capacity to handle environmental difficulties, demands and high pressure without experiencing negative results (Kinman & Grant, 2011:262, 270). In a study done by these authors, it was found that high resilience can be linked to emotional intelligence, the ability to reflect, empathy and social competencies. Self-care is also often a theme in life coaching (Williams & Menendez, 2007:50) as well as in social work (Moore et al. 2011:545-553).

Category 5.1.8 A life coaching programme should facilitate the integration of theory into the students’ lives

In confirmation of this category, the following storylines are provided:

“True empowerment. As social worker you will have to face situations where you will have to stand your ground and maintain the professional image. That is empowerment and the explanation of why they (social work students) have to make theory part of their lives.”

“ . . . We wear theory as our vest. When you go out to the real world you find sometimes you are pushed, this vest you will use it. . . ”

Participants were of the opinion that integration of theory and practice can empower social workers when they have to face the reality of practice.



One participant suggested that using a life coaching programme might enable students to develop coaching skills:

“Maybe by doing that you will groom some of the students to be life coaches.”

This integration of theory into a student’s life is fast-tracked when he/she does practical work. In suggesting their coaching approach to supervision, Perrault and Coleman (2004:54) state that coaching parallels can enhance the framework of the Integrating Theory and Practice Loop. This theory consists of four components, namely retrieval of experiences, reflection, linkage with formal knowledge and evaluation of students’ professional responses to events. Progression through this loop shows similarities with the coaching process – in both, the student recalls a particular incident, reflects on the incident, and links the reflection to action, purpose and options. In both, “reflection in action” examines the gap between intended and actual outcomes achieved, and narrows the gap between theory and practice.

Category 5.1.9 A life coaching programme should create awareness of the broader context of social work

Participants suggested that an awareness of current issues or the broader context in social work can prepare students to reach their professional goals:

“. . . That would be interesting and it could keep them (social work students) up to date with what is going on in South Africa.”

“Like for now what is happening in the country, the strike, they should send messages and say go and do voluntary work in hospitals.”

Students’ suggestions are captured in coaching where the client can be assisted to see the meta-view, the bigger picture of his/her situation, which helps him/her to reconnect with his/her vision and not being drawn into small details of a problem (Whitworth et al., 2007:43-44). Keeping the bigger context of social work in mind can play the same role when providing support through a life coaching programme.

Sub-theme 5.2 Social work students made suggestions on the method of delivery of a life coaching programme

This sub-theme is divided into three categories:

- A life coaching programme could be implemented through personal contact.
- A life coaching programme could be implemented through electronic means.
- A life coaching programme could be implemented through study material.

Category 5.2.1 A life coaching programme could be implemented through personal contact

Seven sub-categories were identified. Findings referred to personal contact with lecturers, supervisors, tutors, senior students, counsellors, student groups and social workers in the field.

Sub-category 5.2.1.1 A life coaching programme could be implemented through contact with lecturers

Participants stressed the importance of close **personal contact** between lecturers and students:

“...myUnisa creates a distance, if you talk about life coaching, you need to be in touch with people, not via myUnisa.”

“Keep close contact with us. As you are doing. It really motivates us. We gain insight in many things. Even you. You get to know how the students are feeling. Our needs also change. When you keep in close contact with the students it will help.”

Through this contact between students and lecturers, lecturers stay in touch with students' changing feelings and needs.

These suggestions were in line with the input from support specialists. During the interviews with staff from the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development, it was stressed that although most support programmes of UNISA are available online, the students still want to know they can go back to a “warm body”; i.e., personal contact. The lecturer of a specific module would be one option. Resources from elsewhere in UNISA,

e.g., DCCD, can also be linked to a specific module with a specific lecturer being responsible for its implementation (Deyzel, 2012b; Van Schoor, 2012a).

Sub-category 5.2.1.2 A life coaching programme could be implemented through contact with supervisors

The storylines below speak of the importance of well-trained **supervisors** for successful practical work education:

“Also to use our (supervisors), like X as my mentor when I am stuck. She was the one facilitating me. If she is free to do it with me. To mentor me now and then.”

“I think supervision will be a good place to start because they (social work students) have to attend supervision, but you can start it from your first year but then maybe via myUnisa but you make it in some way compulsory for them to join.”

Participants suggested that **supervisors** can play an important part in the implementation of a life coaching programme, even via *myUnisa*. As already mentioned in Chapter 3, Sub-theme 2.2, category 2.2.2.5 participants underlined the essential role of good, well-trained supervisors.

Dettlaff et al. (2005:72) lists elements contributing to students’ satisfaction with supervision, e.g. supervisors providing feedback on assignments, reviewing and analysing students’ cases, integrating theory and practice, and helping students to understand the practical work organisation. Perrault and Coleman (2004:47-64) describe a framework for coaching to be used for supervision. The supervisor could thus use coaching as a form of additional support to students in their personal and professional development.

Sub-category 5.2.1.3 A life coaching programme could be implemented through contact with tutors

Other participants suggested that **tutors** could be meaningfully involved in a life coaching programme. The following statements attest to this:

“Like here in first year employing tutors somewhere else or in myUnisa.”

“And the tutor should not only be about theory but more, because you were lucky you had this tutor who looked at the students as growing people with a lot of questions.”

UNISA has three types of tutors: face-to-face tutors, e-tutors and specialist science tutors who are part of the Science Foundation Programme. E-tutoring is gradually implemented at UNISA from 2013. The goal of e-tutoring is to support the students on a pedagogical, managerial, social and technical level. The ratio between tutors and students is 1:200, but students are divided into groups of 50. The tutors promote students' interaction with the study material, assess tasks and interaction of students with the system as well as liaise with the module lecturers.

Sub-category 5.2.1.4 A life coaching programme could be implemented through contact with senior students

Some participants also suggested contact with **senior students**:

“It can be another senior student . . . a lecturer . . . a supervisor . . . any of the three because it will have to be voluntarily I think. Just as long as they have been through that road.”

Various universities promote the contact between junior and senior social work students. At the Department of Social Work at the University of Venda (Thabede, 2013) a number of first-level students are linked to a fourth-level student to provide support by sharing their study experiences with the first-level students. A few good fourth-level students facilitate the learning of life skills in class for the first-level students. A prescribed book, *Life Skills*, by Van Heerden (2004) is used for this purpose.

The Social Work Department of the North-West University has an academic student society for social work students, called “Caritas”. This group supports first-level students and assist with the arrangement of level rituals, such as a ceremony where second-level students sign the declaration of SACSSP or a graduation ceremony for fourth-levels students where prizes are awarded to the best students (Herbst, 2013). UNISA also motivates their alumni students to get involved in the development of undergraduate students (my Link @ Unisa, 2013).

Sub-category 5.2.1.5 A life coaching programme could be implemented through contact with student groups

Personal contact could also be maintained through group contact as illustrated by the following storylines:

“Maybe you can facilitate it in workshops where they (social work students) can get a chance to talk [to other social work students] about their characteristics and their attributes and their type of personality. Like their attitudes, their values and so on in a workshop.”

“The way they were doing the workshop thing.”

“Like a social gathering. To get to know each other. The focus is not just your studies. A person wants to be known wider than just your study interest.”

Workshops are held at third and fourth level where student interaction is facilitated and utilised for learning. The goal of the workshops is to integrate theory and practice through group discussions, activities and role plays (Botha, 2012:2). Parts of the life coaching programme could be implemented through activities during workshops. Group contact does not only need to be personal contact. Schmidt (2012a) describes the responsibility that all UNISA students have to create their own interconnectedness, their own “little UNISA” or “world of rigorous academic engagement” consisting of lecturers, mentors, fellow students, tutors, supervisors and facilitators.

Sub-category 5.2.1.6 A life coaching programme could be implemented through contact with counsellors

Although there is a clear distinction between **counselling** and **coaching**, some participants felt **counselling** could form part of a life coaching programme, as stated below:

“I had counselling at VUDEC and it really, really helped with my anxiety, my personal life, my school work.”

“Counselling. It is very important especially when you are a first-year student. . .”

From the discussions in Chapter 4, Sub-theme 4.2, Category 4.2.1 and Chapter 4, Sub-theme 5.1, Sub-category 5.1.1.2, it is clear that there is a need for students to work through personal issues. A life coaching programme is, however, not intended to provide counselling, but it can create awareness of issues to be worked on and refer students for counselling at the university, or with ex-students or organisations who will assist students at low cost (Dykes, 2011; Lawlor, 2008; Lintvelt, 2008; Wade, 2009).

Sub-category 5.2.1.7 A life coaching programme could be implemented through contact with welfare organisations and social workers in practice

Participants also suggested contact with **welfare organisations and social workers in practice** through visits and volunteer work that could be included in a life coaching programme:

“They should visit social work organisations, to see how they are practicing in the social work environment, to make them aware of what social work is, what is inside social work. That will also help. You can give students a letter, as part of an assignment and say take this letter and go to an organisation in your area.”

“While still learning they should be exposed (to the practical field of social work) so that they have a bit of a clue of what it is all about.”

“If UNISA can print us letters so that we can volunteer at nearer places.”

Students should, however, be guided during these contacts. According to Deyzel (2012b), contact and interviews with social workers in the field can play an important part in the professional development of students. Students should be assisted though with access, guided as to what to look for, which questions to ask and how to approach workers in the field. The DCCD provides the assistant student counsellors at the Directorate with a framework of an interview when they go out in the field to interview psychologists.

Category 5.2.2 A life coaching programme could be implemented through electronic means

Virtual coaching or e-coaching can be defined as “a developmental partnership, in which all or most of the learning dialogue takes place using e-mail, either as the sole medium or

supplemented by other media” (Clutterbuck, 2010:4). Coaching can be web-based, e-mail-based, telephone-based or videoconference-based but it can use a variety of other technologies, such as mobile phone, Skype, MSN Messenger, moodle (free software e-learning platform) or Adobe Connect Professional (conference call software). The earlier application of e-coaching used single technologies, while the current application tends to use a mix of media. The choice of the mix will depend on factors like access, cost, training needed, confidentiality, security issues, number of users and depth of conversations (Clutterbuck, 2010:18; Hussain, 2010:68).

Three types of approaches to e-coaching are distinguished: pure e-development where all aspects of coaching are done through electronic means, primary e-development where the majority of coaching activities are done using electronics but interspersed with face-to-face meetings or supplementary e-development where the use of electronic media for coaching activities is seen as a useful add-on (Stokes, 2010:82). This category is divided into four sub-categories. A life coaching programme could be implemented through:

- myUnisa
- a DVD
- Facebook
- e-mail.

Sub-category 5.2.2.1 A life coaching programme could be implemented through myUnisa

The following utterances attest to this:

“Then maybe via my-Unisa but you must make it in some or other way compulsory for them to join.”

“I think myUnisa will be good to just inform people about the resources.”

“Maybe there could be a questioning and answering service where students instead of trying to phone a lecturer to get hold of them, you post your questions on that and then they come back to you.”

The above suggestion to implement the life coaching programme in this manner is supported by literature and the views of support specialists. When a web-based model is used, one can either develop a new website or an existing web-based scheme (like myUnisa), considering factors, e.g. whether you need synchronous or asynchronous communication or both, the expected number of users at any one time, the level of security required, hyperlinks to other resources, user registration, and whether the website should have audio and video capabilities or just text (Hussain, 2010:54).

During the interviews with staff at UNISA who specialise in student support, it was suggested that an online self-coaching programme could be developed with links to existing resources such as podcasts and programmes of the DCCD (Van Schoor, 2012a; Schmidt, 2012a; Deyzel, 2012b).

Sub-category 5.2.2.2 A life coaching programme could be implemented through a DVD

Participants suggested the use of a DVD explaining what social work is:

“Maybe you have a DVD explaining, what is social work, how to get into social work, when you give them their study material, you give them the DVD, they can see (watch) it at home. Using myself as an example. I am staying in Bushbuckridge. The nearest UNISA is in Nelspruit and it costs R50 to get to Nelspruit, and I don’t have R50. If I have a DVD, I can go to my neighbour to watch it.”

The suggestion to include a DVD to inform students about social work has already been implemented by the Department of Social Work. During 2012, the researcher developed a DVD with a group of fourth-level students of The Bright Site project (Department of Social Work, 2012). The aim of the DVD was to give first-level students an overview of the fields of social work, to assist them in the decision whether social work is the right profession for them and to provide an overview of the journey of studying social work at UNISA.

Various organisations were visited and the work that they do were portrayed. Various fourth-level students and social workers provided their reasons for studying social work. Students were prepared for what to expect at the different levels of their study and which

resources they could use. In 2013, the DVD was distributed to students of all the practical modules; from 2014 it will only be sent to first-level students.

Deyzel (2012b) also suggested that a life coaching programme reach out to students who have applied for registration for social work but who have not yet registered. This DVD could be sent to them. As an alternative, an SMS can be sent to these students with a link to a web page where smaller podcasts or videos from this DVD could be linked as well as a frequently asked questions facility.

Sub-category 5.2.2.3 A life coaching programme could be implemented through Facebook

Facebook could be used as a form of virtual coaching, as was suggested in the following storylines:

“You can even join us on Facebook.”

“I think even also myUnisa and Facebook even though those ones they are going to divide the students because some will not have access to computers and some will have.”

One of the second-level students, however, questioned whether the lecturers are ready to use electronic technology:

“. . .What about other facilities like Facebook? We are in the 21 Century. So it goes to you guys. Are you at all ready?”

The suggestion to use Facebook is supported by the literature and a lecturer. Facebook could be used as a form of supplementary e-development; therefore, where the use of electronic media for coaching activities is seen as a useful add-on (Stokes, 2010:82). Herbst (2013) suggested that Facebook be used well within an ODL context where students from across the country can gain immediate access to a Facebook group. This venue can also be used for transitional rituals, like welcoming new students, a candle lighting ceremony to celebrate graduation or a second-level pledge signing ceremony.

Sub-category 5.2.2.4 A life coaching programme could be implemented through e-mail

Participants suggested that e-mail be used to implement the life coaching programme:

“There should be someone who is monitoring that site every day and giving them (students) feedback. Maybe if I have heard your idea then I am still going to consult some of the people in the department, I will come back to you, even though I don’t know your name but I know your e-mail address. . .”

Details of e-mail-based coaching supporting this suggestion are provided by Stokes (2010:55, 79). With e-mail-based coaching a client can use his day-to-day e-mail address or a unique address for the purpose of coaching. This helps with additional security and the monitoring of participation. It is easier to track e-mails and to store e-mails. A disadvantage of coaching via e-mail is that it does not capture the richness of face-to-face communication by means of, for instance, tone of voice or body language.

Category 5.2.3 A life coaching programme could be implemented through study material

A few participants suggested that more “old school” methods could be used to facilitate communication between UNISA and those students who do not have access to computers. The following accounts illustrate this:

“I think through questionnaires. Some of the students come from rural areas. They do not have access to computers, it is the first time for them when they come here, they don’t have access to internet cafes. Through distributing questionnaires, by asking them questions, posting them, evaluate the questions, what problems they are facing. I think questionnaires will help a lot.”

“Maybe also to send letters with a little bit of information for those who do not have access to myUnisa.”

One participant was of the opinion that a **booklet** could be a useful tool to market the life coaching programme:



“Maybe you can put it (information on the life coaching programme) in a booklet or somewhere else . . . Yes if they (students) came to the Department of Social Work then having those papers at the reception desk so that they can grab it and write down and put it somewhere. At workshops you must also have those forms.”

These views are supported by UNISA’s policy of student support. According to the Conceptual Framework for Student Support (UNISA, 2010b:8), student support should be integrated coherently into the main learning experience of curriculum planning, of planning assessments, of offering tutorial and counselling services, and of technologies.

Support is, therefore, also an integral part of the curriculum and study material. Certain themes and activities currently used in study material can be seen as functional elements for a life coaching programme. These themes and activities are discussed in Chapter 5.

Sub-theme 5.3 Social work students made suggestions on the manner of presenting a life coaching programme

Various suggestions were made as to how the life coaching programme should be presented. This sub-theme is discussed under six categories:

- A life coaching programme should be fun and creative.
- A life coaching programme should assist students to consolidate their experiences of their study journey at the end of each year.
- A life coaching programme should emphasise students’ responsibility for their own growth.
- A life coaching programme should reach all students.
- A life coaching programme should create a safe place.
- A life coaching programme should specifically focus on students at risk.

Category 5.3.1 A life coaching programme should be fun and creative

The participants made the following suggestions:

“In my mind also there must be some fun (in the life coaching programme). There is a need for a little bit of fun. Students need encouragement sometimes. Students need fun, something which is not just focusing on the seriousness of things.”

“And then creativity. When there is creative activity, it helps a person to go deeper. It is the start, to be creative. It can unlock things that need to be addressed. It could. It could spark a need for whatever.”

“Maybe poetry. Put it in a poetry form. Not all of us have challenges. That poetry will help you to express whatever.”

Students’ suggestions on creativity were confirmed by a lecturer. When interviewed as the HoD of the Department of Social Work of the University of the Western Cape, Schenck (2013) suggested that a life coaching programme for students should be creative to capture their interest. She proposed an interactive online programme which can use a diagram of a journey to assist students to locate themselves as they progress through their study.

Life coaching is in nature also creative. Schwarz and Davidson (2009:340) motivate coaches to be creative in their design of interventions and to experiment, as creativity is about perceiving and applying things differently, rearranging existing theories, concepts, objects and facts, and being aware of the interrelationship among different things.

Category 5.3.2 A life coaching programme should assist students to consolidate their experiences of their study journey at the end of each year

One focus group emphasised the importance of reflecting at the end of each year for students to recognise their own growth during the year:

“...unless you sit there and are aware of it and bring it together for yourself, then you can just coast along and not really consolidate the year and not really look at how you started and how you grew through the year. I learnt a lot of things and I actually made notes about them after each of my years. About where I was and it was very interesting.”

One participant emphasised the coach’s role to assess with the students on a yearly basis where they start and what resources they need. The life coaching programme needs to create self-awareness in the students throughout their journey as social work students within an ODL context. This conviction was shared as follows:

“...you are not going to be there to judge them and put them down (about that), but you are there to see them succeed as well. That can be reemphasized each year. So what resources have you used? Are you aware of these other resources? That you are that person throughout the journey creating awareness.”

In coaching, clients are motivated to celebrate when they reach a short-term goal and choose people “to cheer them on” (Mumford, 2007:49-50). At the end of the coaching journey it is important to assist the clients to consolidate learning and “to make sure they know consciously what they have learned unconsciously” (Vickers & Bavister, 2010:240). Clients sometimes do not see the overall picture of change or miss small changes. Clients also need to find ways to continue learning (Starr, 2011:186).

Prinsloo (2012) suggested that critical incidences, for instance at the beginning or end of a year level or the beginning or end of practical work at an organisation, be used as a time for reflection.

Category 5.3.3 A life coaching programme should emphasise students’ responsibility for their own growth

One of the newly employed social workers highlighted the responsibility of the students to use available resources:

“...to communicate with the Department is the responsibility of the student because if the student is not going to make sure he or she also interacts with the facilitators, interacts with the supervisors, lecturers even, if they can put in an effort, I think it is not going to have a good outcome. . .”

Category 5.3.3 and Category 5.3.4 will be discussed together.

Category 5.3.4 A life coaching programme should reach all students

Some participants were of the opinion that a life coaching programme should reach all students, as supported by the following utterance:

“I think UNISA does not reach all students. There should be a programme to reach all students.”

This suggestion is supported by the view of support specialists. Within an ODL context, students are expected to take control of their studies in order to achieve success (Van Schoor, 2012b:81). However, if it is seen as solely the students' responsibility to use the life coaching programme as a form of support, it will not reach all students. Van Schoor (2012a) mentioned the 80/20 principle. When a support opportunity is made available to all students, only 20% use it.

Schmidt (2012b) also mentions that UNISA's Corporate Communication Marketing department has developed all the marketing tools, e.g. my Studies @ Unisa and my Registration @ Unisa, but they do not know how many students really use the material, as it is not compulsory. Students, especially from second level onwards, only filter information that must be read. A study has been undertaken in this regard, but results are not available yet. As an option, students may be required to consult institutional resources as part of assignments for which they earn marks (Schmidt, 2012b).

Category 5.3.5 A life coaching programme should create a safe place

From this storyline it was indicated that students should feel fully accepted when participating in the life coaching programme:

“... You may be working with a really negative situation but you are not going to be there to judge them.”

In coaching, a safe place is created for the client. Williams and Menendez (2007:35) describe a coaching conversation as a “sacred space, an inspiring place”, which the coach needs to prepare and in which the client is received. No matter what means of communication is used the coach should be present or available.

Category 5.3.6 A life coaching programme should specifically focus on students at risk

Participants suggested that a life coaching programme could assist at-risk students to achieve their educational goals, as this is accounted in the following excerpts:

“...if possible sometime to be called to the department so that they (students at risk of failing) can understand that lecturers even though they are not teachers but they are there for them to achieve their goal educationally.”

“If possible maybe they (students at risk of failing) can gather at one place so that if the lecturer is able to address them, they can be there, so that they can understand that the lecturer cares about their studies and that means that more responsibility is on them”.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, UNISA's Student Support Framework (Liebenberg & Archer, 2012:2) comprises various elements which include the systematic gathering of information from various sources and the integration of this information into a comprehensive tracking system as well as the utilisation of this information to predict and warn against risk of failure, and inform student support initiatives.

Three types of information are gathered: academic information (qualification cohort retention and graduation analyses as well as detailed course-level profiles); student-related non-academic affective information (derived from a student profile survey) and administrative/support processes which impact on student success (e.g., supply of study material, feedback on assessments).

On the students' side, this would include failure to submit or pass an assignment, failure to attend or pass an examination or to use support services. Appropriate academic, affective or administrative support services would be notified. The Department of Institutional Statistics and Analysis (DISA) is in a process of piloting the tracking system which will still be rolled out to the wider institution (Liebenberg & Van Zyl, 2012:8-9).

Discussion of Theme 5

Linking the socio-critical model for improving student success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:177-193) with the findings in this section, a life coaching programme, as a form of support for social work students within an ODL context, could be seen as an institutional resource aimed at the transformation of students' identities and attributes to obtain success and creating effective mutual engagement or “fit” between UNISA as the learning institution and the students during the student walk.

In the findings, participants provided suggestions on what should be included in this resource; e.g., the attributes of a good social worker and tools to create self-knowledge and how it should be delivered to the students, namely online, through lecturers, tutors, supervisors, peer students or counsellors. They also made suggestions regarding the process of life coaching which included setting goals, planning, linking with resources and reflecting. In contrast with the findings of Chapter 3 where it seemed that students expected satisfiers to come from outside, participants, maybe due to the nature of coaching and the questions asked, focused on the self-motivation and responsibility of students.

These suggestions correlate with the concepts “processes”, “domains” and “modalities” listed in the socio-critical model (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:184). “Processes” refers to the students’ responsibility and choice as well as students managing risks, opportunities or uncertainty. The “domains” refers to change taking place on an intrapersonal and interpersonal level, while three modalities are highlighted, namely “attribution”, “locus of control” and “self-efficacy” – students who see all possible causes for success or failure, who recognise areas in which they have a locus of control and who believe in themselves have a much bigger chance of achieving success.

Although the focus of the life coaching programme is on the student as situated agent, knowledge of the identity and attributes of the institution (UNISA) is essential in order to link the social work students to resources and to be in line with new policies and developments, such as the Student Support Framework, the use of e-tutors and the newly developed information or tracking system.

Should the programme be utilised within the Department of Social Work, constant updating would need to be done in order to reflect and use transformation within the system. As participants have indicated, the wider context of social work as a profession also needs to be monitored, as this forms an important “shaping condition”, not only for the social work curriculum but also the life coaching programme.

Literature used came from the realm of coaching. Only one article could be found on a coaching model being suggested for supervision within social work, while a few sources referred to coaching being used as a form of student support within tertiary education.

4.3 CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 dealt with Theme 4 and 5 of the findings on the attributes of a good social worker, suggestions on how these attributes could be developed in students as well as suggestions on core elements, the method of delivery and presentation of a life coaching programme.

Chapter 5 focuses on identifying and describing possible functional elements of a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context.

CHAPTER 5

POSSIBLE FUNCTIONAL ELEMENTS FOR A LIFE COACHING PROGRAMME FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS WITHIN AN ODL CONTEXT

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Social work students studying within an ODL context may experience many challenges which may influence their “student walk” or journey as well as their employability at the end of their study career. Although student support and career development programmes exist within UNISA, a need has been identified for a support programme focusing specifically on the needs of social work students studying within an ODL context, emanating in this research study to develop a life coaching programme targeting social work students within an ODL context.

As described in Chapter 1 and 2, the Intervention Design and Development model of Rothman and Thomas (1994:3-51) has been used to develop this life coaching programme. This chapter presents the outcomes of Phase 2, namely “Information gathering and synthesis”. It specifically presents “the identification of functional elements of successful service programmes or models”. The search was guided by questions, such as: “Has there been a practice which was successful in reaching the outcomes?” and “What has made this practice effective?” (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:33).

With the assistance of a subject librarian at UNISA, thorough subject-specific literature searches were undertaken through EBSCOHost and databases including Academic Search Premier, Africa-Wide Information, ERIC, PsycINFO, Public Administration Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts, SocINDEX with full text and Sabinet’s SA E-Publications. No evidence was found of any life coaching programme or model used to support social work students within South Africa or abroad. However, one article was found, proposing the use of coaching within social work field practice (Perrault & Coleman, 2004:47-64).

In order to identify existing knowledge which could be synthesised to assist in the development of a life coaching programme to support social work students within an ODL context, the researcher has consulted various people from ODL institutions involved in student support, leaders in social work education, people involved with life coaching , literature and the Internet.

The process started by doing an Internet search on international ODL institutions offering social work. Two universities, namely the Open University, United Kingdom and Deakin University in Australia, were arbitrarily selected from a list of international ODL institutions obtained from an ODL consultant at UNISA (Prinsloo, 2012).

Student support specialists at two residential South African tertiary institutions, namely TUT and the University of Pretoria, were consulted. The researcher was referred to TUT by a colleague who was under the impression that the institution offers a life coaching support programme. She was referred to the support centre of the University of Pretoria by the HoD of the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria. Various student support specialists from different departments at UNISA, as the only ODL institution offering social work in South Africa, were consulted. The researcher had either worked with these specialists before or was referred to them by their colleagues in other departments.

The researcher interviewed seven HoDs of residential universities in South Africa offering a course in social work. Fifteen HoDs were approached and requested twice by e-mail to participate in the study. Nine HoDs responded, but only seven could be interviewed.

Functional elements in the present curriculum of the Department of Social Work at UNISA were identified by working through the study material of the various social work modules. The researcher also undertook a literature search on coaching and/or life coaching. A few useful coaching models were identified as well as relevant information on coaching conversations and coaching approaches, focusing on positive psychology, and specifically appreciative inquiry as a theoretical framework as well as the role of the coach. The researcher also found a book, *Successful social work education: a student's guide* (Barsky, 2006), which contains many functional elements or themes which could be used in the development of a support programme.

Functional elements were identified, while information was gathered and synthesised from all the existing information provided by the above sources about student support and life coaching. The elements were described and the researcher tried to answer the following questions:

- Is there any evidence of success?
- What are the strengths of a specific element?
- What are the weaknesses of a specific element?
- How could this element be used in a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context?

The answers to these questions are suggested to provide an indication of whether a specific element was successful in rendering support to students, what had contributed to the success or failure, and whether it could be used in the development of a new support programme (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:33). Elements with the potential of being used will be described briefly, and elements used in the programme will be examined in more depth.

5.2 A COACHING FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL WORK TRAINING

Perrault and Coleman (2004:47-64) from the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary, Canada, propose that emerging theories and practice from outside the profession be embraced as part of educational supervision of social work students. They claim that coaching fits well within the paradigm of educational supervision in social work, as it offers opportunities for the supervisory functions to be fulfilled.

Three of the functions of field placement supervision, namely (a) the discussion of problems and provision of support, (b) demonstration of professional characteristics and (c) encouragement of students to use practice skills, correspond with requirements for coaching (Perrault & Coleman, 2004:50). They recommend the use of the following coaching framework or model during field placement supervision:



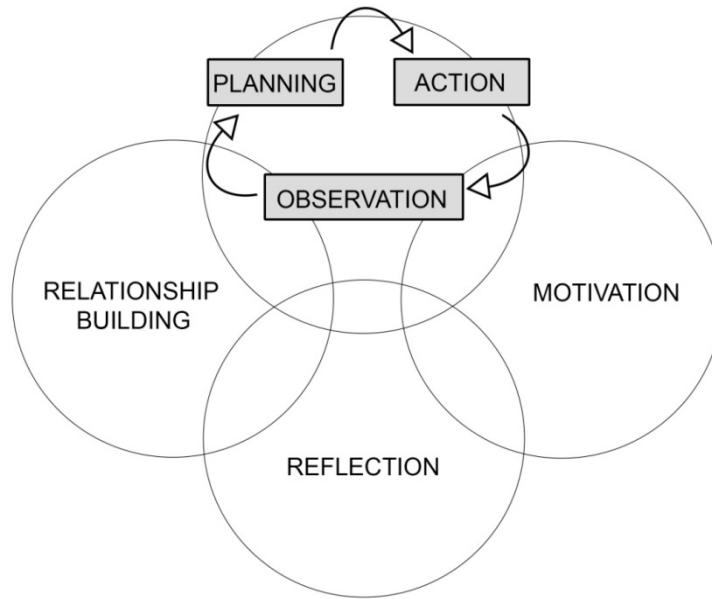


Figure 5.1 The coaching framework, as proposed by Perrault and Coleman (2004:49)

In this framework, the educational coaching process is described as the cycle of *observation, planning and action*, supported by the coaching strategies of *relationship building, reflection and motivation* (Perrault & Coleman, 2004:47-64).

In order to clarify the educational coaching process, the authors compare the framework of the Integrating Theory and Practice (ITP) Loop of Bogo and Vayda (1998) in supervision, consisting of the components *retrieval of experience, reflection, linkage with formal knowledge and evaluation* with the process of coaching.

During the retrieval stage the student recalls a practice situation which triggers positive or negative feelings about his/her work, and during reflection the student considers the feelings evoked by the experience and any personal issues involved. At the third stage, linkage, the student analyses what he/she has done and why, and what could have been done differently.

During the last stage of evaluation or professional response the student considers future reflection and linkage of existing knowledge.

In both the ITP Loop and coaching the student recalls a particular incident, reflects on the incident and links the reflection to action, purpose and options. As the process recycles

from one incident to the next, the student and supervisor identify themes. In both processes the reflection on action focuses on “the gap between the intended outcome and actual outcomes achieved, and narrows the gap between theory and practice” (Perrault & Coleman, 2004:54-55).

Perrault and Coleman (2004:51-53) describe the coaching strategies of relationship building, reflection and motivation. They explain how these components enrich the supervisory process. Coaching takes the form of a “learning partnership”. During the first phase of each coaching session the student identifies what he/she expects from the session, what he/she has accomplished since the previous session and discusses any problems or dilemmas faced. The supervisor keeps to the student’s goals and decisions, focusing on his/her strengths (Perrault & Coleman, 2004:51).

In coaching, the student takes the primary responsibility for learning. For the optimal use of coaching the student needs to be prepared to accept coaching as a method of teaching. The students “need to be primed to utilise their own ‘inner teachers’” (Perrault & Coleman, 2004:52).

The importance of a balance between motivation by the supervisor and the autonomy of the student is stressed. Autonomy is encouraged by the use of reflective questions and critical thinking. The aim of coaching is to educate the whole person and foster respect of the student as an autonomous individual. Reflection is about looking back to determine whether a specific point was reached, and looking forward, dreaming about the future. During reflection procedures are discussed, issues are clarified, learning objectives are verbalised, and strengths and strategies are reflected upon (Perrault & Coleman, 2004:54). As part of reflection, various types of questions can be used successfully to assist students to draw on their inner knowledge. Examples are the following:

- *Content questions:* Can you tell me about your experience?; What are the most comfortable part of the experience and the least comfortable?
- *Process questions:* How did these issues make a difference?; What is different about you now that you have been through the experience?
- *Premise questions:* Why did this experience happen?; Why is this experience valuable?

- *Action questions:* What could have been done differently?; How can you apply this experience to other environments? (Perrault & Coleman, 2004:56-57).

No evidence of success could be found, as this was only a proposed framework and no mention was made of whether the model has been implemented. The following strengths and weaknesses, as presented in Table 5.1, were identified (Perrault & Coleman, 2004:47-64):

Table 5.1 Strengths and weaknesses of the proposed framework for coaching within social work field education

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching uses positive reinforcement, sometimes with technical instruction, encouragement and encouragement after a mistake. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation is an integral part of supervision but not of coaching.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching is a versatile method of supervision and distance field education can benefit from the development of coaching skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisors need training and personal experience specific to coaching.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer coaching amongst students can be used as a feedback mechanism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The coaching method does not suit/fit all supervisors equally well; it fits some supervisors better than others. There should be congruence between the method and the self of the supervisor.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer coaching can be used by field instructors/supervisors to improve their skills. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching skills can also be used in many traditional social work settings. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching energises and focuses students, and can improve students' performance. 	

This coaching framework is useful in the development of a life coaching programme for social work students, as it visually depicts the relationship between the learning process in social work (which is about the integration of theory and practice) and coaching. The prerequisite of students being well-prepared and “buying into” the coaching process is noteworthy and useful. The use of the various types of questions to raise the students’ self-awareness to reflect upon their actions and the use of the self – looking into the past and the future – is also useful. The action taken, aims to lessen the gaps between the intended and the actual outcomes, while the autonomy (using the inner teacher) of the students is stressed.

5.3 FUNCTIONAL ELEMENTS IN SUPPORT PROGRAMMES OF INTERNATIONAL OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

An Internet search was undertaken to investigate the support services of international open and distance learning institutions. A list of the following institutions has been provided by Prinsloo (2013):

- Open University (United Kingdom)
- Indira Gandhi (India)
- Athabasca University (Canada)
- Open University (Netherlands)
- Deakin University (Australia)
- Zimbabwe Open University
- University of Southern Queensland (Australia).

From this list, the Open University (UK), Indira Gandhi, Deakin University and the University of Southern Queensland provide courses in social work. The researcher arbitrarily selected the Open University (UK) and the Deakin University to investigate further.

5.3.1 The Open University (UK)

The University provides the following support services to its students: face-to-face and online tutoring, online forums, online and printed support material as well as the support of

a student support team stationed at the national and regional centres (Open University [UK], 2013). The University has a special support unit, namely the Personalised Integrated Learning Support Centre (PILS), which is part of the University's Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (The Open CETL, 2013a). Two of the programmes provided by this unit can be regarded as possible functional elements for the life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context, namely the Skills Bank and the STARS programme.

5.3.1.1 The Skills Bank

The Skills Bank was funded and piloted from December 2007 up to February 2008. The aims of this online tool were for students to develop an understanding of the link between learning outcomes and employability skills, and to practice to produce evidence of their employability skills in view of using it within future job applications. It incorporated two activities, namely skills review and job seeking. A list of 36 employability skills was selected.

In a questionnaire, students were presented with a definition of the skills and some reflective questions. They had to generate evidence for the skills, rate their level of competence and indicate where the skills were to be developed, such as in their study or work environment. Data generated was saved within the University's *MyStuff* e-portfolio. In the job-seeking facility, students were offered templates for the selection of potential jobs with a typical competence to practice. The tool was also linked to other support websites (The Open CETL, 2013b).

The tool was assessed through an online questionnaire and telephone interviews. Students experienced technical difficulties and some lost access to the site after the first visit. Some found the tool to be confusing. However, students wanted more support via the site or through coaching and mentoring (The Open CETL, 2013b).

The tool can be regarded as a functional element, as it points to the importance of students' ability to identify skills they have developed and link these to employability. Students need to be able to articulate which skills they have and how these are developed as well as

linking the skills to the needs of employers. The idea of the *MyStuff* e-portfolio can also be investigated when implementing the life coaching programme.

5.3.1.2 The STARS programme

It seems as if the STARS programme was built on the Skills Bank. The STARS is an interactive personal development tool for students and recent graduates. It was developed by three universities – the Open University (UK), the University of Bedfordshire and the Sheffield Hallam University.

STARS is an acronym for “situation”, “tasks”, “actions”, “results” and “skills” (The Open CETL, 2013b). It is designed to help users link their personal experiences to relevant skills and articulate these skills clearly. It allows users to identify the situations they have experienced, identify tasks and actions they have carried out in these situations, and articulate the skills acquired.

Users can also start with skills they wish to develop and the tool assists them to identify situations where they could develop these skills. The STARS programme refers to lists of generalist skills; e.g., attention to detail, numeracy, problem-solving; personal skills, e.g., initiative, commitment, time management; interpersonal skills, e.g., empathy, listening, networking; and specialist skills, e.g., financial awareness, language expertise and technical expertise.

The programme links users to video presentations given by graduate recruiters, and to topics such as curriculum vitae and job interviews (The Open CETL, 2013b).

No evidence could be found of research done to assess the effectiveness of the tool. The strengths of the STARS programme are highlighted as providing graduates with the opportunity to articulate their skills when looking for a job, building their self-confidence and writing a detailed CV; thus, increasing their employability (STARS Teams, 2008; Why use STARS, n.d.).

When trying to use the tool, the researcher found it to be time consuming, while some instructions were unclear. The STARS programme provides valuable insight into a useful

thinking process by either starting with a situation and going through the STARS steps to identify the skills learned, or by starting with a skill and going through the steps planning how to develop the skill.

5.3.1.3 The SOAR model (University of Bedfordshire)

The researcher communicated with a support specialist (Cocking, 2013) from The Open University (UK) about the STARS programme by e-mail. She then referred the researcher to a colleague (Kumar, 2013) from the University of Bedfordshire who had developed the SOAR model. The SOAR model is “a curriculum enhancement model that can be used flexibly to integrate personal and career development with good academic learning and employability” (Kumar, 2007:xiv).

SOAR is an acronym for “self”, “opportunity”, “aspirations” and “results”. The SOAR model is built around the implementation of a personal development plan (PDP). This is a structured process undertaken by individuals to reflect upon their own learning, and to plan for their personal, career and educational development (Kumar, 2007:3).

According to Kumar (2009:8), a range of attributes is enhanced when the inner world of the **self**, interacts more intentionally with the outer world of **opportunity**. Personal strengths and developmental needs are identified when the student starts with “an end in mind” as the self is informed about the **results** to be achieved. Aspirations are then realistic and can be monitored. Results can be articulated in reflective writing in e-portfolios, assignments and CVs. In this way, personal effectiveness in study, work and personal life is enhanced.

The SOAR model is built on the principles of appreciative inquiry. As students discover their strengths, they can align them with opportunities and obtain better results. Students are asked about their strengths and what has worked for them; these best practices are then carried forward into the future (Kumar, 2007:9).

The SOAR model incorporates many practical activities as part of the four phases. Although many of these activities, especially the ones enabling self-awareness, could be used in the life coaching programme, the following seemed to be most meaningful:

- A lifeline exercise with the aim of taking stock of past experiences that may have contributed to the present situation. The student is instructed to take a blank piece of paper, turn it horizontally and draw a line from left to right across the middle to represent his/her life from birth to the present. He/she has to mark it from 0 to his/her current age, and section it off in five- or ten-year periods. On this line he/she has to chart the significant events of his/her life at the age they have occurred. They have to mark positive, happy events and factors in black ink above the line and sad or difficult events below the line in red, using the distance from their lifeline to indicate the degree of impact the event had. Examples of events are changes, e.g., starting school, marrying, leaving home, significant holidays, turning points, achievements and setbacks or meeting significant people. The student then has to reflect on the lifeline guided by questions (Kumar, 2007:102-103).
- The importance of other-awareness and working in teams is stressed through a figure (cf. Figure 5.2) and a teamwork audit (cf. Table 5.2), enabling the student to assess how effective he/she works in a team (Kumar, 2007:169-170).

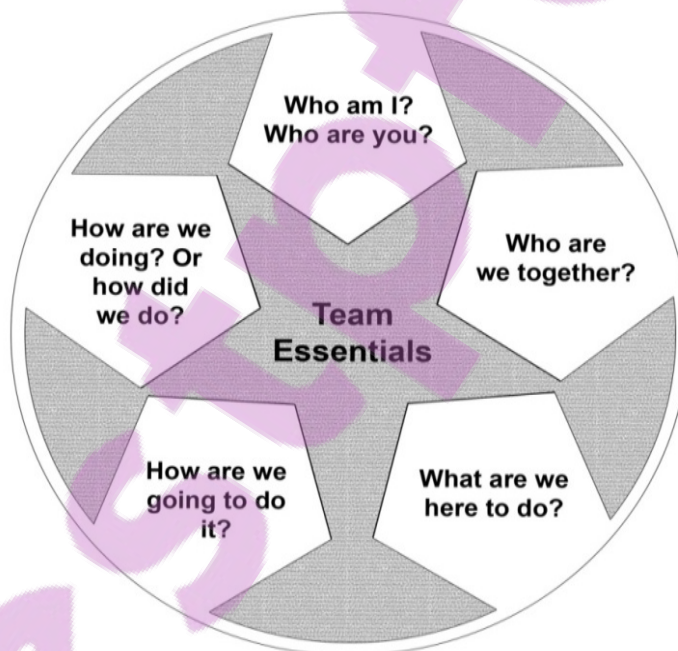


Figure 5.2 Team essentials (Kumar, 2007:169-170)

The assessment can be done by completing the following table:

Table 5.2 Self-assessment on team work (Kumar, 2007:169)

4 = very frequently, 3 = frequently, 2 = rarely, 1 = never	
Ideal group or team behaviours	Ratings 1-4
1. I am aware of my core strengths in contributing to a group project.	
2. I offer support and share information freely with my group/team.	
3. I am aware of the role I tend to adopt when working in a group.	
4. I appreciate and use the different roles and strengths of others in my team.	
5. I take group projects at university seriously.	
6. I know why project teams are important in the workplace.	
7. I understand how collective effort can be more productive than isolated individual efforts.	
8. I am aware of the factors that make groups dysfunctional.	
9. I adapt my ideas and views to suit the collective group aims.	
10. I help to create commitment to common goals among group members.	
11. I ask for support or information when I need it.	
12. I adjust to changes in team members, goals, values, as and when necessary.	
13. I accept personal responsibility for my contribution to the team.	
14. I respond to requests from others in a timely and helpful way.	
15. I keep my promises to others in the group.	
16. I admit my limitations and mistakes,	

and take steps to rectify them.	
17. I challenge dysfunctional behaviours in others; e.g., intolerance and divergent personal agendas.	
18. I involve team members in decisions and plans that affect them.	
19. I encourage others to express their views and listen respectfully.	
20. I challenge unsound or illogical ideas tactfully.	
21. I give credit where it is due.	
22. I facilitate a win-win solution or compromise when conflict arises.	
23. I focus on resolving a problem or addressing an issue rather than blaming others.	

Kumar (2007:242-243) stresses the ability to set clear, achievable goals and to plan out the steps to achieve them. She includes the following self-audit on planning and managing work and study in her book:

Table 5.3 Self-audit: Planning and managing study and work (Kumar, 2007:243)

4 = very frequently, 3 = frequently, 2 = rarely, 1 = never	
To what extent do I plan and manage my priorities to achieve my goals?	Rating 1-4
I focus on my goals and what I need to do in order to achieve them – in the short-, medium- and longer term.	
I break down complex end goals into shorter, simpler, more manageable tasks and action steps.	
I clarify precisely what type of action I need to take at each stage, at an appropriate level of detail, to meet critical deadlines.	
I prioritise and set out a plan for managing my task objectives on a daily, weekly and longer basis so that the urgent and important tasks are completed on time.	

I identify and use various sources of information appropriate to my tasks at each stage.	
I organise in advance the help and resources I need to complete my tasks.	
I organise my study/work environment systematically.	
I manage routine distractions effectively (e.g., I respond to e-mails or phone calls promptly).	
I balance and schedule my study, work and leisure activities to make the best use of my time and resources.	
I recognise my progress towards my goals, and reward myself for keeping on track with difficult and complex tasks.	
I anticipate barriers to achieving important goals and plan for contingencies.	
I flex priorities according to changing needs and opportunities.	

The following strengths and weaknesses of the SOAR model can be identified, as set out in Table 5.4 (Kumar, 2009:xii, xiii; 10; Kumar, 2013):

Table 5.4 Strengths and weaknesses of the SOAR model

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The model is used in many UK universities and various countries, including South Africa. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although feedback from staff and students indicates that using the model empowers students to learn more effectively for employability, further research is needed to provide evidence on its success.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The model is based on a career coaching model which has been tried and tested in many contexts, including social work, psychology and accounting. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SOAR model is a transferable model and can be used for personalised development of individuals. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SOAR model incorporates the idea of a personal development plan. As such, it develops students in higher education as self-regulating, independent students. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The model appeals to the innate universal need of students for personal development and self-actualisation. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SOAR model helps students to become more aware of their decisions and actions in responding to opportunities and challenges of everyday life. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The central focus of the SOAR model is to develop students towards employability and lifelong learning. 	

The model is a functional element for the life coaching programme for social work students, as the steps of creating self-awareness, getting to know and finding a fit with the learning opportunities, setting goals in the form of a personal development plan, and implementing these goals with the view of enhancing employability can contribute meaningfully to the support and development of social work students studying within an ODL context.

Concepts used in the SOAR model are also similar to those identified in the UNISA model for student success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011), such as **student identity** and attributes which can be linked with self-awareness. Attributes correspond to opportunity awareness while both models refer to a “fit” and have success or results in mind (cf. Chapter 1, paragraph, 1.1.4.1).

5.3.1.4 Social work at the Open University (UK)

The researcher also visited the website with information of social work courses (Social Work, n.d.). No mention is made of specific support programmes for social work students. A definition of social work is provided, information is given on the various courses and a

section makes provision for frequently asked questions. However, what is useful, is a few personal stories of social workers with photographs sharing why they have chosen social work, what their work entails and how one can build one's career (Social Work, 2013).

The information provided, corresponds with the content of the DVD which was developed by the Department of Social Work during 2012. This provides support for the possibility of including sections of the DVD in the life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL environment.

5.3.2 Deakin University, Australia

The Deakin University has a variety of support services for students, including career and employment advice, counselling and personal development, disability support, financial assistance, medical centres, study skills assistance, international student support, chaplaincy and legal services (Deakin University, 2013a). CloudDeakin provides a variety of virtual learning support, e.g., access to courses including tools such as discussions, quizzes and e-portfolios, online tutors, blogs, videos of recorded lectures as well as the use of Turnitin, a computer program which detects plagiarism (Deakin University, 2013b). A lot of attention is given to career planning and development. Some of the information provided in this regard could be viewed as functional elements.

5.3.2.1 Career development

Through linked pages the student is taken through the following steps in a process of career planning: learn about yourself, research job options, explore courses, add value to your university experience and make decisions (Deakin University, 2013c). Under the section "Learn about yourself", students can explore their interests, values and skills. A value self-assessment consisting of 30 statements linked to specific work related values is provided (My career values, 2013). Students can choose from three personality assessments to do online, namely The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Self-Directed Search (SDS) and the Strong Interest Inventory (SII).

The student has to pay to do the first two tests, but the last is free of charge (Deakin University, 2013d). A list of tips is provided on how the student can make a transition from being a student to being a professional (Deakin University, 2013e).

No information is provided on whether this service is successful or not; nor are any strengths or weaknesses indicated. The information can, however, be seen as a functional element, as it provides ideas for the content of the life coaching programme; e.g., the inclusion of the facilitation of self-awareness, the studying of job options, a focus on the transformation from being a student to being a professional, and the use of self- and personality assessments.

In the development of the life coaching programme it is important not to duplicate what already exists within UNISA. Students could be linked to existing websites focusing on career development.

5.3.2.2 Social work at the Deakin University

Once again, there is no indication of support programmes that focus specifically on social work students. The website on social work focuses on the importance of field work and the process of field placements. Links were provided to resources, student stories, workshops, study material, insurance, funding and wider networks within the field of social work, e.g., the Australian collaborative education network and a rural social work action group. A theme connecting the international websites consulted seems to be the use of stories, whether from social workers or students. Linking the students to a wider social work context could be seen as a functional element, taking into account the need identified by participants of the focus groups and individual interviews to be exposed to a wider social work context.

5.3.3 Discussion of functional elements in the support programmes of international open and distance learning institutions

Support programmes from four different universities overseas were discussed, namely the University of Calgary, Canada; the Open University, UK; the Deakin University, Australia and the University of Bedfordshire, UK. The coaching model for field practice developed by a lecturer of the University of Calgary seems very promising, but no evidence could be

found that it has been used in practice. It focuses on practical work only, while the life coaching programme is being developed to guide the whole study journey of social work students.

The STARS project from the Open University (UK) can be used as a tool for students to facilitate the development of skills or to recognise skills developed within a specific context. The developmental process described in the SOAR model of the University of Bedfordshire can be used in an adapted form in the life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context, as it clearly provides a detailed structure for the developmental journey. The social work departments of the two open and distance learning institutions, the Open University (UK) and the University of Bedfordshire, do not provide support programmes specifically focused on the needs of social work students.

The following general guidelines have been identified in reflecting on these functional elements:

- Students need to understand the coaching process and buy into it to ensure motivation.
- Self-awareness can be facilitated by asking the right questions.
- Action can be guided by the gap between the intended and actual outcomes of a study journey, and can facilitate autonomy in students.
- Students need to be able to articulate the skills gained during their studies and should be assisted to prepare themselves for the job market.
- Video clips of social workers sharing their stories can be a valuable resource to students.
- It is important not to duplicate existing resources.

5.4 FUNCTIONAL ELEMENTS IN THE SUPPORT PROGRAMMES OF TWO LOCAL RESIDENTIAL UNIVERSITIES

The researcher interviewed student support specialist from the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) and the University of Pretoria (UP).

5.4.1 Support programmes within the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) with elements of a life coaching programme

The TUT Directorate of Student Development and Support renders a variety of support services which include a life skills programme, a mentorship programme, an English word proficiency programme, face-to-face counselling, study buddies which is an e-tutoring programme, and workshops on various life skills. TUT uses two assessment tools throughout their work – the LASSI (Learning and Study Strategies Inventory), a tool assessing academic skills, and the NBI (Neethling Brain Profile Instrument) to assess personal functioning (Barnard, 2013).

Two programmes could be described as containing elements of a life coaching programme. These are the life skills programme and the peer mentoring programme called the Student Mentors @ TUT programme.

5.4.1.1 Life skills programme

The life skills programme focuses on academic and personal developmental areas. The academic component addresses topics such as goal setting, time management and information processing. The personal component focuses on intrapersonal, interpersonal and personal leadership skills (Mason, n.d.:3). Students can register for a module of Life Skills and write an examination. The book, *Life skills, my journey, my destiny* (Van Heerden), is prescribed for these students. Students can also attend workshops in life skills without registering for the module (Mason, 2013).

A generic life skills programme is presented to TUT students, but practitioners are encouraged to develop course-specific programmes. One such a programme is a logotherapy student development and support programme for student nurses which has been developed, based on their specific needs. This programme has been piloted and will be described in the next section (Mason, n.d.:1-11; Mason & Nel, 2011:469-472).

5.4.1.2 A logotherapy-based student development and support programme

Mason (n.d.:6) has developed a needs-specific support and development programme for nursing students, namely *In pursuit of meaning: A logotherapy-based student development and support programme* (IPM). The programme has three learning objectives, namely to introduce participants to the logotherapy theory and concepts; to enable participants to reflect on the meaning of their lives, based on the concepts learned, and to activate participants' will to meaning.

The programme was presented to 13 participants over a period of eleven weeks with one two-hour contact sessions per week. Following the sessions, participants completed a reflective self-development exercise to enable them to integrate their understanding of logotherapy. Pre- and post-tests were done, using the Purpose in Life Test (PIL). The mean score for the pre-test was 115 and that of the post-test 124 which was statistically significant. It implied that the programme had enhanced the students' will to meaning. The following strengths and weaknesses could be identified (Mason, n.d.:1-11; Mason, 2013):

Table 5.5 Strengths and weaknesses of the IPM programme

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programme is focused on the specific needs of a group of nursing students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small sample was used.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students were less apathetic, lethargic and bored than with the generic life skills programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logotherapy addressed the needs of the nursing students but other approaches may have to be used for other groups of students.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A follow-up PIL test will have to be done to determine whether the change in students' will to meaning will be lasting.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International data is available on the validity and reliability of the instrument but little information is available on the

The IPM programme can be seen as a functional element in the development of a life coaching programme for social work students, as it emphasises the importance of addressing the specific needs of a group of students studying a specific discipline as well as the value of using a clear theoretical framework.

5.4.1.3 A self-regulated learning (SRL) approach to life skills

In 2009, a pilot project was undertaken by the TUT Directorate of Student Development and Support (Mason, n.d.) in which a self-regulated learning approach was used in the teaching of life skills. Self-regulated learning is defined as an “active, constructive process whereby students set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation and behaviour as they pursue their goals” (Mason, 2009).

Self-regulation consists of four steps, namely “planning” (“organised steps including setting a goal, selecting suitable strategies of achieving the goal, identifying and dealing with possible obstacles that may preclude attainment of the goal”), “monitoring” (“an individual’s ability to monitor their progress towards the goals”), “evaluating” (“assess the outcome and the process and how well the goal was achieved”) as well as “reinforcing” (“reflect on results”) (Mason, 2009).

Self-regulated learning is lifelong learning, because “how you know” is as important as “what you know” (Mason, 2009). A 12-week intervention programme, focusing on academic skills was developed and presented. A pre- and post-test (using the LASSI) was done with a sample of 20 second-level industrial engineering students. A statistically significant improvement was noted on all the LASSI scales. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified (Mason, 2009):

Table 5.6 Strengths and weaknesses of the self-regulated learning approach (SRL) to life skills

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SRL approach is an active process that facilitates knowledge acquisition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sample was small and results can therefore not be generalised.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students experience a sense of personal satisfaction. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are more inclined to make adaptive changes. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SRL can enhance persistence and self-fulfilment, and prevent and manage avoidance and self-doubts. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SRL can assist students to experience and develop a sense of autonomy. 	

The SRL pilot study is relevant to the life coaching programme being developed, as the principle of self-regulated learning can be used in the programme for social work students within an ODL context. The steps of planning, monitoring, evaluating and reflecting are appropriate in the life coaching process.

5.4.1.4 Student Mentors @ TUT programme

The vision of the peer mentorship programme of the TUT is to help every mentee to maximise his/her full potential, while the mission of the programme is to provide quality support to students by promoting student awareness of available campus resources, provide guidance to new students, foster positive and motivated students, and provide all students with the opportunity to learn from role models (TUT, n.d.:4).

Peer mentors are selected by the various academic departments and residences, based on their academic performance and behaviour. They undergo three days' training and are allocated a group of 10-15 students. The mentor and mentees meet once a week in a group to discuss academic and any other adjustment, developmental or personal problems students may have. If necessary, the mentor refers the mentee to either the lecturer or

student support services. Students are made aware of existing resources within the institution, e.g., during the training mentors do an amazing race in which they have to discover all the resources on campus so that they can guide their mentees. Mentors are provided with guidelines for the week's meeting through mass SMS's sent by the responsible student support practitioner (Barnard, 2013).

Mentors are requested to provide feedback after training. Of the feedback received, 90% of mentors were positive about the training. Lecturers also send e-mails to provide stories of success. The responsible student support practitioner has requested formal feedback from the academic departments, but the results are not yet available.

Table 5.7 Strengths and weaknesses of the Student Mentors @TUT programme (Barnard, 2013)

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mentee is supported during periods of transition and can optimise his/her development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The academic departments do not support the programme enough, e.g., some do not make provision on their timetables for mentoring; lecturers also do not provide additional input where needed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mentor grows through the training, and receives a certificate of experience which could be added to his/her CV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable venues are not always available.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students at risk are supported and the throughput rate is improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentors do not receive sufficient support.

Although the institutional contexts of TUT and UNISA are totally different; the one being a residential university and the other an ODL institution, the positive personal and academic development for both mentor and mentee could be considered. The numbers of UNISA students would not facilitate face-to-face programmes, but online peer mentoring or support through discussions could be a possibility. Other useful components are the importance of students knowing institutional resources and the regular communication with support staff through SMS's.

5.4.2 Support programmes within the University of Pretoria (UP) with elements of a life coaching programme

The student support division of the UP renders three categories of support services, namely (a) academic support; e.g., career choices, career planning, study methods, time management; (b) therapy and emotional support which include psychotherapy, life skills and development of potential as well as (c) services for students with special needs (UP, n.d.).

As a residential university, student support is mainly rendered face-to-face. It includes services to individuals, small groups, support groups and workshops. Some of the support material is available online (Nolte, 2013). The life skills programme, which also focuses on the development of the student's potential, will be discussed as a potential functional element in the development of a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context.

5.4.2.1 A life skills programme for young adults

The life skills programme is based on research done by Nolte (2002) as part of her doctorate degree, namely *Lewensvaardighede: 'n Bemagtigingsprogram vir vroeë volwassenes*. Her aim is to empower young adults through the development of life skills. Nolte (2002:180) identifies various categories of essential life skills for young adults. These are self-perception, interpersonal skills, feeling skills, thinking skills, career skills, problem-solving skills, active learning and internalising skills as well as decision-making skills. She cites Nelson-Jones' (1993) five-stage strategy for the learning of life skills, the *DASIE*:

D = Develop (phase 1 – develop a trusting relationship and identify the client's needs or problems)

A = Assess (phase 2 – assess the problems and define the appropriate skill)

S = State (phase 3 – formulate workable goals and strategies)

I = Intervene (phase 4 – intervention with the view of development of self-help skills)

E = End (phase 5 – termination and consolidation of self-help skills).

This strategy or model is used during the presentation of the life skills programme (Nolte, 2002:197).

Nolte (2002:208) identifies three strategies and facilitative activities to empower young adults with life skills, namely decision-making skills, problem-solving skills and skills of active learning, internalising and renewal.

The programme is presented in a group of young adults over six consecutive weeks. It is divided into six themes with a variety of strategies and tools (Nolte, 2002:290-299).

Theme 1: Who am I?

- Building of relationships and contracting
- Pre-test with standardised assessment scales, Self-perception Scale and Psychosocial Functioning Inventory
- Identification of an individual's needs regarding life skills
- Completion of Hudson's self-concept questionnaire
- Identification of positive and negative areas of the individual's self-concept
- Listing and discussing each individual's strengths and weaknesses
- Each individual choosing one weakness to work on during the week. Strategies are discussed.
- Identifying of short- and long-term goals as far as the individual's career, personal relationships, ideals and religious aspirations are concerned. A potential schedule and a goals schedule are utilised.
- Discussing self-motivation in relation to self-concept
- A questionnaire, identifying various temperaments, is handed out to be completed at home.

Theme 2: Temperament and goal setting

- Getting feedback on efforts to improve one's weakness
- Individuals choosing the next weakness to work on
- Discussing strategies to work on weaknesses and possible reasons for failure

- Discussing feedback on questionnaire focusing on types of temperament, the effect the individual's type could have on his/her self- perception, relationships and life decisions
- Discussing possible growth areas and strategies for growth regarding the individual's self-perception, relationships and life decisions
- An exercise, *Positive redefinition of the self*, consisting of seven stages, and a weekly time planner given as homework.

Theme 3: Personal time management

- Sharing feedback on the exercise of *Positive redefinition of the self*
- Discussing the time planner
- Discussing the members' plans in relation to their physical, social, emotional, religious and intellectual life areas. Prioritising activities and setting deadlines
- Discussing members' career choices, studies and preparation for employment (specific guideline provided)
- As homework, individuals have to write down positive and negative interactions with others.
- Discussing positive stress management strategies.

Theme 4: Communication skills and relationships

- Internalising of positive interpersonal interaction through case studies and role plays
- Discussing communication and conflict management skills
- Identification of gaps in the individual's interpersonal relationships
- Deciding on steps to be taken to improve interpersonal skills and setting deadlines
- Identifying positive and negative interaction patterns with family, friends and partners
- Hand-out on 14 components of a relationship with a partner.

Theme 5: Choice of a life partner and 14 components of a relationship

- Discussing the 14 components of a relationship with a life partner
- Evaluating the quality of the individual's relationships with the opposite sex, and identifying strengths and weaknesses in the relationships

- Practising problematic relationship aspects
- Preparing for termination the following week.

Theme 6: Problem-solving, decision-making, active learning, internalising and renewal

- Identifying facilitative strategies and activities for problem-solving, decision-making, active learning, internalising and renewal
- Post-test with standardised assessment scales, Self-perception Scale and Psychosocial Functioning Inventory.
- Termination of the programme.

Evidence of success of the programme was provided by the comparison of the pre- and post-test with the two standardised scales, namely the Self-perception Scale and the Psychosocial Functioning Inventory with 42 participants. The Self-perception Scale measures three constructs: “inner security” (an improvement of 12,8571%); “self-management” (an improvement of 12,238%) and “self-worth” (an improvement of 13,6428%). The average improvement on this scale was 12,9286%.

The Psychosocial Functioning Inventory is divided into positive and negative functioning areas. An improvement of 10,5% was measured on the positive functioning areas, while the negative functioning areas were turned into the positives with a measurement of 11,1667% (Nolte, 2002:360-361).

Strengths and weaknesses of the life skills programme for young adults are presented in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8 Strengths and weaknesses of the life skills programme for young adults (Nolte, 2013)

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme empowers young adults with life skills, as proven by the pre- and post-test. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme needs to be marketed to ensure that students participate.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The developmental process cannot be rushed. The programme can be fitted into three consecutive days, but better results are obtained if it is presented over six. Participants need to internalise the acquired skills.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New skills can be added. Themes now also include post-traumatic stress, leadership skills, presentation skills, management of depression and job finding skills. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through continuous feedback from participants the programme can be continuously improved. It is advisable to request feedback from participants after each session. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme has been presented in other countries as well and it seems that the needs of young adults are universal. 	

Although the focus of the life coaching programme will be on social work students in various age categories, the life skills programme for young adults could be seen as a functional element, as much can be learnt, not only of the process followed, but also the content of the programme.

The five-stage strategy for learning life skills, the *DASIE*, is similar to models of life coaching. It is also interesting to note that the developer of the *DASIE*, Nelson-Jones, is also a leading author in the field of life coaching (Nelson-Jones, 2007). Participants set goals in the various areas of their lives. A distinction was made between long-term goals (which included study and career goals) and short-term goals.

Strengths and weaknesses were identified, and strategies developed to work on weaknesses. The importance of interpersonal relationships is stressed as well as the meaningful use of decision-making skills, problem-solving skills and active learning skills

in personal development. The importance of giving participants time to internalise the new skills was also noted.

5.4.3 Discussion of functional elements in support programmes of two residential universities

The difference in services rendered to students within residential facilities, and open and distance institutions is clear. The focus in residential institutions is on face-to-face support, while support within an ODL context seems to be mostly online. The following guidelines could be extracted from the functional elements identified from support programmes within residential universities:

- Life skills are considered very important within residential universities. It is, however, not the goal of a life coaching programme to teach life skills.
- The value of course-specific support has been highlighted.
- Students should be requested to give continuous feedback.
- A course-specific support programme should be based on a clear theoretical framework.
- A goal of the life coaching programme should be to facilitate self-regulatory learning.
- Role players in the life coaching programme, such as supervisors, tutors and workshop facilitators could be prepared for their input by sending SMS's or e-mails.
- Peer support can play an important role for students.
- Various tools to facilitate self-awareness could be used, like Hudson's self-concept questionnaire and a temperament questionnaire.
- The value of focusing on strengths but working on weaknesses is emphasised.
- Students need to be given enough time to internalise what they have learned.

5.5 FUNCTIONAL ELEMENTS IN SUPPORT PROGRAMMES WITHIN UNISA

In Chapter 1 the support services within UNISA is briefly described. The researcher visited support specialists in the departments where functional elements of support programmes had been identified: Corporate Communication and Marketing division, the Directorate:

Counselling and Career Development, Department: Institutional Statistics and Analysis (DISA), Directorate: Student Development as well as the Directorate: Instructional Support and Services.

Functional elements within support programmes at UNISA will be described in more detail, as these institutional resources play an essential part in the life coaching programme and could be integrated into or be linked to the support programme for social work students.

5.5.1 Corporate Communication and Marketing (CCM)

The Corporate Communication and Marketing division of UNISA has the responsibility to address student communication and marketing needs through the implementation of effective communication tools (Schmidt, 2012a:4). To simplify the concept of ODL, UNISA has developed an ODL student walk to help students understand the process. This walk comprised five levels which incorporated the application phase. This was introduced during 2008/2009 (Schmidt, 2012).



Figure 5.3 A building as the metaphor of UNISA's student walk (Schmidt, 2012a:6)

For each level, Corporate Communication and Marketing compiled a set of products (brochures, CD/DVD, FAQs, website, mobi site) which contains essential information for that specific level of the student walk. After development input was given by other sections of UNISA, such as the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development. Some aspects were found problematic; for example, information on the awareness and application levels overlapped; UNISA is not a building, but a living organisation; people start reading from the top, not from the bottom, as required by the figure.

What did work in the student walk presentation were the colours of the phases and the distinct phases/levels linked to with specific communication tools. It was decided to redevelop the student walk.



Figure 5.4 The new metaphor of UNISA's student walk as a recursive process with marketing products developed at each phase (Schmidt, 2012a:9)

The researcher referred to these five stages/levels of the student walk or journey in the interview guide, asking students to reflect on their experience of their journey within UNISA (cf. Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.2.1).

5.5.1.1 my Choice @ Unisa

The “Choose and apply phase” is specifically aimed at the prospective student who has never before studied through Unisa. The communication products focus on four aspects or steps (Schmidt, 2012a:11; my Choice @ Unisa, 2013):

- Choose UNISA: Ensure that the prospective student understands what open distance learning is in order to assess whether ODL is for him or her.
- Choose a career: Ensure that the student knows what his or her career path is to avoid making an incorrect choice regarding what offering to select.
- Choose a qualification: Provide information about the University’s offerings to assist the prospective student to make the correct choice.
- Apply: Provide adequate information about the application process and assist the prospective student to apply to study through UNISA.

Two functional elements in these products were selected for use in the life coaching programme:

- A questionnaire (Table 5.9) to determine the student’s fit with UNISA.

Table 5.9 Is the UNISA journey for me? (my Choice @ Unisa, 2013:14-15)

Abilities statement	Yes	No
1. I obtained a minimum of 50% for English or Afrikaans and enjoy reading and writing.		
2. I am goal-directed, because I set my sights on end results. I usually achieve them.		
3. I am self-motivated, because my goals are clear.		
4. I am a self-starter, because I know what I need to do to reach my goals.		
5. I like to get things done today rather than putting them off until tomorrow.		
6. I am self-disciplined, because I start and finish tasks on time.		
7. I can work independently, because I prefer to sort out difficulties on my own.		
8. I do not give up easily, because I make plans to cope with difficulties.		

9. I am capable of independent study, because I can study on my own.		
10. I think I am ready for university-level work, because I am willing to master new and difficult ideas.		
11. I am an organised person, because I plan my life and do things step-by-step.		
12. I use time effectively, as I put aside sufficient time to study.		
13. What I learn and do not learn is my responsibility.		
14. I consider myself to be responsible because I find study help when I need it.		
15. I am confident of my ability to read academic texts.		
16. I am confident of my ability to write examinations.		
17. I consider myself to be a capable reader.		
18. I know how to make notes from study guides, textbooks and tutors.		
19. I read a lot (fiction and non-fiction).		
20. I consider myself to be a university-level reader, as I am willing to read difficult books.		
21. I know how to use a library to search for specific information.		
22. I know how to use the Internet to search for specific information.		
23. I am able to analyse multiple-choice questions.		
24. I am willing to learn how to analyse multiple-choice questions.		
25. I know how to structure and write an academic essay.		
26. I am willing to learn to structure and write an academic essay.		
27. I can do basic calculations.		
28. I can apply ideas that I learn about to real-life situations.		
29. I am comfortable to prepare for examinations.		
30. I know how to prepare for examinations.		
31. I know how to manage my stress levels during exam time.		
32. I am willing to participate in programmes to prepare me for university studies.		
33. I have made arrangements so that my studies are priority until I graduate.		
34. I am aware that I need to purchase textbooks that may be expensive.		
35. I have regular access to a computer and the Internet, and am confident about my computer skills.		
36. I read books, newspapers and magazines, and am comfortable with gathering information.		

The questionnaire is followed by a key, interpreting the findings and indicating whether studying through an ODL institution seems to be a suitable option for the student.

- A tick list (Table 5.10) followed by questions to make the student aware of the possible effect of his/her personal circumstances on studying through UNISA.

**Table 5.10 In what way may my personal circumstances affect my success at UNISA?
(my Choice @ Unisa, 2013:16-17)**

My personal circumstances	Tick
1. I am a special needs student and require special assistance.	
2. I live in a rural or urban area without postal service.	
3. There is no exam centre close to where I live (go to p 102-107 to check).	
4. I do not have access to a computer or the Internet.	
5. I am a single parent with small children to look after.	
6. I work full-time.	
7. I work during the day and at night/weekends.	
8. I do not have access to a cell phone.	
9. I am battling financially, and do not know how I will fund my studies and buy books.	

5.5.1.2 my Registration @ Unisa

The “Registration phase” in the student walk is for students who have applied to study through UNISA and are now ready to register as well as for students who are reregistering. A lot of information is given to prepare students for registration and to complete the registration process itself. The aim of the communication products focusing on registration is to (Schmidt, 2012a:14; my Registration @ Unisa, 2013):

- Understand ODL: Ensure that the student understands what ODL is and is prepared for his or her studies.
- Select modules: Ensure that the student knows which qualification he or she has selected. Make sure that they meet the admission criteria and know which modules to choose (provide information about the University’s offerings to assist the prospective student to make the correct choices).

- Register: Provide adequate information about the registration process and assist the student in registering to study through UNISA.

There is a specific version of this product for each college as well as “my Rules” and “my Modules”, assisting students to select the right modules, register and understand the rules of UNISA. The Corporate Communication and Marketing department also runs a campaign on Facebook and Twitter during the registration period (Schmidt, 2012a:15).

In the life coaching programme students need to be made aware of the “my Registration @ Unisa 2013” College of Human Sciences brochure. They need to be referred specifically to BSW degree (p 132). Information on modules required and the registration process have been identified as important study needs during the focus groups.

5.5.1.3 my Studies @ Unisa

During the “Teach and learn” phase of the student walk students are already registered and are ready to study. They now need as much information about the study process and study support as possible. The communication products developed for this phase focus on three steps (Schmidt, 2012:16; my Studies @ Unisa, 2012):

- Plan: Students are provided with information on how to get started, to schedule their work and go online.
- Connect: Students are guided to form their own academic support network by going on Facebook, Twitter, listening to UNISA Radio, link with student support resources and get involved in student affairs.
- Study: Students are provided with guidelines on how to study, to do assignments, write exams and manage stress.

During the research study participants requested information on where to start with their studies, time management, being part of a study group and study skills which is part of the information gathering stage. My Studies @ Unisa is thus a valuable satisfier for these student needs. Functional elements in these products include the following:

- Throughout the brochure, students are provided with lists of resources within UNISA (my Studies @ Unisa, 2013). These are all opportunities available for students.
- Students are provided with guidelines to build “their own little UNISA” (Schmidt, 2012b) by interacting online (using *myUnisa*, Facebook, Twitter and UNISA Radio, utilising student support resources (tutorials, WIL, library, counselling and regional centres) and linking with the SRC, student organisation, and satisfy their financial needs and special needs as students with disability (my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:9).
- Methods of note taking, doing assignments, memorising, revision and taking exams are explained (my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:26-34).
- The mental, emotional, physical and behavioural symptoms of stress are listed as well as unhealthy ways of dealing with stress. Simple stress management techniques are discussed and students are referred to resources within UNISA which can assist them to cope with stress (my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:35).

5.5.1.4 my Link @ Unisa

The “my Link @ Unisa” product provides all the information for the phase of “graduating and lifelong learning”. It includes the following (Schmidt, 2012a:18; my Link @ Unisa, 2013):

- Information about the graduation process
- What it means to be an alumnus; how to stay involved with UNISA, such as funding, updating information and events
- How to make contact with the Alumni Directorate
- Lifelong learning, short learning programmes and postgraduate studies
- Convocation.

This product contains valuable information on graduation and continuous learning. This is also a prerequisite within the field of social work. Students can be referred to “my Link @ Unisa” as a resource in their final year.

5.5.1.5 Evidence of success, strengths and weaknesses of the marketing package

In 2012, nine focus groups were held with 18-15 students and 10-15 frontline staff members to assess their use and opinion of “my Choice @ Unisa”, “my Studies @ Unisa” and “my Link @ Unisa” in print, online and in mobi format. However, the information has not yet been processed (Schmidt, 2012a).

Table 5.11 Summary of strengths and weaknesses of the four communication tools (Schmidt, 2012b)

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The products can be seen as a form of self-coaching – students drive their own development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The products cannot focus on any specific qualification or field of study.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The content is clear and provides easy guidelines on the ODL process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The material is not yet interactive enough – the CCM are working on this.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The products are improved and extended continuously. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is not clear whether students use the products, since it is not compulsory to work through it. It seems that the longer students study, the more they tend to filter information so that they only give attention to work which will gain them marks.

5.5.2 Directorate: Counselling and Career Development (DCCD)

On the UNISA website, mention is made of the student services and support, namely “Learning”, “Counselling”, “Libraries” and “Student Affairs” (UNISA, 2013a). Under “Counselling”, students are referred to the website of the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development (DCCD, 2013a). Some of the topics students can explore on this website and functional elements in their existing programmes will be discussed in the next section.

5.5.2.1 DCCD website

On the DCCD website (henceforth referred to as “website”) students can explore the following three options for information and guidance on their career, study and personal choices: Manage my career, Manage my studies and Manage myself.

Manage my career

On “Manage my career” a table (cf. Table 5.12) is provided with a list of compelling situations students may be experiencing with corresponding options to explore. Each one of the options in the left hand column links to another web page with information, activity sheets or questionnaires to assist students. Please note that the information is described as it was accessed on the specific day. Information on the website is, however, changed on a regular basis.

Table 5.12 Manage my career (DCCD, 2013b)

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXPLORE TODAY?	WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING THERE?
I need to explore alternative study options.	You do not meet the admission requirements for the qualification you applied for, or have realised that UNISA is not for you – what now?
I need to get started with planning my career.	You are at the start of your career and you need to make some choices with regard to your career but you are not sure where to start. This section will help you to think about the different aspects you need in order to make a considered choice.
I need to decide between different options.	You have identified a couple (or more) of options in terms of your career and you feel confused about which one to choose.
I need to change my career direction.	You have been working, but you realise that you have to make some changes to your changing circumstances or due to the environment that is changing. This will help you to think about the different aspects you need to consider in terms of changing your career direction.

I have work experience and I need a qualification.	You have work experience and now you need to complete a qualification to progress. Learn more about what you could think about so that you make an informed decision about the qualification you wish to complete.
I want to research career options.	You need to think about how you would go about researching different career options and where to find information.
I know what I am interested in and I want to explore career fields related to these interests.	Explore job titles related to specific interests, including working with children, working with people, working with the environment and more.
I want to know more about career information related to my field of study.	Read more about careers in your field of study.
I need to link my studies to my career vision.	You have passed four or more modules this semester/year. It is still some time before you graduate. This section will help you to reflect on your progress with your studies and skills you are developing.
I need to enhance my employability.	Explore more ways of increasing your employability, including how you present yourself to employers through your CV, portfolio and interview skills.

Although social work students could benefit from all these options, five functional elements have been identified which could meaningfully contribute to a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context. These refer to career options, information related to the field of study, a booklet on psychology as a career, career vision and employability.

- “I want to research career options” – Students are referred to a conversation sheet where they are asked questions on what they already know about the career/s and four ways in which they can find more information on the career/s they want to research; i.e. talk to others, occupational websites, job search portals and LinkedIn

(DCCD, 2013b). Social work students need to know what social work is all about to decide whether they have made the right choice and to set professional goals for themselves.

- “I want to know more about career information related to my field of study” – Students are linked to a web page on career areas, again linked to a page with information specifically on social work. The following questions are answered: “Which qualifications are available to prospective social work students?”, “What are the practical requirements?”, “Which other major should I combine with social work?”, “How can I learn more about a career in social work and the options available?” and “How will I fund my studies?” (DCCD, 2013b). These answers inform prospective students’ decision-making.
- During the Internet search, the researcher found a valuable booklet entitled “psychology@Unisa” (Barnard & Deyzel, 2012). It focuses on the students’ career choice, integrating the questions on aspects that influence career choices described in “my Choice @ Unisa” (2013:19-27); managing a career in psychology, suggesting specific tasks to be done on different year levels, specialisation fields of psychology, specific module choices and reference to resources. A suggestion is made that students should develop a professional network to assist them in finding a job (cf. Figure 5.5). Similar information on social work could be included, not only in the support programme for social work students, but also made available on the DCCD’s web page.

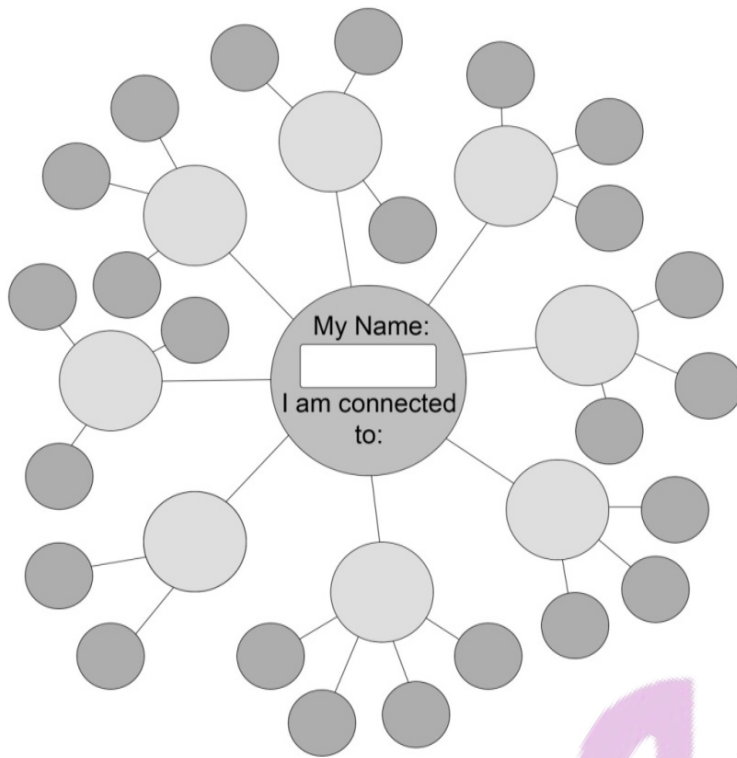


Figure 5.5 My network (Barnard & Deyzel, 2012:19)

- “I need to link my studies to my career vision” – Students enter an activity booklet leading them through the following questions to link what they have learned in the modules they have passed, to their qualification: “What is your career vision?”, “What were you hoping for when you registered for this qualification?”
- “I passed these modules during my last examination period” – Questions asked were: “What does each of these modules help you to do?”, “How can you use the skills you have gained in these modules to add value to an organisation or help them solve specific problems?”, “Are you on track?”, “What do you need to do differently to get even more out of your modules next semester?” Lists of examples of transferable skills are also provided to guide students (DCCD, 2013b). This could be included in the life coaching programme because during the data gathering for this study participants expressed a need to know more about the whole social work study journey and to not just learn material without knowing where it fits into the bigger picture.
- “I need to enhance my employability” – This option is linked to a booklet called “My employability skills” by Barnard, Deyzel and Makhanya (2011). Here the concept of “employability” is explained. Students are guided to develop a career

portfolio consisting of a statement of originality, work philosophy, career goals, skills areas, work in progress, community service, professional membership and awards as well as their CV. Guidelines are provided on how to do a job search and links are provided to online job sites. Tips are listed on the writing of a cover letter, forms and CV. Effective and ineffective strategies of compiling and presenting a CV are listed, and students need to analyse an example of a CV. Job interview skills are presented by means of a “do and don’t list” as well as examples of questions frequently asked. Students are guided to build up a professional network by using “informational interviewing” where they gather information on the field and industry, and explore career options. Informational interviews provide opportunities to build confidence in a non-threatening environment, to access up-to-date information and to identify personal strengths and areas for development. A sample of structured questions which can be used during an informational interview is provided. This booklet could be a valuable resource for fourth-level students to develop a career portfolio, start job searching and prepare them for job interviews after graduation.

Manage my studies

“Manage my studies” introduces self-help resources and services offered, as indicated in Table 5.13. All these options are linked to further information or activities.

Table 5.13 Manage my studies (DCCD, 2013d)

SELF-HELP RESOURCES	SERVICES OFFERED
Identify your areas of development with the Study Process Questionnaire	Academic literacies (reading, writing and quantitative skills)
Study skills leaflet	Peer collaborative learning
Effective study book	Start a study group
my Studies @ Unisa book	

Functional elements are the following:

- A study process questionnaire – It contains 70 statements with which students can agree or disagree (DCCD, 2013d). It is a self-assessment tool with the aim of creating

awareness of study skills and areas which need to be developed and on which students need to work. This questionnaire could facilitate students' academic development.

- When students link to the “Study skills leaflet”, the following table (cf. Table 5.14) appears (DCCD, 2013e):

Table 5.14 Study skills (DCCD, 2013e)

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXPLORE TODAY?	WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING THERE?
Learning styles	Find out more about how you prefer to learn and how this knowledge could help you make better use of your available study time.
Balancing work and studies	Are you struggling to balance your studies? Be inspired by this article.
Manage isolation – form a study group	Are you feeling isolated from other students? Forming a study group with fellow students can motivate you to complete your studies. This article explains how you can do this.
Memory – can I improve it?	You will often need to memorise basic facts, ideas and key words as part of your studies. This article explains how memory works and how you can manage yours.
Concentration	Are you one of those students who often complain about a lack of concentration? This article might help you to learn new techniques to improve your concentration.
Note making	Note making is an extremely important skill and is an essential part of the process to make sense of your own learning. Learn more about two techniques that you can use.
Managing stress, anxiety or tension	Stress is normal, but not managing your stress can have a negative impact on your studies. Read about identifying stressors and how to manage them for yourself.

I want to know more about how to prepare for my examinations (HTML).	Are you wondering how to prepare for examinations? How to deal with exam anxiety?
I want to know how to manage my anxiety about exams, and effective time management techniques to help me prepare (slide show).	This presentation will help you check what you need to look out for in terms of academic anxiety and how to use time management as a way to address your anxiety.
Exam preparation hand-out	This hand-out is used at an examination preparation workshop that is presented in Parow bi-annually.
Reflecting on exam failure	This page contains information about reflecting on your exam experience and provides further resources to help you approach your preparation more effectively.
Time management (HTML or slideshow)	Long-term and short-term planning are important skills for you to manage your studies. Learn more about applying these skills.

Information under each option is presented in an article-like format and students are linked to further resources.

- “Reflecting on exam failure” is another functional element where students are linked to a reflection sheet with questions assisting them to reflect on how they have prepared for the exam, how they wrote and what they could do differently. Questions included are: “What was my emotional state / personal circumstances like during the semester/year?” and “How can I change my study habits to adjust for the errors that I have made?” Students are then referred to a variety of resources which can assist them to improve their performance, such as podcasts, hand-outs and the DRIVER programme (DCCD, 2013f).
- The DRIVER programme (DCCD, 2013f) is a resource students can use to improve their exam performance after failing one or more modules. The programme aims to motivate and equip students to be the driver of their lives or destiny instead of being driven by outside influences. DRIVER stands for:
D – Define the problem
R – Review and reflect on the information available

I – Investigate the problem further and identify possible solutions

V – Verify the most likely solution and develop a project plan

E – Execute the chosen solution

R – Reflect on the outcome and revise the actions necessary.

In step 1, “Define the problem”, students are guided with an activity consisting of questions to identify the problem and reflect on the impact the problem has on him/her and the future.

Step 2, “Review and reflect on the information available”, asks students to do an electronic self-assessment reflecting on their preparation for the exam and writing the exam. They use this information to look at the overall picture, such as the total number of answers, or to look for patterns or clusters of negative answers. Possible areas where causes for failure could be located are identified in this manner; e.g., relationships, time management or their emotional state on the day of the exam. Students can ask for assistance if they cannot make sense of the information.

Step 3, “Investigate the problem further and identify possible solutions”, requests students to investigate the possible causes, gather more information if required and identify possible solutions. An activity guide facilitates students to list identified root causes and possible solutions.

In step 4, “Verify the most likely solution and develop a project plan”, students return to the possible solutions identified in Step 3 and add a planned activity to each possible solution. The objective, action, timeline, responsibility, resources, risks and deliverables are listed for each possible solution in the form of a table.

Step 5, “Execute the chosen solution”, is where students take action based on their project plan.

In step 6, “Reflect on the outcome and revise the actions necessary”, an activity facilitates reflection on the outcome of the DRIVER process by looking at external and internal cues of success. Students are referred to further resources.

Students are requested to fill out an online questionnaire, providing DCCD with feedback on the usefulness of resources provided.

This programme is centred on students taking responsibility for their own situation, setting goals, planning specifically to reach these goals and reflect on the process. These are all components of life coaching. From the needs assessment of social work students studying within an ODL context, it seemed that students expected the system to take responsibility for their failure. This programme could be applied in the life coaching programme by students assessing which outcomes related to the professional development of a social worker should still be reached and how this could be done.

- In the section “Academic literacies”, students are informed about workshops and an electronic academic literacy service where they can send in a number of pages online to receive written input on their writing style. Needs or desires to acquire study, writing and time management skills as well as study with other students were all identified by students who participated in the research study (cf. Chapter 3, sub-category 2.1.2.4). These resources can serve as satisfiers of the expressed needs.

Manage myself

Under “Manage myself” students can investigate three options, as described in Table 5.15:

Table 5.15 Manage myself (DCCD, 2013g)

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXPLORE TODAY?	WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING THERE?
I want to know how I can improve my wellness.	Before you can decide what to study, you need to know where you want to go. This section will help you to find out more about yourself.
I think I need counselling, but I am not sure about it.	Find out how counselling can help you.
I need to talk to a counsellor – whom can I contact?	Go to our contact list for counsellors at UNISA.

The first section on wellness in “Manage myself” is another possible functional element. The wellness wheel which is often used in life coaching is presented and students can explore each of the wellness areas, namely spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical, occupational, social, environmental and financial. A description of each type of wellness is provided together with two activities which guide students to further explore this type of wellness. After assessing the different areas of wellness, students have to reflect on the balance they achieve in all these areas (DCCD, 2013h).

This is a possible functional element, as the areas explored in the wellness wheel are similar to those of Max-Neef’s wheel of fundamental human needs which was used to explore students’ needs or poverties (cf. Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.2.1).

In the last two sections of “Manage myself”, counselling is defined. The myths about counselling and when students should go for counselling are also discussed. Information is provided about face-to-face counselling nationwide and e-counselling (DCCD, 2013i). This could be used as a functional element in the exploration of students’ study needs. Some students, although aware of counselling resources, did not make use of it. To make available a choice of service providers/counsellors would enable students to go where they feel safe, e.g., to ex-students or volunteers at welfare organisations.

5.5.2.2 Evidence of success, strengths and weaknesses of the website

Strengths and weaknesses of the website as a whole and the DRIVER programme are summarised in Table 5.16 below (Deyzel, 2012a). The DRIVER programme was evaluated separately, since it seems to be one of the most important functional elements identified.

Regarding the DCCD website, students are requested to provide online feedback on the usefulness of the website which is used in the continuous updating of the website (Deyzel, 2012a).

As far as the DRIVER programme is concerned, DCCD undertook a pilot study at the end of the first semester of 2011. A sample of 8 556 students who failed the Economics 1 examination were contacted and invited by e-mail to participate in a three-part online programme. Students had to complete a self-assessment, reflecting on their examination,

follow the DRIVER programme and complete a follow-up questionnaire after they had written their next examination. A total of 156 students completed the programme. A total of 22 responses were received and 19 respondents gave permission for the data to be analysed further. Despite the low response rate, data indicated that these students found the DRIVER programme to be effective, because 81% of respondents agreed that the DRIVER programme had helped them to identify solutions to their problems, while 75% indicated that the programme helped them to feel in control of their situation. It was concluded that the self-assessment part needed attention to better assist students to clearly identify areas which need to be worked on and then to link them to the DRIVER programme (Van Schoor, 2012b:81-86).

Table 5.16 Summary of success, strength and weaknesses of the DCCD website and DRIVER programme (Deyzel, 2012a; Van Schoor, 2012a)

Strength	Weakness
Website	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The website serves as a marketing tool for the support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although students seem to be aware of these resources, many do not take the time to utilise it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A multi-media approach is followed to provide in diverse needs of students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New students may feel overwhelmed by all the information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can use the resources on their own, irrespective of where they are, but can ask for assistance, either face-to-face or electronically when needed. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCCD counsellors incorporate the resources on the website with their counselling, e.g., ask students to listen to a podcast, write down how it applies to them and e-mail the counsellor again. 	
DRIVER programme	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are “driving” their own learning process – being proactive agents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programme can be more interactive. At the moment it is based on a PowerPoint presentation.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme also assists students with the emotional aspects around failure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the pilot study the participation rate was very low.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme is a good example of progressive scaffolds to support learning – first students reflect on their exam failure, follow the DRIVER programme and then assess the impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students do not seem to complete the programme.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The long-term impact of the programme still needs to be determined.

5.5.3 Department: Institutional Statistics and Analysis (DISA)

As part of UNISA's ODL Implementation Plan, Task Team 6 has developed a comprehensive framework for student success. One of the aspects in this framework is the identification of relevant and measurable information on factors impacting on student success and the integration of this information into a tracking system which would alert the institution to students' risk to failure.

Part of the role DISA plays in this process is to track students' non-academic readiness and risk by developing a student profile/non-academic readiness survey, to track students' academic engagement, and to assess students' habits and behaviours (Liebenberg & Archer, 2012:2-7).

5.5.3.1 Student profile

In the student profile, information is gathered about the UNISA students through information on their registration forms and other surveys, such as whether the student is male/female, how many children he/she has, his/her financial circumstances, whether he/she is the first member of the family to study, at what life stage he/she is, etc. This information is then measured against constructs of risks, namely financial risk, how long a person has been in the system or the number of modules outstanding in the final year of study.

Two pilot studies have been undertaken, one in 2011 and one in 2012, in order to refine a questionnaire on student profiles, and to explore the relationship between key constructs used in the questionnaire and items for the prediction of student success (Liebenberg & Van Zyl, 2012:14). The pilot studies identified various academic and non-academic factors affecting/influencing/explaining student success, but the integration of future results into the student tracking system and early warning signs are still being explored. The idea is, however, to make this information available to lecturers to assist students identified to be at risk (Liebenberg, 2012; Van Zyl, 2012; Liebenberg & Van Zyl, 2012:1-27). The researcher will keep track of the development of the student profile study, as it could be used as a tool to increase the student's self-awareness of his/her identity and attributes as a situated agent, as described in the UNISA model for student success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:184).

5.5.3.2 Tracking a student's academic engagement

DISA can analyse a student's learning by determining how many times he/she has visited *myUnisa*, has had contact with a tutor or a lecturer online, whether he/she has submitted assignments or sat for an examination. An analysis can also be made on a cohort of students. As in the case of the student profile, this information will be made available to lecturers in the future to identify and assist students at risk of failing (Liebenberg, 2012; Van Zyl, 2012). The researcher will also follow up on developments in this area, as it could provide valuable information to students on their risk to fail and motivate them to take charge of their own academic journey.

5.5.3.3 Shadowmatch programme

Shadowmatch is an instrument developed by an external service provider to assess students' habits and behaviours. At the end of 2012 it was in a pilot phase to test its appropriateness to the UNISA context (Liebenberg & Archer, 2012:3-4).

Shadowmatch is an Internet-based worksheet, originally developed to enable companies to recruit staff according to their needs. However, it was adjusted for the tertiary education environment. The programme is used to establish whether candidates have the appropriate habits and behaviours to succeed in a specific context. A benchmark profile or shadow of

behavioural habits of top performers in a specific context is created and matched with habits of potential candidates. Five critical habits are identified for each context. If students' habits and behaviours do not match the benchmark of top performers in their area of study, they are at risk of possible failure.

Within the academic context the goal of the programme is to increase the probability of student success, retention and throughput. After completing an online assessment (maybe during the registration phase) students will be provided with a personal development plan to foster the habits and behaviours to increase their chances of success in their study field (Liebenberg & Archer, 2012:5-6).

Shadowmatch measures a number of habits, but also includes ten conceptual questions to measure the participants' conceptual abilities. The attributes measured by the programme include team and individual inclination, an ability to simplify (breaking complicated challenges down/ problem-solving), resilience, propensity to change, propensity to own, propensity to hand-off, dealing with frustration, responsiveness (tasks), innovation, discipline, dealing with conflict, leadership, task efficiency, conceptual application, attitude, self-motivation, problem-solving, people positive, altruism and self-confidence.

Shadowmatch presents the student with a list of tasks in order to determine habits in the behaviour of the student. It simulates tasks for the student to indicate how he/she will act by selecting from a list of multiple answers. The system then identifies trends in the way the student indicates that he/she will act in specific circumstances and calculates the consistency with which the answers were selected. The end result is provided in the form of a graph that indicates the levels to which these habits are embedded in the behaviour of the student. A high score indicates that the student has consistently selected answers that indicate a strong preference towards behaving in a specific way. A low score indicates that the student did not consistently select answers that would represent congruent behavioural patterns seen as a habit (Liebenberg & Archer, 2012:7).

The Shadowmatch programme has a readymade intervention programme. If a student attains a low score on a critical habit, such as resilience, the system recommends a resilience professional development plan to help the student to improve his/her habit of resilience. The development plan contains a programme of activities and tasks for the

student to engage with over several weeks in order to establish the specific habit. The student can re-take the assessment after a few months. This provides him/her with an opportunity to compare how he/she may have improved the habits in the critical areas (Liebenberg & Archer, 2012:10).

This whole programme is seen as a functional element which could be included in or adjusted for the life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context.

5.5.3.4 Evidence of success, strengths and weaknesses of the Shadowmatch programme

The Shadowmatch programme is well-tested and used in various contexts like the business sector by companies such as Canon, Nedbank, McCarthy and Vodacom. International and local universities also make use of the programme. Stanford University, University of Pretoria and the University of Johannesburg are examples.

DISA is in a process of running a pilot project to test the appropriateness of the programme for the UNISA context. Each college has been invited to select a number of qualifications to be included in the pilot study. For each qualification, a benchmark is established by identifying the top 50 performers from 2011. First-level students are then shadowed against this benchmark. If the results of the pilot, which should be available during 2013, is positive, DISA plans to make the programme available across all qualifications.

The strengths and weaknesses of the Shadowmatch programme are summarised in Table 5.17 (Liebenberg, 2012; Liebenberg & Archer, 2012).

Table 5.17 Summary of success, strengths and weaknesses of the Shadowmatch programme (Liebenberg, 2012; Liebenberg & Archer, 2012)

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A benchmark is developed for each context; e.g., a specific qualification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ideal is for each student to have a mentor, but due to large numbers this is not possible.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme provides a way to guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the UNISA context, the

the development of huge numbers of students.	programme focuses on habits needed to complete a specific qualification successfully. However, the requirements for a specific career may be different from those of a qualification.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can track their own development in specific habits over time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programme takes long to complete.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An individualised developmental plan with activities to develop a specific habit(s) is provided. 	

The Shadowmatch programme is seen as a functional element, as it could be used to measure the suitability of first-level students to study social work. It indicates behaviours and habits of “good social work students” and enables students who lack these habits to undergo a self-development programme according to an individual professional development plan.

Unfortunately it only focuses on general habits and behaviours. It does not make provision for specific social work knowledge, skills and values. Should the pilot results be accepted by the UNISA management and the programme rolled out to all departments, the Shadowmatch could be done in collaboration with the e-tutors to assist and motivate students to use it correctly. The professional development plan linked to the Shadowmatch could form part of the students’ personal development plan.

5.5.4 Directorate: Student Social Development

The Directorate: Student Social Development is a relatively new section which falls under the Dean of Students. Its primary purpose is to create a nurturing environment to promote students’ wellbeing and to foster a sense of belonging to UNISA. It is mandated to focus on three areas, namely (a) student health and wellness, (b) student training, capacity building and life skills development and (c) community engagement (Le Roux, 2013a:1).

Although many projects are still in a planning stage, workshops for capacity and life skills development as well as health and wellness projects could be seen, not so much as functional elements, but as resources which could contribute to the personal and professional development of social work students.

5.5.4.1 Workshops for capacity and life skills development in students

Annual workshops are presented in various regions on project management, leadership development and financial management (Le Roux, 2013b).

5.5.4.2 Health and wellness projects

HIV/AIDS counselling and testing are done in all regions. A peer HIV/AIDS education programme is run with the collaboration of 12 peer educators. A sexually transmitted disease prevention day is held annually and peer educators communicate with fellow students on Facebook in an effort to prevent and manage HIV/AIDS. Gender transformation is seen as a priority and workshops focusing on women are presented to raise awareness on gender equality and sexism. Seminars on men's health were held in Pretoria, Polokwane and Durban. An e-directory of over 300 categories of support services delivered in the community has been developed (Le Roux, 2013b).

5.5.4.3 Evidence of strengths and weaknesses of the workshops and projects

Evidence of the strengths and weaknesses is collected by requesting feedback from students after each service rendered. This is summarised in Table 5.18 below.

Table 5.18 Strengths and weaknesses of the Student Social Development workshops and projects (Le Roux, 2013b)

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students acquire skills broader than only academic skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to the Student Satisfaction Survey, students are not aware of these services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within an ODL context, a sense of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These services should be marketed to

belonging is created for the students.	students.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness is raised about HIV/AIDS and gender issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is still a stigma attached to having HIV/AIDS.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer educators are not formally trained.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer educators are only black which creates the misconception that HIV/AIDS is only a “black” problem.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although awareness is raised about gender inequality, women still need to go to their communities to raise more awareness.

A need was expressed by participants in the research study to develop skills through voluntary work. In the life coaching programme students could be made aware of the website and workshop dates as well as the opportunity to serve as peer educators. The Directorate: Student Social Development will also focus more on community engagement, and the possibility of placing social work students for their practical work could be investigated.

5.5.5 Department: Tuition and Facilitation of Learning

At UNISA the tutor is integral for engaging the student with the University, community and the specific module. Tutors form part of the teaching team of the specific academic department (Job description, e-tutor, n.d.). Tutoring and specifically e-tutoring, face-to-face tutoring and tutors for the Science Foundation Programme fall under the Department of Tuition and Facilitation of Learning.

As from 2013, e-tutoring will be offered to all first-level students. E-tutoring will be phased in to other levels. Although face-to-face tutoring is still continuing, it will gradually be phased out (UNISA, 2012b).

Each e-tutor will be allocated 200 students who will be divided into groups of 50. Four key performance areas of an e-tutor have been identified, namely to

- facilitate online delivery of tutorial material;

- manage students' learning experiences online;
- facilitate students' interaction with their peers online; and
- provide students with academic and technical support (UNISA, n.d.).

A new position, namely that of an academic support coordinator, has been created and will be located either in the College or a specific department. This person will be responsible for e-tutoring as well as face-to-face tutoring. The academic support coordinator has three key performance areas, namely (a) administration of tutorial services which includes engaging with academic staff, compiling and distribution of tutorial information, and linking tutors to myUnisa; (b) monitoring and maintenance of planning and management information which includes monitoring of growth in students per module, compiling reports on students at risk, and compiling student and tutor profiles as well as (c) logistical support with tutor classes, video conferences and satellite transmissions (UNISA, n.d.).

Although the life coaching programme for social work students will address all areas of the students' lives and the tutor mainly addresses academic issues, online e-tutoring sessions could form part of the method of delivery. The researcher has tested this suggestion with the newly appointed academic support coordinator of the Departments of Social Work, Health Studies and Sociology (Sindane, 2013).

At the time of the interview, e-tutors have only been appointed for the Social Work module SCK1501, while they were awaiting applications for SCK 1502. According to the coordinator, the researcher could either provide her with material which e-tutors could discuss with students or investigate the possibility to be linked to the e-tutoring site and join online discussions between students and the e-tutor (Sindane, 2013).

5.5.6 Discussion of functional elements in support programmes within UNISA

As the above section shows, UNISA provides many resources to support its students, but it seems that students are not aware of the resources or do not make the effort to utilise them (Van Schoor, 2012a; Deyzel, 2012b). Most of the functional elements identified, specifically those of the Department of Corporate Marketing and DCCD, will be linked as resources to the life coaching programme. If the results of the Shadowmatch pilot study are

accepted and the programme is rolled out to the whole UNISA, it will be incorporated into the life coaching programme as an important self-awareness and development tool.

The following guidelines for the development of the life coaching programme have been isolated from the information gathered:

- The websites and available resources within UNISA are constantly changing. Should the life coaching programme be implemented by the Department of Social Work, it will have to be updated regularly.
- Evidence from UNISA as well as local residential universities shows that only a small number of students utilise the available support resources. Even though the life coaching programme will facilitate autonomy of students, the programme will have to be made compulsory; e.g., by linking it to the practical modules at each year level and giving a yearly assignment, even if it only counts a few marks.
- The life coaching programme would be able to facilitate access to student support resources by selecting some and linking them to specific themes and year levels.
- Quite a few of the support programmes, such as Shadowmatch, the tracking system and projects of the Directorate: Student Social Development are still in a beginning or pilot phase. The researcher will have to keep track of these developments.
- Since UNISA social work students only do field work during their fourth level, they could be encouraged to do voluntary work or get involved with peer education or other projects of the Directorate: Student Social Development.

5.6 FUNCTIONAL ELEMENTS IN SUPPORT PROGRAMMES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL WORK AT OTHER UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The HoDs at the Department of Social Work, or persons to whom the HoD referred the researcher, of the following South African universities were interviewed telephonically and asked about their support programmes for the students in their departments: University of Fort Hare, University of Venda, University of the Free State, University of the Western Cape, North-West University, University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Pretoria.

The time available to interview the HoDs was limited so that the researcher could not gain information on evidence of success as well as strengths and weaknesses of the programmes. All these universities are residential institutions, which implies that support programmes would be based on face-to-face contact between students and lecturers.

5.6.1 University of Fort Hare

The Department of Social Work runs a support group for students with HIV/AIDS once a week. Students at every level (level 1-4) select a group leader to facilitate support groups. Students learn together as groups, revise their work, discuss writing skills and referencing techniques in groups. Students with emotional problems are referred to the university's counselling services. The group leaders also assist other students with scholarship programmes (Mesatywa, 2013).

5.6.2 University of Venda for Science and Technology

The first-level social work students at the University of Venda for Science and Technology do a compulsory practical module on life skills where issues such as assertiveness, decision-making, career choice and time management are addressed. The book, *Life skills, my journey, my destiny* (Van Heerden, 2004), is prescribed. A number of first-level students are linked to each senior student. They meet as part of practical work sessions where the senior students share their experience of studying social work. Senior students who perform well also assist with the presentation of the Life Skills module. Lecturers make an effort to support first-level students with their adjustment (Thabede, 2013).

5.6.3 University of the Free State

The Department of Social Work does not have specific support programmes for their students but refer them to the Student Support Division of the University, when necessary. Two years ago they presented an adventure-based programme for first-level students. The students met with a lecturer a few times during the semester and sessions were held in a student-centred manner, focusing on needs the students had expressed, including study methods, self-concept and their flexibility. Many students experience trauma and are referred for counselling. Students often do not have goals or if they do, they are only short-

term goals. A need has been identified for students to develop long-term goals and to work on their emotional intelligence (Reyneke, 2013).

5.6.4 University of the Western Cape

A face-to-face tutoring programme which focuses on academic needs of students is presented by every department of the University. However, participation in this programme is poor. Students are referred to the Directorate: Student Support, when necessary.

A lecturer at the University has done research on the impact traumatic experiences as children had on students' lives. As part of one of the first-level modules, students have to do a formative task entitled "Who am I?" which requires them to reflect on who they are by considering what had impacted on their identity and growth. The results of her study indicate that students have been affected by experiences such as a troubled family life, troubled relationships as well as abuse as children. However, most students have overcome these experiences with positive outcomes, showing personal strength, a willingness to help others and gaining skills in the process (Dykes, 2011:521-533).

Although the Department pays attention to employability, students seem to be without direction and study social work for the wrong reasons, such as obtaining a bursary. There is a need to assist students to take ownership of their own studies which is not yet addressed (Schenck, 2013).

5.6.5 North-West University

The Department of Social Work has a close relationship with the Institute for Psychotherapy and Career Counselling. The latter also does the psychometric testing during the selection of the social work students. Should academic or personal problems be identified with selected students, they are referred to the Institute for assistance.

The different level lecturers will also, on their level, refer students with problems for counselling. An academic student society for social work students, Caritas, renders support to fellow students and the Department. Members of Caritas mentor first-level students and

organise important rituals in the department; for example, the first-level orientation, a pledge-signing function for second years and a graduation ceremony for fourth-level students. The Department has been using an assessment instrument, the SASPER, measuring the growth in students' professional and ethical behaviour from level 1-4 (Herbst, 2013).

5.6.6 University of the Witwatersrand

During the first semester first-level students do a compulsory academic development programme that covers aspects, such as how to write assignments and plagiarism. Students can choose to continue with this subject for a second semester. It seems that the throughput rate of first-level students has improved due to this programme but it puts additional strain on staff members.

Successful fourth-level students support first-level students, mainly with their academic work. Fourth-level students are allocated a group of first years and meet with them at specific times. Should personal problems be detected, the students will refer their peers to lecturers or to the University's support section. Through the involvement of senior students, lecturers are more aware of the experiences first-level students have (Kaseke, 2013).

5.6.7 University of Pretoria

As part of their practical work, first-level students attend life skills classes in small groups of 30. Themes such as self-concept and time management are addressed. During the second semester, the second-level students do group work with first-level students in groups of five to seven, focusing on life skills. It seems that the first-level students find the group work more meaningful than the life skills classes, and that the group work implies personal and professional growth for both first- and second-level students.

All level students are seen during supervision where supervisors will refer students for counselling or other student support, when necessary. It is a policy in the Department that the supervisor is not the student's counsellor (Lombard, 2013; Wessels, 2013).

5.6.8 Discussion of functional elements in support programmes within the departments of social work at other universities in South Africa

The following themes emerged from the discussions:

- Peer support in the form of student support groups on the various levels or fourth-level students supporting first-level students is provided in most departments.
- Life skills are presented, often by other students.
- Since residential universities have smaller numbers of students, lecturers are able to provide individual support.
- Special attention is given to first-level students having to adjust within a tertiary institution.
- Most departments have a close relationship with the student support division of the university and refer students for counselling, when necessary.
- HoDs were of the opinion that students needed to be more goal-directed, take responsibility for their learning, choose social work for the right reasons and work on their emotional intelligence.

5.7 FUNCTIONAL ELEMENTS IN THE PRESENT SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM AT UNISA

The researcher was made aware of some functional elements in the present curriculum by colleagues in the Department of Social Work at UNISA. She worked through the study guides in search of relevant material. Much useful material or assignments were found which addressed the needs of students, as identified by the research participants or which could be useful in reaching the goals of the life coaching programme. The researcher refers to the study material of 2012. Please note that the codes of some of the modules have changed since 2012.

5.7.1 SCK1503: Assignment 2, Practical tasks and workbook

Parts of the following assignment can be seen as functional elements which focus on the following aspects (Tutorial Letter 103 for SCK1503, 2012d:2-31):

- The choice of social work as a profession: Students have to reflect on why they decided to become social workers; what the characteristics of a good social worker are; why they see themselves as suitable for the profession, and what they think are the most rewarding and most difficult part respectively of being a social worker.
- Thinking critically and self-awareness: Students have to think critically about questions on child abusers, people from different race groups and religion. These ideas are linked to discrimination, stereotypes and prejudice.
- Experiencing similarity and diversity in different contexts: Students have to expose themselves to different contexts and become aware of how their beliefs or ideas differ from those of others. They can visit a church denomination different from their own or go to a meeting place of people with a different sexual orientation and reflect on their experience, for instance.
- Marketing the social work profession by means of an advertisement in South Africa's leading magazine: Specific criteria are provided for the task, and students have to reflect on the content and process of the task.
- Creating their own task: Students have to choose a topic in social work of which they want to know more or have found interesting and develop their own task.
- Evaluation of the practical tasks: Students reflect on what they have learnt from the tasks and in which areas they still need to grow.

5.7.2 SCK2024 (now SCK2604): Workbook in facilitating communication in groups and communities

The goals of this workbook is for students to identify and use basic communication skills, to become aware of their own attitudes and values, and to reflect on their learning (De Kock, 2010:i-59). The following activities can be seen as functional elements:

- Self-awareness: Students have to draw a pie chart of the different areas of their lives and reflect on what they want to change. They also have to discuss this pie chart with significant others in their lives.
- Values and work ethics: Students have to write down which values are important to them and assess whether their values are in line with the values of social work.
- Understanding different frames of reference: Students have to draw a table with two columns, and list arguments for and against the death penalty/abortion.

- Change your own life: Students have to list three things they have learnt or changed over the last three years that are important to them and that have had an impact on their lives; they must reflect on the process of change.
- Relationships and change: Students have to identify a situation in which they have been accepted unconditionally and reflect on it.
- Reflecting on learning: Students have to discuss how the exercises have contributed to their development as facilitators and how their selves have been reconstructed.

5.7.3 SCK2046 (now SCK2606): Basic counselling skills. Only study guide for SCK2046

The purpose of the module is to guide the student to understand the person-centred approach to counselling, and to record and reflect on their own experiences (Grauman, 2009:vii). The following activities, which are linked to the theory of the person-centred approach, can be seen as functional elements for the life coaching programme for social work students:

- Students are requested to reflect on the reasons for registering for this module. They have to reflect on the role of a counsellor.
- Students must reflect on a major decision they have taken in their lives and state what has influenced that decision.
- In one of the “Take a moment” reflection activities students are requested to look at themselves in the mirror and reflect on what they see.
- Students have to draw their holistic, ever-changing world in the form of a circle with themselves in the middle. They have to divide the circle into the areas of their lives representing their friends, romantic relationships, community, hobbies, work, study, fitness and religion. They must consider the changes which have occurred in the various areas over the last few years. They have to decide with which areas of their lives they are happy (mark these with an A+) and which areas need improvement (mark these with an A-).
- Students have to answer questions which will reveal information about themselves; for example, “What do you do best?” and “What makes you laugh most?”

- Another “Take a moment” activity requires students to complete sentences such as: Things I like about myself. . .; Things I don’t like about myself. . . The students have to transfer the statements to the life cycle in whatever areas they apply.
- A list is provided of possible characteristics and students have to tick what they consider important, like careful, clever and hardworking. Students add the ones they have ticked to their life cycle.
- Students must look at their life cycle and think of significant others who have had a positive influence on them.

5.7.4 SCK305B (now SCK3705): Community work

The workbook for the practical work contains a few activities which could be described as functional elements for the student support programme being developed (Skhosana, 2012:3-65):

- Group visits to organisations: Students are required to visit organisations where community work services are conducted in groups of 5-7. Students have to prepare themselves for the visit, do the visit, write a report, prepare group presentations and do a group presentation on their visit. Students are provided with a list of questions, based on the technique of appreciative inquiry which they can use to find out more about the role of the social worker within the organisation.
- Participatory rural appraisal and other visualisation techniques: As part of the workshop, students practise various techniques, like the PERT (for planning a project), Venn diagram (to map relationships and resources in a community), the SWOT analysis (to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in an organisation or situation) and the force field analysis (to identify helping forces and hindering forces within a situation). Some of these techniques could be used to raise self-awareness.

5.7.5 SCK304A (now SCK3704): Guidelines for practical work: group and family work

In this study guide, the lecturer wants the students to look at the aim of their studies, specifically the practical work as they see it. She asks a few meaningful questions, and

facilitates a lot of reflection on personal and professional growth of the students (Grobler, 2010:1-68).

- Question: What will it take to prepare you for professional practice in two years' time?
- Question: The lecturer motivates the students to ask this question before they do any of the activities in the guide: Why and for whom am I doing this?
- The students have to list their aims for taking the module which may differ from that of the lecturer.
- At the end of the workshop students have to reflect on the workshop and formulate their own learning goals for the rest of the year.
- The students attend group supervision and write a group process report in which they reflect on their use of theory, values and skills. The following are a few examples of questions they must answer in each report:

Knowledge

How would you describe the group's self?

Is there a difference between the members' self and the group's self?

Were any members experiencing a threat to the self?

Values

Were you able to accept each member as a unique individual?

Were you able to respect each member, to share and deal with the pain?

Did you maintain confidentiality during the sessions?

Skills

Were you able to attend to each and every member?

Was your empathy accurate? Give examples of accurate and inaccurate empathy.

Give an example of how you connected islands to the self of individual members and the group or family as a whole.

- In their final assessment, students must reflect on what they have learned, for example:
 What have you learned about people and human behaviour?
 What have you learned about social work?
 How do you feel about your ability to apply what you have learned in a different situation?
 How do you feel about yourself as a developing professional?

What changes have occurred during the year during social work training in your attitudes, knowledge and skills?

5.7.6 SCK402B (now SCK4802): Social case work: working with couples and families

In this tutorial letter, guidelines are provided for the practical work, workshops and writing process reports, mid-year assessment and the final oral assessment (Botha, 2012:1-88). Some of the exercises of the workshops could be seen as functional elements. As seen with SCK304A, assessments seem to play an important part in consolidating personal and professional growth, and setting new goals for a next period of learning.

- During the first workshop students do a “magic wand” exercise, describing themselves in five years’ time while reflecting on what they still need to change or work on to achieve their goals, and what support they need to do this.
- During the second workshop students draw a genogram of their family. They must reflect on their family’s strengths, weaknesses, and how their family has shaped their attitudes and ideas about life.
- During the last workshop students reflect on their own trauma and experiences that could influence their work. Students are encouraged to go for counselling to deal with their pain if necessary.
- The format for process notes includes a section called “*evaluation*” where the students reflect on themselves, their relationship with the client, what they did well and what they could have done differently.
- In the written mid-year assessments, students are required to measure their progress against the various outcomes set for the module. They must also set learning goals for themselves for the rest of the year and specify the support they need from their lecturer or supervisor.
- In the final oral examination the students reflect on the knowledge acquired, the integration of theory and practice, and their own personal and professional growth.

5.7.7 SCK408H (now SCK4808): Social work management. The social worker as employee and manager

Several of the themes in this study guide are also covered in life coaching. These were mentioned during the need assessments of first- to fourth-level students (Makondo & Van Biljon, 2005:1-195).

- The setting and formulation of goals and objections. A distinction is made between goals and objectives. The types of objectives are discussed and requirements for the formulation of goals listed.
- Planning. Scheduling aids, namely the timeline and the PERT are included.
- Time management. A time log is provided as a tool, and time wasters in oneself and the environment are discussed.
- Compiling a CV and finding a job. The application letter and guidelines for a job interview are provided.

5.7.8 SCK411C (now SCK4811): Social work, supervision and ethic

This study guide incorporates the code of ethics. It includes a section on adult learning, theories of learning, the cycle of experiential learning and conditions for learning (Van Dyk & Harrison, 2008:vi-90).

5.7.9 SCK405 (now SCK4805) – Tutorial letter 101/0/2013

In this tutorial letter, students are provided with detailed guidelines on how to present assignments. In the assessment of an assignment, students reflect on how the assignment assisted them or did not assist them in attaining the specific outcomes of the module. They also have to describe what the most beneficial learning experience was whilst doing the assignment (Tutorial Letter 103 for SCK4805, 2013:1-37).

5.7.10 Discussion of functional elements in the present social work curriculum at UNISA

Many of the elements which the researcher wants to include in the life coaching programme for social work students are already present in the curriculum of the Department of Social Work at UNISA, but they are scattered. It will be important not to repeat information or already existing exercises. Should an already existing activity be used, it should be discussed with the lecturer of that module in order to coordinate as far as possible. The assignment of SCK1503 referring to the choice of social work, and the fit between the person and the career as well as two variations of the wheel of life exercise in SCK2024 and SCK2046 are examples of such activities.

Students are also expected to reflect on their learning throughout the four levels. In SCK304A, students have to reflect on why they have taken a specific module and in SCK405F students are requested to think what role a specific assignment has played in their attaining the outcomes of the module.

Assessments can play an important part in enabling students to monitor their progress if the researcher could facilitate a different perspective of assessment. Information which would be available to use at level 2 is only presented at level 4, like time management being covered in SCK408H. In a SCK402B workshop, students are expected to reflect on how the trauma they have experienced in the past impact their lives and studies. This is, however, too late and should be attended to earlier.

5.8 FUNCTIONAL ELEMENTS OF A LIFE COACHING PROGRAMME FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS WITHIN AN ODL CONTEXT FOUND IN LITERATURE

In this paragraph, a few coaching models and tools which could be used meaningfully in the life coaching programme as well as theoretical approaches to coaching will be discussed. The researcher could not find any evidence of success of specific coaching models, and strengths and weaknesses are not identified in the literature. The researcher, however, weighed the potential applicability of each model discussed for potential use in the support programme for social work students.

5.8.1 Coaching models

Coaching as a **process** as well as coaching models were described in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.1.4.2. Rostron (2009b) provides a classification of models, as summarised in Table 5.19 below.

Table 5.19 A classification of coaching models

Four-quad-rant models	Circular models	Nested-level models	U-shaped models	Triangular models
David Kolb's Experiential Learning model	Lane's and Corrie's Purpose, Perspective, Process model	Pam Weiss' and James Flaherty's model	Otto Scharmer's model	Habermas's Domain of Competence model
Daniel Goleman's EQ model	Cummings and Worley's Input-Throughput-Output model	Centre for Conscious Leadership		Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
Ken Wilbur's Four Quadrant Integral model	Strasser's Existential Time-limited Therapy model			
Hudson's Renewal Cycle model				
John Whitmore's GROW model				

For the purposes of this study, the researcher will focus on the better known models and models which could be used within a support programme for social work students within an ODL context. These are the Ken Wilbur's Four-quadrant Integral model, the EQ model, Kolb's Experiential Learning model, GROW and two circular models not mentioned by Rostron (2009b), namely Starr's four stages of a coaching assignment and appreciative inquiry life coaching.

5.8.1.1 Ken Wilbur's Four-quadrant Integral model

There are many versions of Wilbur's coaching model; however, the researcher will describe the model using Rostron's interpretation (Rostron, 2009a:108-113; The Coaching Centre, 2009:13-15).

Wilbur's model is based on the subjective and objective realities in each of us. The model works from the premise that the more consciousness we have of the internal world, the greater our corresponding understanding of the complexities of the exterior world (Rostron, 2009a:109). When clients learn from their experience in a coaching relationship, the coach and the client need to understand the **I** (inside the individual), the **we** (inside the collective), the **it** (outside the individual) and the **its** (outside the collective).

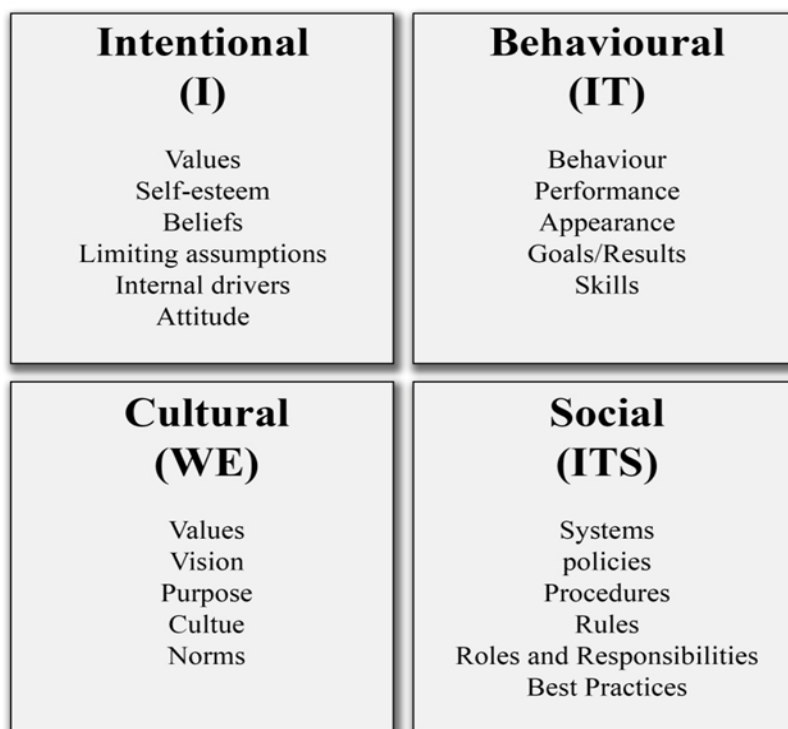


Figure 5.6 Ken Wilbur's Integral model (Rostron, 2009a:110)

Upper left (I)

The **I** is inside the individual and is interior (not visible to the world), individual and intentional. It is represented by the individual's values, beliefs, morals, feelings, emotions, self-confidence and self-assurance.

Upper right (It)

The **It** is exterior (visible to the world), individual and behavioural. This quadrant shows how the individual's values, beliefs, feelings and emotions show up through his/her behaviour and interaction with others in the external world; the interpersonal skills, competencies, what the person does or does not do.

Lower left (We)

The **We** is interior, collective and cultural. **We** is inside the collective, i.e. the culture or worldview of a family, team, organisation or society of which the individual is a part. It is represented by an awareness of his/her relationships with others, the values and beliefs of the collective in which he/she operates.

Lower right (Its)

Its is outside the collective, i.e. the social system and its environment; it is represented by the systems, rules, regulations and procedures within the environment or society in which the individual works.

Coaches can help their clients develop self-awareness and a conscious awareness of their interior life and an understanding of how they manage their interactions with others within systems, such as a family, community, organisation, society or nation (Rostron, 2009a:112).

This model could be used to facilitate social work students' awareness of their own values, thoughts, feelings and beliefs (**I**), an awareness of their relationships with others (**It**) within and outside the university and the social work profession, an awareness of the values and culture of the university and profession (**We**) as well as their fit with these values and culture, and lastly an awareness of the structure and resources of the university and the requirements for the degree in social work (**Its**).

The distinction between the **We** and the **Its** is, however, not clear and could confuse the students. The focus of the life coaching programme is on the individual student and not on the wider group or context. The model also does not fit clearly with the support model of Subotzky and Prinsloo (2011) which has been used to interpret the results of the research findings.

Ken Wilbur's Integral model focuses on visible and invisible aspects influencing the individual and the group, while the model of Subotzky and Prinsloo depicts the transforming identity and attributes of the individual student and the ODL institution during the student's academic walk or journey.

5.8.1.2 EQ model

The EQ Coaching model was originally developed by Goleman but has been adapted by other authors (Rostron, 2009a:116-117; Starr, 2011:233-251). The basic premise is that the four main areas, viz. self-awareness, self-management, awareness of others and relationship management, form the foundation of our emotional maturity. These can be divided into two main aspects of maturity, namely our ability to relate to ourselves (personal competence) and our ability to relate to others (social competence).

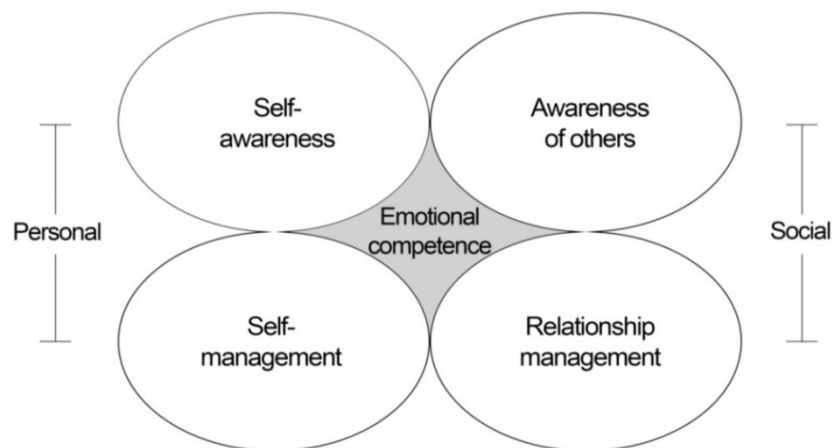


Figure 5.7 The four elements of emotional competence (Starr, 2011:234, with acknowledgement to Goleman)

Emotional competence: self-awareness

Self-awareness refers to one's ability to understand oneself, either in the immediate moment or in general, to know how one feels about a certain subject like one's career, social life, strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, features and mistakes (Starr, 2011:234). Self-awareness can be developed by completing a personality profile, seeking regular feedback from others, attending developmental courses and keeping a learning diary (Starr, 2011:236).

Emotional competence: self-management

Self-management "is our ability to influence ourselves: to choose our responses and behaviour" (Starr, 2011:238). Self-management can be applicable on the short- or long-term, e.g., making a tough decision and staying with it, adapting one's natural behaviour for the good of others or do something one does not feel like doing. Self-management builds on self-awareness (Starr, 2011:238-242).

Emotional competence: awareness of others

Awareness of others refers to one's ability to understand what is going on with others as well as the ability to demonstrate this understanding; to empathise with others, for instance to notice somebody is angry. This ability can once again be stimulated by reflecting on specific questions (Starr, 2011:242-243).

Emotional competence: relationship management

The last competence, relationship management, is built on the previous three abilities. Relationship management refers to social abilities, such as building, harmonising and sustaining relationships. It influences one's ability to communicate clearly with others, to negotiate or manage others. One can learn relationship management by learning about human behaviour, seeking feedback on how people see one and reflecting on past relationships (Starr, 2011:246-250).

This model focuses on the awareness and management of self and others. It is useful to utilise in a coaching conversations with the social work students as self-awareness, self-management, awareness of others and relationship management could contribute to the personal and professional development of social work students. It also links well with the components of the success model of Subotzky and Prinsloo (2011), as both describe the

intra- and interpersonal growth of an individual. It will, however, not provide a structure or framework for the whole coaching journey for social work students.

5.8.1.3 Kolb's Experiential Learning model

Kolb's Experiential Learning model is used during coaching when the coach and client reflect on the client's experience (Rostron, 2009a:18). According to Kolb (cited in Rostron, 2009a:118), learning is a process where knowledge is created through transformation of experience. Kolb (cited in Rostron, 2009a:118-129; The Coaching Centre, 2009:37-45) developed a learning style inventory according to which a student can be a converger, diverger, assimilator or an accommodator. Each style has its own strengths and weaknesses (The Coaching Centre, 2009:41-45). Kolb's original Experiential Learning model is depicted in Figure 5.6:

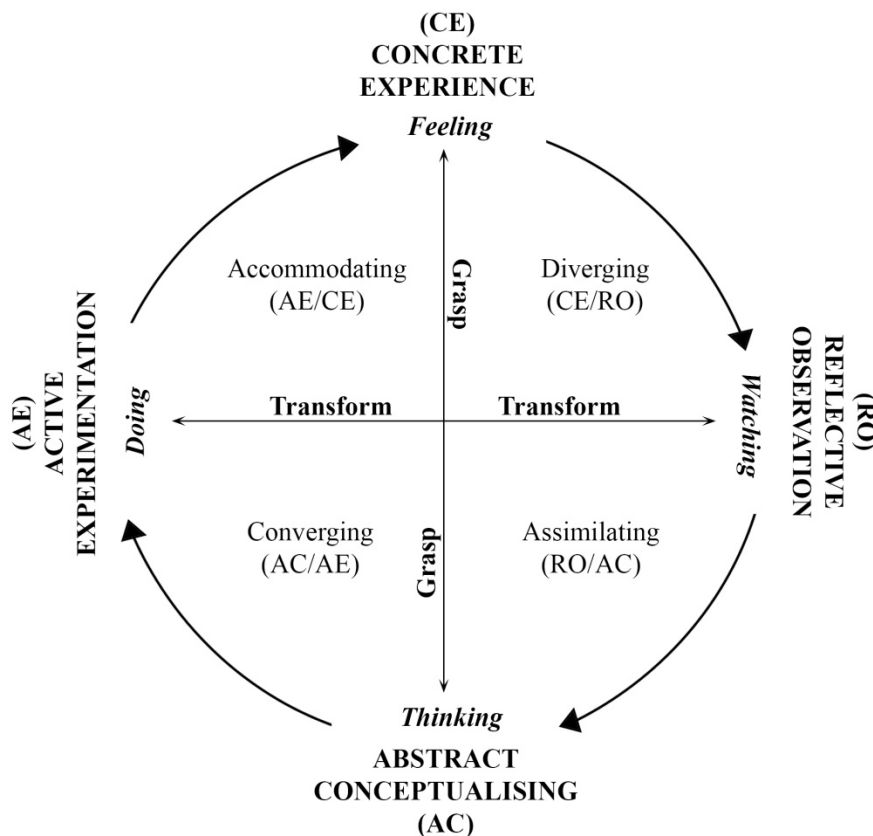


Figure 5.8 Kolb's original Experiential Learning model (Rostron, 2009a:118)

The learning process is depicted in four quadrants (Rostron, 2009:120).

- CE (concrete experience) is about feeling and experiencing.
- RO (reflective observation) is about observing and watching.
- AC (abstract conceptualisation) is about thinking and conceptualisation.
- AE (active experimentation) is about doing and being in action.

Although all four stages of learning are used, people tend to rely more on one or two learning stages resulting in a specific learning style. Kolb's model, and specifically the learning styles inventory, may be useful as a tool to create awareness in the students of their own learning styles but the emphasis of self-awareness will be on the strengths, values and interests of the students.

5.8.1.4 The GROW model

The GROW coaching model was originally developed by Whitmore (1992). It consists of four stages which can be used to structure a coaching conversation and the coaching journey (Whitmore, 1992:39; Holroyd & Field, 2012:40-43).

- GOAL – goal setting for the coaching session as well as in the short- and long-term
- REALITY – checking to explore the current situation
- OPTIONS – options and strategies or courses of action
- WILL – what will be done, by whom, when and the will to do it.

GOAL

Whitmore (Holroyd & Field, 2012:40) stresses the importance of first setting the coaching goals before they become contaminated by the reality of the situation or past experience. He emphasises the importance of goals being SMART (specific, measurable, agreed, relevant/realistic and time bound); PURE (positively stated, understood, relevant and ethical) as well as CLEAR (challenging, legal, environmentally sound, appropriate and recorded) (Whitmore, 1992:44-45). He also distinguishes between the “end goal” and the “performance goal”, establishing with the client what level of performance is necessary to reach the end goal (Whitmore 1992:47).

REALITY

In this stage the client and coach clarify the current situation, and recognise internal factors that could distort the client's perception of reality. Objective descriptive language should be used to encourage the client to be more specific (Whitmore, 1992:50-52). Self-awareness of feelings, thoughts and attitudes is important, as is asking the questions "what", "when", "where", "who" and "how much" to reveal information which is missing or less obvious (Holroyd & Field, 2012:42).

OPTIONS

The purpose of this stage is to maximise options, to generate as many alternative courses of action as possible, not necessarily to find the "right" answer. The quantity of options is more important than the quality. Options can be mapped to avoid a hierarchy of options. "What if. . ." questions can be used to facilitate this process, e.g., "What if you knew the answer?", "What would it be?" and "What if that obstacle didn't exist?" In this way more creative thinking is possible. The costs and benefits of each option can be weighed and noted. If necessary, the GOAL stage can now be revisited (Whitmore, 1992:61-66).

WILL

The purpose of this final stage is for the client to come to a decision. It is the construction of a clear action plan. A set of questions guide the client into taking the decision: What are you going to do? When are you going to do it? (Whitmore, 1992:67-74). Whitmore (1992:74) stresses the importance of the principles of raising awareness and building responsibility within the client.

The GROW model could be valuable for the life coaching programme in assisting students to set overall and specific goals, create self-awareness and generate options, decisions and commitment in areas they want to change. A valuable detail of this model is that the client is requested to set goals even before "reality" is checked to specify a passion or vision.

The model once again does not describe the journey of the social work students through UNISA during the four or more years of study, but could be used as a valuable tool to assist students to "grow" in various areas of their lives. It could be used during one of the coaching conversations.

5.8.1.5 Framework for a coaching assignment

Starr (2011:186-225) developed a model or framework of four stages to provide structure for the overall coaching journey or assignment (cf. Figure 5.8).

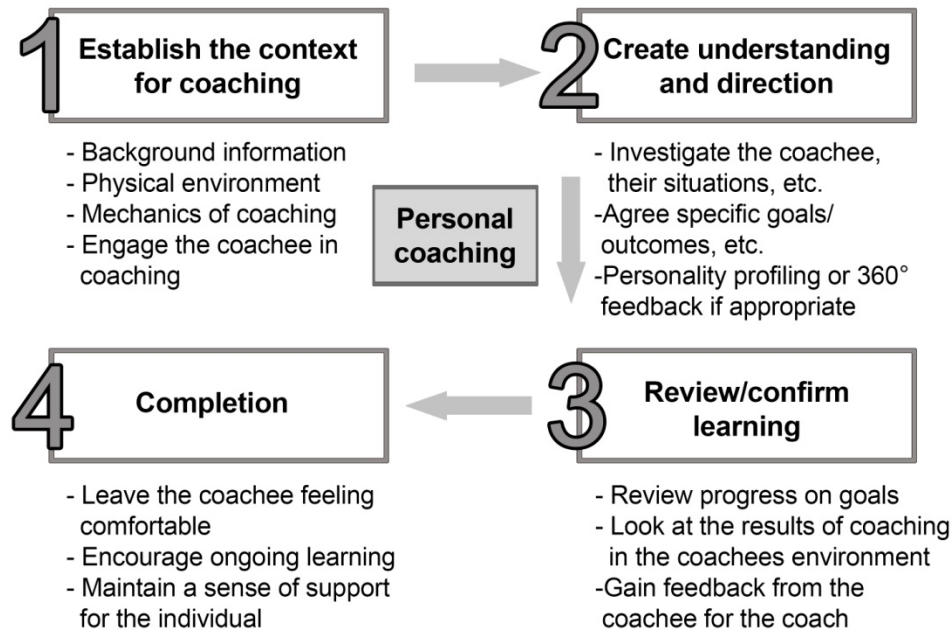


Figure 5.9 Framework for a coaching assignment (Starr, 2011:223)

Stage 1: Establish a context for coaching

The first step is to build a supporting context to coach. This refers to anything surrounding the actual coaching conversations that might hinder or help the process. The coach ensures that the physical environment supports the coaching, e.g., that the room is private and comfortable, and that the client knows what coaching is and what to expect during the coaching sessions. The client has to buy into the idea of coaching. The client can also be encouraged to imagine the future series of coaching sessions (Starr, 2011:189-199).

Stage 2: Create understanding and direction

In this stage the client decides what he/she wants to achieve, while identifying where he/she is right now. The second stage entails getting to know the client, getting to know what the client wants, maintaining direction within each session, developing goals and

helping the client to stay committed to the destination, yet flexible to the journey (Starr, 2011:199-208).

Stage 3: Review and confirm learning

In Stage 3, the progress of the client and the effectiveness of the coaching process have to be reviewed. Some of the following issues may be explored: Are the coaching sessions working well? What impact does the sessions have on the client? What progress has been made towards the client's goals? How could the sessions be improved? Learning is confirmed and the results are linked to coaching (Starr, 2011:208-214).

Stage 4: Completion

Coaching is a time-limited arrangement that has to be brought to an end when the client has to assume responsibility for his/her own process. The client can, however, return to the relationship for a specific reason or make use of a different coach. The client should leave with a personal development plan. The key elements of a personal development plan are the areas of development, development objectives (goal), behaviours to develop, actions to create progress and a date to complete or review the objective (Starr, 2011:215-224).

Starr (2011:224) states that the sequence of the stages can be different and that the coach needs to determine how much structure he/she needs for the coaching process.

The framework described above can be seen as an important functional element, as it provides a clear structure which can be used for a life coaching programme for social work students. It can guide the full journey of the students and be integrated with the concepts of the model of success developed by Subotzky and Prinsloo (2011). It also depicts a journey of an individual to reach specific objectives or "success". The stages "Establish a context for coaching" and "Completion" create the opportunity to begin and end the coaching relationship in a meaningful way, while "Review/confirm learning" is about continuous reflection on the action and coaching process.

5.8.1.6 Appreciative coaching

Coaching sessions in general may focus on the client's problems, and discussions may focus on weaknesses the client has to overcome in order to solve the problems. In

appreciative coaching or appreciative inquiry, life coaching is done from the appreciative inquiry approach, concentrating on the client's strengths, vision and motivation. The coach helps the client to reverse his/her focus, paying attention to strengths and potential, but not weaknesses. The coach facilitates a sense of agency in the client to find alternative ways around obstacles. The coach and client together explore through stories and guided conversations the positive, life-giving forces within the client.

From these discoveries new energy is generated and plans for the desired future are co-created. Appreciative language plays a huge role in appreciative coaching and words like “potential”, “affirmation” and “dreams” are preferred to words like “status quo”, “gaps” and “action plans” (Appreciative Inquiry Commons, n.d.; Ninja, 2012).

The structure of appreciative coaching (see below) is based on the 4D stages of appreciative inquiry (Barrett & Fry, 2005:56-71; Thomas, n.d.:4; Whitney, Trosten-Bloom & Rader, 2010:54).

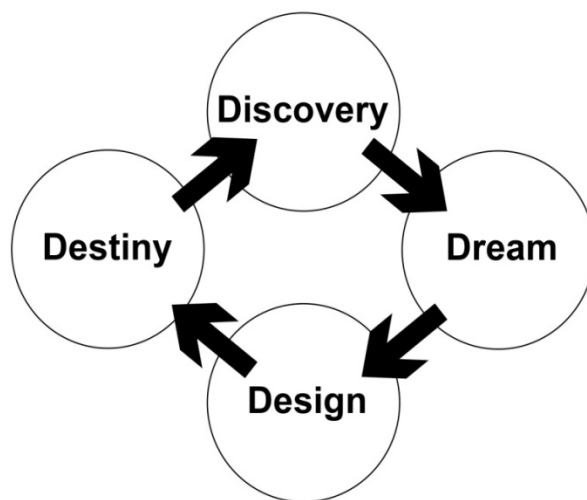


Figure 5.10 The 4D stages of appreciative inquiry used in appreciative coaching

Phase 1: Discovery

The discovery phase represents an extensive search to understand the “best of what is” and “what has been”. Stories of the positive are generated. They are reminders of accomplishments and experiences that have been elevating and life-giving. In this way, strengths and core competencies are identified. The client can be asked to recall a

highpoint – an experience or a moment which has left him/her with an intense sense of pride, excitement and involvement.

Phase 2: Dream

The dream phase is an energising exploration of “what might be”; people exploring their hopes and dreams for their lives, relationships, work and the world at large. It is about thinking big and out of the boundaries. A preferred future is envisaged with passion. Dreams can be told as stories. A typical dream question can be to ask a client to imagine awakening from a long sleep and discover what has happened, everything being the way he/she wished for.

Phase 3: Design

The design phase involves making choices about “what should be”. It is a process of aligning processes and strategies with the positive past and the dream. The metaphor of architecture is implied – designing involves creating the foundation upon which structures are built. Coaches can enquire from clients what kinds of changes will most support the vision of an ideal future.

Phase 4: Destiny

The destiny phase initiates inspired action that supports ongoing learning and innovation – “what will be”. It is about commitment and using strengths to achieve the dream. Action planning, scenario building and role allocation can be part of the destiny phase. Planning needs to be specific with clear deadlines.

The cycle can open up to a new beginning, starting again with discovery.

The appreciative coaching model is an important functional element which could be combined with the framework for a coaching assignment (Starr, 2011:189-199) to form the basis of the coaching journey with the students. It starts with “discovery” which can include not only individual strengths, but also study and career opportunities, while the “dream” phase can set the stage for the development of personal, academic and professional goals. The “design” and “destiny” phases focus on the planning and action needed.

It fits well with the model of success developed by Subotzky and Prinsloo (2011), as both are based on a strengths approach. However, this model does not make provision for reflection and confirmation of direction.

5.8.1.7 Discussion of life coaching models as functional elements in the support programme

Aspects which need to be considered when developing the support programme for social work students are the following:

- The framework for a coaching assignment (Starr, 2012) and the appreciative coaching model (Barrett & Fry, 2005:56-71; Thomas, n.d.:4; Whitney et al. 2010:54) or a combination of both could be used to describe the stages of the coaching journey, while the EQ model and the GROW model can be used within conversations to promote intra- and interpersonal growth.
- A relationship must be built with the students, irrespective of the mode of delivery of the programme. The concept of coaching needs to be sold to students in order to gain and keep their commitment through the whole journey.
- It is important to know the student and understand his/her goals. However, goals are not solely set by the students, as there are clear outcomes for the BSW degree. UNISA also has clear expectations, as does the SACSSP.
- Thorough completion is important – students need to leave feeling supported.
- The format of the personal development plan is valuable but the researcher is of the opinion that it should be used during the coaching process and not to plan further development.

5.8.2 Coaching tools

A coaching tool is “an instrument used to produce certain results; the tool is what you engage with as a coach inside the coaching conversation”, such as profiles, assessments, questions, reframing statements, listening, question frameworks and models (Rostron, 2009a:87).

Many tools are used within coaching and all of these form potential functional elements which can be used in the life coaching programme for social work students (Driver, 2011:19, 25; Holroyd & Field, 2012:33, 87, 102-103, 118, 120; Starr, 2011:204).

- Personality profiles: Myers Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI), Neethling Brain Profile Instrument (NBI) and the Enneagram, VIA Strengths Questionnaire and the DISC. Some of these profiles like the MBTI and the NBI need to be purchased, while versions of others like the Enneagram, VIA Strengths Questionnaire and the DISC are available free-of-charge on the Internet (Holroyd & Field, 2012:102). These profiles assist the client in creating self-awareness but they can be rigid in dividing people into categories and focus on weaknesses. In this regard the VIA Strengths Questionnaire would be a good option but it will be enriching to expose students to other profiles as well, warning them to see it as a metaphor depicting them and not the “only reality”.
- The Johari window consists of four squares. Square 1 is the part of us that is seen by everyone including ourselves, namely the public view. Square 2 is what everyone else can see but we cannot, namely the blind spot. Square 3 is our private thoughts, things we do not show, but keep to ourselves. Square 4 represents what no one can see. A list of 56 adjectives is provided. The client, his/her peers and other people can be asked to select six adjectives to describe the person. Feedback and self-disclosure is an important part of development in coaching (Holroyd & Field, 2012:33).
- Force field analysis: In a situation where change is necessary, certain factors/persons may facilitate change, while others may restrict change. In coaching, a force field analysis can be used to map what is going on in a situation and prompt strategy options (Holroyd & Field, 2012:86).
- 360 ° feedback: A standardised questionnaire might be used or the coach can interview significant others in the life of the client. Questions to be asked are for example: “What is this person good at?”, “What do you value most about him/her?”, “What does he/she need to get better at?”, “What does he/she need to be successful in his/her current situation?” and “Do you have any other messages for this person?” (Holroyd & Field, 2012:102; Starr, 2011:204). Once again, it may be meaningful to remind students that the views of others are only their perspectives.

- The wheel of life: The client places a dot along the spokes to represent how satisfied he/she is in a specific area, using a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest). The dots are joined to see how round/balanced it is. A new dot in each area represents the ideal, and when joined, the two wheels can be compared and goals set (Holroyd & Field, 2012:118).

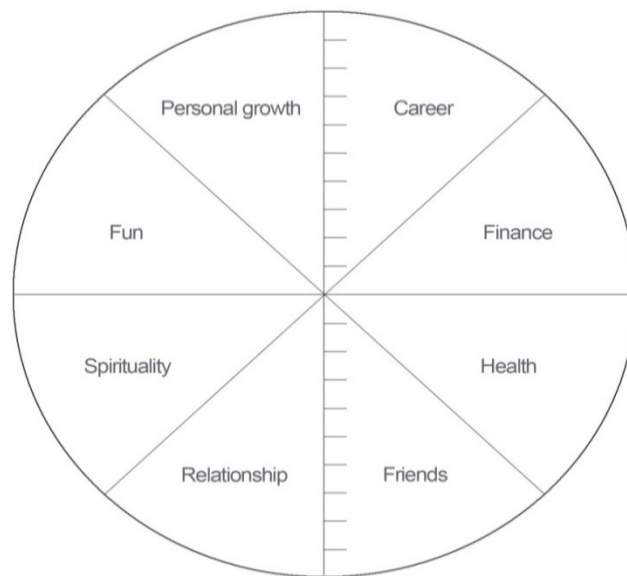


Figure 5.11 The wheel of life (Holroyd & Field, 2012: 134)

- At my best: The client is asked to think of two or three occasions when he/she was at his/her best. The coach (or the client) can jot down all the strengths implied (Driver, 2011:19).
- Goals sheet: For each life goal the client can complete the following questions: What are you currently experiencing in this area that you don't like? What are your underlying feelings? What are the things/beliefs that held you back in the past? How will it be if this situation continued far into the future? How will it be if you reached your goal instead? (New Insights Africa, 2010:10).
- Goal sheet: List ten reasons why I must achieve my goal. List ten consequences of not achieving my goal (New Insights Africa, 2010:11).
- The strength wheel: The client prioritises his/her top four to six strengths, takes one segment for each strength and labels it. The centre score is 0 and the rim 10. The client needs to place two marks in each segment – how far he/she is currently using

the strength and how much scope there is to work on the strength. Strategies can be set to reduce the gaps (Driver, 2011:25).

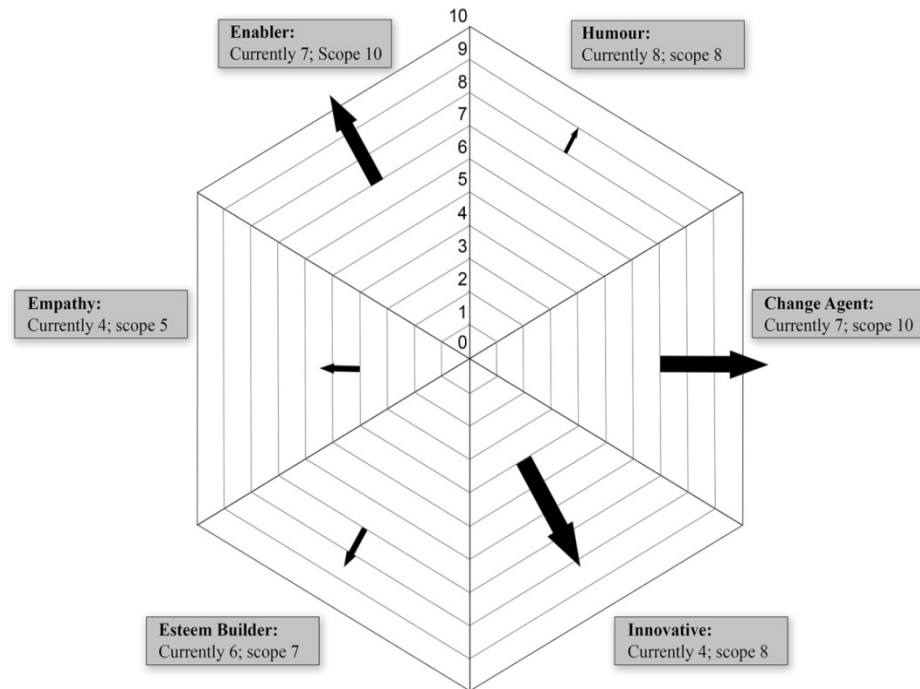


Figure 5.12 A strengths wheel (Driver, 2011:25)

- *Resource* sheet: The client maps his/her goal in the middle of the page and then lists items: “already have”, “internal resources”, “people that can assist” and “to source”. Milestones are listed with a date and reward (New Insights Africa, 2010:5).
- Competency wheel: In the same way as the strength wheel, a competency wheel can be drawn. The wheel can represent a category of competencies with specific competencies to be marked (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House & Sandahl, 2007:225).
- Tracking progress: The coach needs to assist the client to track progress. The following questions can be asked: How will you know that you have achieved your goal? What milestones will you set up along the way? How will you know you are on track for this goal? How often will you check that you are on track? (Holroyd & Field, 2012:103).

5.8.3 Other activities

Some activities found in literature can be used within a coaching situation but are not identified as coaching tools. They are:

- **Lifeline:** It is a way of taking stock of past experiences that might have contributed to the client's present situation and decisions. He/she draws a line from left to right across the middle of a piece of blank paper to represent his/her life from birth to the present, mark it from 0 up to his/her current age and sections it off in five- or ten-year periods. The client charts the significant events of his/her life at the age they have occurred on this line. Positive, happy events and factors are marked in black ink above the line and sad or difficult events below the line in red. The client then reflects on these experiences (Kumar, 2007:102-103; Schwarz & Davidson, 2009:193).
- **Asset mapping:** Asset mapping is often used in community work. It involves documenting the tangible and intangible resources or strengths of community members and communities. It can also be applied to the coaching context. The activity refers to the "gifts of the head" (knowledge the client has and likes sharing), "gifts of the hands" (skills) and "gifts of the heart" (things he/she cares about). His/her experience in the work field or voluntary work is also taken into account (Schenck et al. 2010:162).
- **Writing ritual:** It was found that writing down thoughts and feelings about trauma or crises for as little as 15 minutes a day for four or five days has shown to be correlated with increased physical and mental health (O'Hanlon & Bertolino, 2012:80).
- **Personal learning plan:** Learning or development can be monitored with an educational context but also within life coaching. Cournoyer and Stanley (2002:66-67) suggest that the following aspects form part of the personal learning plan (which can also be called a personal development plan): learning goal, rationale of the goal; learning objectives; action plans; social support and evaluation. Drew and Bingham (2001:258-259) focus on monitoring and renewing the client's development. They note the unmet target, the reason for this, progress which has been made, further action and resources needed as well as a deadline.

5.8.4 Discussion

All of these tools can be useful within a life coaching programme for social work students to facilitate self-awareness, goal setting, personal and interpersonal growth. However, the tools used will have to be selected to fit the model and the theoretical approach chosen.

5.8.5 Approaches to coaching

Coaching is currently an “emerging profession” which does not have its own clear knowledge base (Rostron, 2009a:21).

Rostron (2009a:20-31) provides the following summary of theories from different professions including psychology, used in coaching. Various psychologists had an impact on the development of coaching, e.g., Irvin Yalom, an existential psychotherapist; Ernesto Spinelli, existential professor of psychology and Bruce Peltier, psychologist. The core conditions of change and the skills of Carl Rogers’s person-centred approach with active listening, respecting clients and working from their frame of reference are widely used in coaching.

In order to understand behaviour and facilitate change in clients, coaches base their work, sometimes a whole model, sometimes specific tools, on a psychological theory. According to Alfred Adler adult behaviour is purposeful and goal-directed, and that life goals provide individual motivation. He recommended goal setting during therapy and using techniques, such as “acting as if” and role plays – tools used by coaches.

Carl Jung viewed the adult phase as a time for “individuation”. He suggested that people have different preferences and therefore, alternative perspectives on situations. This theory is now used in coaching where motivation and leadership are concerned.

Erik Erikson viewed development as a lifelong process where individuals had to resolve a series of polarities, which might be initiated by a crisis or turning point. This theory correlates with one of the coaching models, viz. the Hudson’s Renewal Cycle.

Abraham Maslow theorised that we needed to resolve certain issues before we could fulfil other needs (moving from physiological needs, to safety needs, to social needs, to self-esteem and self-actualisation). His theory is relevant to understand the motivation of coaching clients.

The theory of experiential learning of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget and David Kolb, stressing the importance of experiential learning and a client's subjective experience, strongly influenced coaching (Rostron, 2009a:26-27, 31). The coaching model based on Kolb's learning styles has been discussed in the previous section.

5.8.5.1 Positive or strengths-based psychology

Positive or strengths-based psychology is widely used in coaching. Positive psychology is defined as “an approach to psychology which aims to use scientific psychological research to enhance the wellbeing of individuals and communities” (Linley, cited by Driver, 2011:1). Positive psychology has enabled coaches to use the existing, validated positive psychology interventions. It forms an applicable theoretical framework for coaching, while coaching serves as a good soundboard to the ideas of psychologists, using positive psychology (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011:209). Positive psychology and coaching both claim that attention should not be on “fixing” the client or on pathology; both share a concern with optimal functioning and wellbeing; both help clients to find their strengths and use their resources effectively (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011:209).

The themes of strengths, resilience, positive emotions, growth mindset, motivation and meaning in positive psychology are used within coaching.

Strengths

Strengths are “capacities a person has which they are instinctively good at and which energise them when practised” (Driver, 2011:27). Research has shown that a focus on strengths can bring changes in happiness, confidence, energy and resilience as well as less stress (Linley, cited by Driver, 2011:13).

Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011:198) developed a list of personal strengths which distinguish between innate strengths and skills which can be

developed. The Strengths Finder is a tool developed by Clifton which is widely used in organisations.

Seligman (VIA Me!, 2013) developed an analysis of strengths based on a person's values, showing that when a person acts in accordance with what he/she really believes and values, the person is happier and more successful.

The VIA Questionnaire, identifying five signature strengths of a person, is available on the Internet; a basic version can be completed free of charge. Signature strengths are the positive characteristics that are representative of each person and that add to his/her uniqueness (Compton, 2005:172). The five "signature strengths" highest on the list can be matched to strengths usually associated with a specific career (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011:201).

Resilience and positive emotions

Resilience can be seen as the "ability to keep going in difficult times, and to get up and carry on after a fall" (Driver, 2011:45). Positive emotions are connected with a person's ability to handle difficult times. Research done by Fredrickson shows that a person needs to experience more positive emotions to balance out negative emotions. It was shown that every time a person experiences a positive emotion, his/her thinking and capacity to think more widely about problems increased, as did his/her resilience.

This is referred to as "the broadening effect of positive emotions". Over time, this builds resourcefulness in the client – wider search patterns, new ways of thinking and new actions which are called "the building effect of positive emotions". Various resources are identified which include intellectual resources (problem-solving, being open to learning); physical resources (cardiovascular health, coordination); social resources (maintaining relationships and building new ones) and psychological resources (resilience, optimism, sense of identity and goal orientation) (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011:24-25).

Another focus area of positive psychology is emotional intelligence, namely the ability to recognise, use, understand and manage emotions effectively. Various models of emotional intelligence exist; for example, the Bar-On's Emotional Quotient Inventory, the Mayer-Salovey Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence and Goleman's model (discussed under coaching models). The latter identifies four emotional competencies, namely self-

awareness (knowing one's internal state, preferences, resources and intuitions), self-management (managing one's internal state, resources and impulses), social awareness (how relationships are handled and awareness of other people's feelings, needs and concerns) and social skills (the skills, including desirable responses to others) (Lopez, 2008:116-122).

Coaches can build resilience by helping the client to experience additional positive emotion, invite him/her to think more positively, or by using a tool such as the gratitude exercise, asking clients to write down three things each day for which they are grateful. Savouring (to attend to and enhance positive experiences) can be facilitated through sharing with others, self-congratulation and memory building. A coach can help a client to build energy, focusing on the whole person – the body, mind, spirit and emotions. A client can be motivated to eat and sleep well, and exercise regularly (Driver, 2011:50-56).

Mindset

According to Driver (2011:28-44) Dweck has distinguished between a “fixed and a growth mindset”. In a “fixed mindset” people see talents, skills and abilities as fixed assets and failure as an indicator of a lack in ability or talent. In a “growth mindset”, ability is seen as something to be developed and failure is seen as an opportunity to grow. People with a growth mindset are more ready to take on challenging tasks, because failure does not threaten their identity.

Causal attribution also plays a role in the mindset of a client. He/she can attribute an event outcome to internal or external factors, referring to locus of control. When considering success, internal attributions are more motivating than external ones. The client can attribute an event outcome to factors seen as enduring or temporary. The coach can assist the client to be more optimistic, contribute success to internal factors and see casual factors as more temporary. A coach needs to focus on the growth mindset of the client and work on his/her own mindset to ensure that he/she does not work from a q framework of wanting to “fix” the client (Driver, 2011:28-44).

Motivation

Motivation links with the self-determination theory, positing that humans strive to be self-governed and behave in ways which are self-initiated (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011:139).

According to the goal theory, subjective wellbeing depends on the human ability to reflect, choose a direction in life, form goals and direct himself towards the goal.

Life goals are seen as long-term goals, as they direct one's life for an extended period of time. Short-term goals are also important for our daily survival. Goals are considered important, as they give life a sense of purpose; progressing towards the goals (journey) gives a sense of wellbeing. Goals add structure and meaning to our lives. We need to ask what goals we pursue, why we pursue those goals and how congruent our activities are with our values. Goals need to be intrinsic, authentic, approach-orientated (do something rather than avoid it); harmonious, flexible, appropriate and focused on activities (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011:138).

A coach cannot motivate a client, but can only create conditions for motivation by seeing that he/she has clear goals, thinks positively and resourcefully about him-/ herself and knows what to do next. To be motivated to succeed, a client needs a high expectation that his/her efforts will lead to success – this is called “self-efficacy”. A coach can increase a client's self-efficacy by challenging goals which are not according to his/her values. A client can be kept in touch with his/her resourcefulness by referring to past situations when he/she has been resourceful. The coach also needs to support the client's autonomy, ensuring the goals are his/her own. The coach needs to assist the client to implement intentions (Driver, 2011:28-44).

Evidence of success, strengths and weaknesses of positive psychology

Many research studies have been undertaken within the field of positive psychology, for instance research by Seligman, Fredrickson, Diener and Csikszentmihalyi (Ruark, 2009). According to Azar (2011), almost a thousand articles related to the field have been published in peer-reviewed journals between 2000 and 2010. The bulk of this research has shown that happy people form stronger social relationships, enjoy better health, are more creative and effective at work, and are more involved citizens. It is, however, alleged that the media and the public have overblown conclusions about the power of the positive and that practical applications have moved faster than science (Ruark, 2009; Azar, 2011).

The following strengths and weaknesses of positive psychology are identified by Hefferon and Boniwell (2011:2-3, 222-225):

Table 5.20 Strengths and weaknesses of positive psychology

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive psychology focuses on what makes individuals and communities flourish. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methodology used for research within positive psychology place too much emphasis on cross-sectional correlation studies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive psychology focuses on the past, present and the future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive psychology holds a simplistic viewpoint on the dimensionality of emotions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Findings are based on empirical evidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If victims do not show the necessary optimism and strength, they could be seen as being blamed for unfortunate circumstances.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive psychology challenges and rebalances the deficit approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive psychology neglects positive aspects of negative thinking.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Findings are used in various disciplines and contexts. 	

5.8.5.2 Appreciative inquiry (AI)

Appreciative inquiry is an application of positive psychology or a strength-based approach. It was developed by Cooperrider and Srivastva in organisational management in the 1980s (Schenck et al. 2010:65). It is used in all levels of human systems, e.g. families, teams, schools, businesses and even global alliances (Barrett & Fry, 2005:42).

Definition

Appreciative inquiry “is about the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organisations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives ‘life’ to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological and human terms. AI

involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. It centrally involves the mobilisation of inquiry through the crafting of the 'unconditional positive question' often-involving hundreds or sometimes thousands of people" (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d.:3).

The meaning of the concept is also clear when one looks at the meaning of the word "appreciative" meaning "valuing" or "recognising the best in people or the world around us" as well as "increase in value", while "inquiry" denotes "exploration or discovery" and "to ask questions" (Appreciative Inquiry Commons, n.d.:1).

Characteristics of the appreciative inquiry approach

Appreciative inquiry has distinctive characteristics. It is (Barrett & Fry, 2005:25-27):

- Strength-based – it begins with the assumption that every human system already has strengths, features of health and wellbeing. AI is a deliberate search for assets, best practices, metaphors, dreams which embrace potency.
- An artful search – through interviewing and storytelling the best of "what is" and the past is discovered to set the stage for imagining "what might be". Through hopeful images of the future energy is mobilised and intensions mobilised.
- Collaborative – within organisations people together discover and create what is successful and positive. It involves multiple stakeholders talking and working together.
- Inclusive – it invites new voices and can be used in dyads, groups and huge divisions of organisations.
- Generative – it generates new possibilities by using new words, categories, images, activities and positive energy.

A comparison between the appreciative inquiry and the problem-solving approaches

People, individuals and organisations often use the "deficiency approach", looking for problems to fix. This might lead to a fixed mindset of blaming, self-fulfilling deficit prophecies and limited initiative (Barrett & Fry, 2005:29). In the following table the problem-solving approach is compared with AI (Coaching leaders, n.d.):

Table 5.21 A comparison between AI and the problem-solving approach

Appreciative inquiry	Problem-solving approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinks in terms of good, better, possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinks in terms of problems, symptoms, causes, solutions, action plan, intervention and often who to blame
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps the big picture in view, focusing on an ideal and how its roots lie in what is already working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaks things into pieces, leading to fragmented responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly creates a new dynamic – with people united around a shared vision of the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow pace of change – requires a lot of positive emotion to make real change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumes an organisation is a source of limitless capacity and imagination, creating an appreciative culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumes an organisation is made up of a series of problems to be overcome, creating a deficit culture

Principles of the appreciative inquiry

The AI is built on five principles which were originally formulated by Cooperrider (Barrett & Fry, 2005:42-48; Kelm, n.d.: 2-3; Stravos & Torres, 2006:51-89):

- **Constructionist principle**

According to the social constructionist thought we create the world that we call the “real world” through our words – our conversations, metaphors and stories. We create the “reality” within the context of relationships. Our words also guide what we notice; therefore, our experiences.

- **Poetic principle**

A person’s life story, like poems, is constantly being written, rewritten and reinterpreted. We may find new meaning in old storylines when we ask different questions. The same is true for families, groups and organisations. What we give attention to, influences our experience. The choice of topic we discuss or investigate is decisive.

- **Simultaneity principle**

The moment we begin to enquire about something, change begins to happen. Inquiry and change are therefore simultaneous events. There is no neutral question,

every question moves a conversation in a specific direction. Changing the way we ask questions, can change the way we see our lives and relationships with others.

- **Anticipatory principle**

We live “into” our anticipation of future events. We create positive, anticipatory images of the future and then live “as if” the future was already happening. What you believe about yourself and your capabilities impacts your willingness to try, stretch, to reach your dreams. What you believe about others is also likely to influence their actions.

- **Positive principle**

The more positive, bold and dramatic the images we carry, the more likely we are to move towards these images. The positive principle informs the other four principles. As far as the constructionist principle is concerned, we can choose positive language and positive images. The principle of simultaneity is underscored in that questions about the good and the possible will lead to positive action. With the poetic principle, the positive principle invites us to explore “positive poetry” – attending to the possibilities, the moments of joy and sources of energy. In line with the anticipatory principle, the positive principle suggests that imagining positive actions and holding positive expectations will result in uplifting ourselves, others and the world around us.

Process of change

The AI facilitates change in four stages, namely discovery, dream, design and destiny, as discussed in Chapter 5, paragraph 5.8.1.6 above (Schenck et al. 2010:68). Some AI models incorporate a fifth stage, called *definition*, which represents the choice of an affirmative topic for discussion or a frame of intervention (Sharing Knowledge, 2013:2).

Evidence of success, strengths and weaknesses of the AI approach

In a study undertaken by Lee (2010:16-23), 16 examples are cited of effective implementation of AI within organisations. One example cited is that of the John Deere Company in Illinois, USA who needed to increase the quality of their product, reduce costs and improve their product cycle time. After the implementation of the AI approach, the company had a 12% reduction in costs, a new reduced product cycle time (from 5 down to 3 years), and improved relationships between labour and management.

The following strengths and weaknesses of the AI approach are discussed in literature, also within the context of organisations (Gallagher & Heyns, 2012:1-2; Thomas, n.d.:1):

Table 5.22 Strengths and weaknesses of the AI approach

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AI builds a positive affect amongst participants, and builds trust, resilience and creativity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is uncertain whether the positive affect generated leads to sustained organisational improvements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The positive focus may make it easier for some leaders to enter into the change process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The positive focus may be easily dismissed by other leaders.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dream will generate the energy needed for commitment to significant improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most organisational developmental practices assume that there should be a level of dissatisfaction with the current situation and a new direction to obtain improvement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AI generates high energy around change efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dreams and visions will produce momentum for a few months, but planning and monitoring of action are necessary to ensure success.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AI is participatory. It gives people the freedom to be heard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many approaches are participatory. Top leaders may need to buy into the initial focus.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a disciplined set of methods which can be learned and applied. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The method has been popularised. Many believe that they can implement it, but do not have a grounded understanding of the method and skills needed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AI works with strengths. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At times weaknesses or gaps in a system need to be addressed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is value in striving to become better. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People can become addicted to change and feel they are never “good enough”.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is easier to see the vision for the future if it is rooted in past experience. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AI reduces resistance to change. 	

5.8.5.3 Discussion

Positive or strength-based psychology and appreciative inquiry can provide meaningful theoretical frameworks for the life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context even though not all the other functional elements previously discussed, link with positive or strength-based psychology or the appreciative inquiry approach or an application thereof.

As part of the journey, students need to ask themselves whether their choice of university and career fit with who they are as persons – with their purpose in life and their strengths. When students discover their strengths they will be able find a niche field within social work. The use of resources within themselves and in the institution, thus recognising their resourcefulness, will be key for students to find a fit with UNISA as a learning institution.

To define what success means to them, positive psychology will provide useful concepts and tools to develop resilience. Setting goals and directing their actions in the direction of the goals can motivate students to obtain success. The principles of AI can guide the content of questions being asked and language being used in the programme, while the 4D stages of change, namely discovery, dream, design and destiny, could be integrated with Starr's framework for a coaching assignment. It can provide structure to the coaching process or journey.

5.9 THE ROLE OF THE COACH

In order for the coach to steer each coaching conversation, give direction to the coaching process by using a coaching model and a theoretical approach as well as implementing tools to facilitate growth the coach requires specific competencies. Rostron (2009a: 207-223) listed the competencies stipulated by the International Coach Federation (ICF), the Worldwide Association for Business Coaches (WABC) and the Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA) as: building the coaching relationship, listening, questioning, creating self-awareness and building self-reflection.

5.9.1 Building the coaching relationship

According to Williams & Menendez (2007:17) the coaching relationship begins when the coach engages with the client in a conversation around their vision, goals and desires. “Like all good conversation, coaching requires us to listen, to pace the conversations, and to genuinely enter into dialogue with clients. This creates what in coaching we call the sacred or inspiring space”. To create this “sacred or inspiring space” the coach needs to establish trust and respect, creating a safe environment where the client can share and develop. Rapport needs to be developed by being open to the client, be able to manage the client’s expression of strong emotion and by creating features of “sameness” through physical appearance, body language, quality of voice, language used and beliefs and values” (Rostron, 2009a:207-209; Starr, 2011:56;).

5.9.2 Listening

The coach needs to listen actively, pay attention to the verbal and non-verbal, the said and unsaid. By listening, the coach creates a “thinking space” where the client can reflect on where he is and where he wants to go. Williams and Davies (2007:106) distinguish three kinds of listening:

- Listening in order to reflect back to the client. It is letting the client know what you are hearing at all levels of awareness.
- Listening for the gap between where the client is and where he wants to be.
- Listening for the client’s strengths, passion and desire to change. By listening very carefully the coach invites the client to listen to himself.

5.9.3 Asking the right questions

Asking the right questions is one of the coach’s most powerful tools in coaching. The Internal Coach Federation (Rostron, 2009a:212) distinguishes four types of questions:

- Questions that reflect active listening and understanding of the client’s perspective
- Questions that evoke discovery, insight, commitment or action
- Open-ended questions that create greater clarity, possibility or new learning

- Questions that move the client forward towards what he desires; not questions that ask for the client to justify or look backward.

Many question frameworks, a sequence of questions with steps or stages, have been developed which can be used within the different models. Two-, three-, four-, five-, six-, eight- and ten-stage frameworks have been developed (Rostron, 2009a:56-83; The Coaching Centre, 2009:31).

Two-stage question framework

There are various two-stage frameworks. An example would be to ask the client the following questions exploring deeper every time:

- ✓ What is important to you about your **professional life**? What is important about that? Anything else?
- ✓ What is important to you about your **personal life**? What is important about that? Anything else?

Three-stage question framework

The coach asks three questions to identify the core issues:

- ✓ What is working? Anything else?
- ✓ What is not working? Anything else?
- ✓ What can you do differently? Anything else?

Five-stage question framework

- ✓ What is the situation now?
- ✓ What is the situation as you want it to be?
- ✓ What will keep the situation from changing?
- ✓ What action steps can you take?
- ✓ What resources are needed to help you make the change?

Through the use of these questions the coach facilitates self-awareness in the client.

5.9.4 Self-awareness: values, beliefs and attitudes

It is important that coaches have self-insight and access to their thoughts, feelings and are aware of how this influences their behaviour. They should be aware of their feelings and reactions, and be able to accept negative feedback without becoming defensive. They also need to constantly review, reflect on and revise their personal values, beliefs and attitudes to improve their coaching practices (Worldwide Association for Business Coaches (WABC) and COMENSA in Rostron, 2009a:216).

5.9.5 Facilitating self-reflection in the client

As already mentioned repeatedly, reflection is a process of creating conditions and opportunities for experiential learning in the client. It is not about solving problems or giving advice.

The coach facilitates awareness in the client (Rostron, 2009a:217-218) by:

- Exploring beyond the client's concern
- Invoking inquiry for greater understanding and clarity
- Identifying underlying concerns, discrepancies and feelings
- Helping clients to discover for themselves new thoughts, feelings, beliefs etc. that strengthen their ability to achieve what is important to them
- Communicating a broader perspective to clients
- Helping clients to see different, interrelated factors that affect them (e.g., their thoughts, feelings, bodily condition, family background)
- Identifying strengths versus areas of learning
- Asking the client to distinguish between trivial and significant issues.

Other authors categorise coaching skills differently; for instance, William and Menendez (2007:104-154) distinguish the following categories:

- Empowering the client (e.g., acknowledging, reframing, meta-view or perspective-taking)
- Stretching the client (e.g., use distinctions, metaphors, make big requests, identify contradictions and inconsistencies, use the compassionate edge)

- Creating momentum with the client (e.g., contracting with the client, stepping into the future, creating alternative actions and choices).

5.9.6 Discussion

For the life coaching programme, building a “safe space” where students can reflect on themselves and their goals is essential. This can be facilitated by asking questions which will create self-awareness. The role of the coach will, however, be determined by the way the life coaching programme is presented.

5.10 OTHER SOURCES

A very useful book, namely *Successful social work education: a student's guide* (Barsky, 2006), contains many functional elements or themes which could be used in the development of a support programme. The purpose of this book is to provide social work students with practical strategies, skills and suggestions to make the most of their social work education. It is divided into the following chapters (Barsky, 2006:xv, 1-307):

- *So you want to go into social work: where to begin.* The field of social work is described and the question is asked why the students want to study social work. They are also motivated to take charge of their education.
- *Knowing your own programme.* Students are encouraged to research what the vision of their programme is and what support is available.
- *Course selection.* The students have to identify which courses/modules to take.
- *Challenges unique to social work.* Challenges which are identified are the development of a social work identity, balancing generalist and specialist perspectives, integrating the value base of social work, ensuring professional suitability, linking theory, practice and self-awareness, and succeeding with limited resources.
- *Social work writing.* Students are provided with general writing guidelines as well as guidelines for writing process notes and other assessments.
- *Oral presentation.* Formal and informal oral presentations are discussed.
- *Self-care.* Various themes are covered, e.g., stress, trauma, self-awareness, support systems, building on strengths.

- *Diversity concerns.* Diversity among instructors, peers and clients is discussed.
- *Library research.* Students are guided to identify relevant resources and read critically.
- *Working in student groups.* Types of groups and strategies for effective groups are discussed.
- *Working relationships with professors.* Ways to build relationships and manage conflict with professors are discussed.
- *Making most of the field.* This chapter focuses on preparing and dealing with field work.
- *Where to go from here?* The last chapter deals with students going into the field of social work, and being involved in professional and career development.

This book is considered a functional element, as it has a similar purpose to that of the proposed coaching programme for social work students, namely to guide the students through their learning journey, and facilitate personal and professional growth.

The first few themes are especially useful, since they focus specifically on the field of social work and the choice of social work as a career. The content of the last chapter also provides input into the last phase or conversation of the planned support programme.

The 27 exit level outcomes for the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) registered at the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA, *Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work*. n.d.) can be seen as the goals students have to achieve before registration.

The required knowledge is specified in the associated assessment criteria (criteria used to assess whether the outcomes have been reached) of the various outcomes; e.g., knowledge of the nature of client systems and their dynamics, appropriate theoretical frameworks, knowledge of research, understanding of key elements, functions and principles of social welfare and social work. These exit level outcomes provide specific goals students can set as part of their personal development plans. The Solemn Declaration of a Social Worker (SACSPP, 2013) can serve not only as a dedication to the social work profession, but also a celebration of the students' achievements.

5.11 CONCLUSION

Chapter 5 is a description of the implementation of Phase 2 of the Intervention Design and Development Model of Rothman and Thomas, namely information gathering and synthesis. Functional elements of existing service programmes or models described in literature and used at ODL institutions abroad, local residential universities and at UNISA were identified and discussed. The researcher also referred to literature on coaching models and approaches as well as a guide for social work students.

The questions: “Has there been a practice which has been successful in reaching the outcomes?”, “What has made this practice effective?” (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:33) were partially answered, as clear evidence on the success of the functional elements described, was not always available, especially in the case of coaching models and tools, as coaching is not yet a discipline on its own.

The life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context will be presented in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

AN ONLINE SELF-COACHING PROGRAMME AS SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS WITHIN AN ODL CONTEXT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 the research problem was discussed and the following research question was formulated:

“What would a life coaching programme to support social work students within an ODL context consist of?”

This chapter now presents the developed intervention, an online self-coaching programme for UNISA social work students. The support programme provides students with the opportunity and means to not only take responsibility for their own academic development, as required in an ODL context, but to also take responsibility for their personal and professional development from when they enrol as social work students until they graduate as social workers. The support programme emphasises self-awareness, personal development and goal achievement. It has the following goals (cf. Chapter 1, paragraph 1.2):

- To enhance student success and throughput
- To facilitate the personal and professional development of students in preparation for the profession of social work
- To empower students to take ownership of their learning process
- For social work students to experience their journey or “walk” through an ODL institution more positively
- For students to learn self-reflection and self-development skills to be utilised as part of their lifelong learning
- To contribute to the curriculum development of the Department of Social Work
- For coaching knowledge and skills to contribute towards the development of social work students.

The support programme presented in this chapter is based on life coaching principles and techniques as well as the socio-critical model for improving student success in open and distance learning at UNISA (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011) (cf. Chapter 1, paragraph 1.1.4.1). This model was used to provide an understanding of the goal of student support and the process of change necessary for students to achieve success. It was used in the interpretation of data to clarify students' support needs and satisfiers within an ODL institution. It has also contributed to the identification of programme elements within the life coaching programme.

An adapted version of the appreciative inquiry (AI) process, as used within appreciate inquiry life coaching, was utilised to structure the conversations within the self-coaching programme; therefore, as a life coaching model (cf. Chapter 5, paragraph 5.8.5.2).

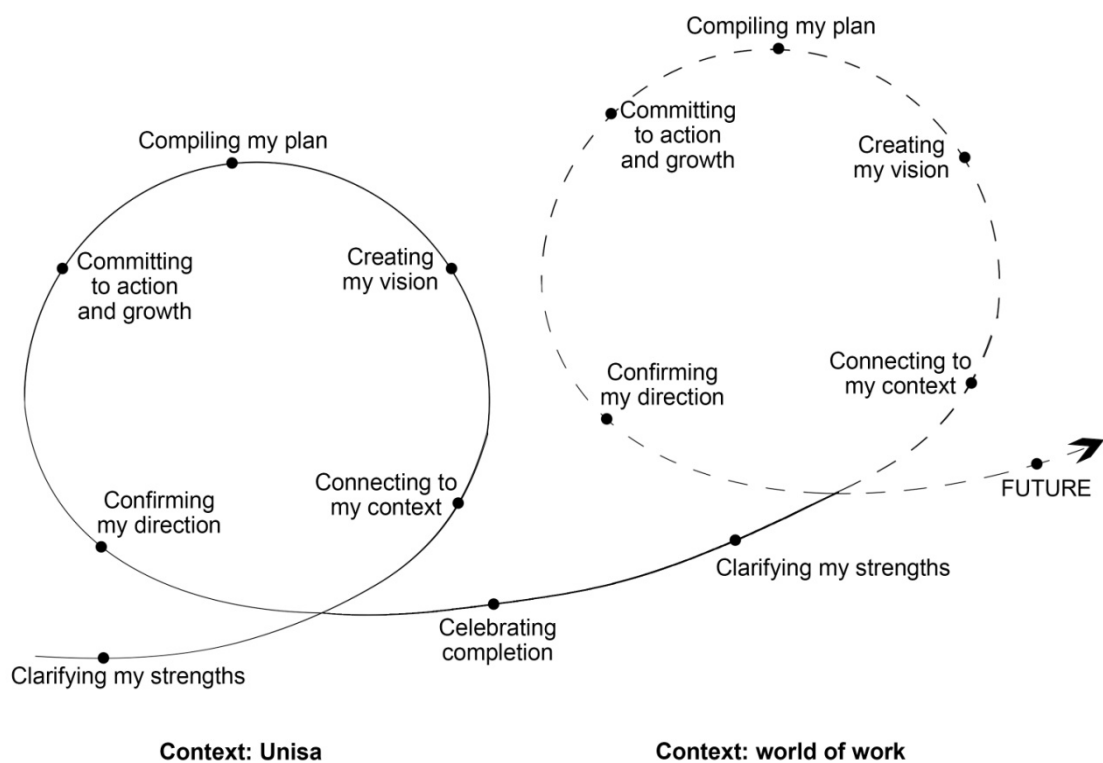


Figure 6.1 Seven C's and I life coaching model: An adapted version of the appreciative inquiry process

The self-coaching programme, following the above process, consists of two coaching conversations per year level. In the present UNISA context, first- and second-level students will be supported with assignments given during conversations by e-tutors; level 3 students will be assisted by workshop facilitators while level 4 students will be supported face-to-face by supervisors to write their personal development plans and assess their growth during their journey within UNISA.

The life coaching support programme, based on the adapted version of the AI process (cf. Figure 6.1), will be presented in a written format in paragraph 6.2. Feedback from participants in a pilot study will be discussed in paragraph 6.3. These participants have made suggestions on how the life coaching programme can be adapted. Changes made based on their feedback, are indicated by small numbers in the programme. Implementation guidelines for the life coaching programme are discussed in paragraph 6.4.

6.2 THE CONTENT OF THE ONLINE SELF-COACHING PROGRAMME FOR SUPPORT OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS WITHIN AN ODL CONTEXT

AN ONLINE SELF-COACHING
PROGRAMME FOR SUPPORT OF
SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS
WITHIN AN ODL CONTEXT

By: P Botha

2013

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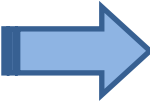



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Key to symbols

	Activity
	Story
	Further resources
	Discussion
	Evaluating the conversation
	Quotes
	Assignment
	Introduction



Introduction 1: an introduction to the self-coaching programme 1.

You have decided to study through UNISA, an open and distance learning (ODL) institution. You have decided to take one or more first-level Social Work modules. This implies that you have embarked on a journey or a student walk to success. For you, success may mean to become a social worker, to obtain a degree, to complete a specific module, to develop as a person or just to enjoy studying.

UNISA, an ODL institution, realises that it is not easy to study at a non-residential university and has put student support in place to assist you to obtain the success you have defined for yourself. Social work students may feel isolated in their journey within UNISA and may not always be aware of existing support. As the Department of Social Work, we are aware of some of the support requirements of social work students to prepare them for a profession through a course in which they do not have regular face-to-face contact with their lecturers.

This self-coaching support programme has been developed to support you as a social work student to:

- Enhance your academic success as a student
- Empower you to take charge of and determine the direction of your journey
- Facilitate your academic, professional and personal growth
- Develop self-reflection and self-development skills that you can use as part of lifelong learning
- Enjoy your student journey.

What is a self-coaching programme? Different forms of coaching, including life coaching, have become very popular in South Africa and elsewhere (Vickers & Bavister, 2010:1). Coaching can be defined as a process of facilitating self-awareness, setting goals as well as facilitating personal and professional growth and development. Life coaching, more specifically, focuses on the whole person and all areas of life. Coaching is appropriate for

you as a social work student, because even though your main purpose at UNISA is to study, all aspects of your life influence your studies and are influenced by your studies.

Coaching usually consists of a series of conversations which one person, the coach, has with another, the coachee, in a way that relates to the coachee's learning and development. Coaching conversations can happen in different ways and in different environments (Starr, 2011:295). As UNISA is an ODL institution, it is not possible to have personal coaching sessions with all students; therefore, the online self-coaching programme has been developed.

As a lecturer, I will be your “coach voice”, your host, who will accompany you through eight coaching conversations, extending across the four years you will study social work. Two conversations will be presented on each level, one in the beginning (March) and the other at the end of the year (September). Conversation 1 and 2 will be presented on level 1; Conversation 3 and 4 on level 2; Conversation 5 and 6 on level 3, and Conversation 7 and 8 on level 4.

These conversations create a place where you can discover and develop your potential. Should you decide not to continue with social work, you will leave the conversations, equipped with self-knowledge and self-reflection skills you can use during the rest of your life journey. To enrich the conversations, your e-tutor on your first and second level, your workshop facilitator on your third level and your supervisor on your fourth level will assist you with some activities.

As a life coach, I will try to bring some continuity by being available on e-mail at Bothap@unisa.ac.za throughout your journey in becoming a social worker.

In order to structure and give direction to our coaching conversations, we will follow the “Seven C's and I” process. The “I” represents you, the most important person on your journey and the “Seven C's” refer to the seven actions in the process of your personal, academic and professional growth.

These actions in the process of your development are:

- Clarifying your strengths
- Connecting with your context
- Creating your vision
- Compiling a plan
- Committing to action and change
- Confirming your direction
- Celebrating completion.

The process is depicted as repeated, ascending spirals, implying that the same process can be followed in any context as a guideline for self-development; thus, becoming part of lifelong learning (cf. Figure C1).

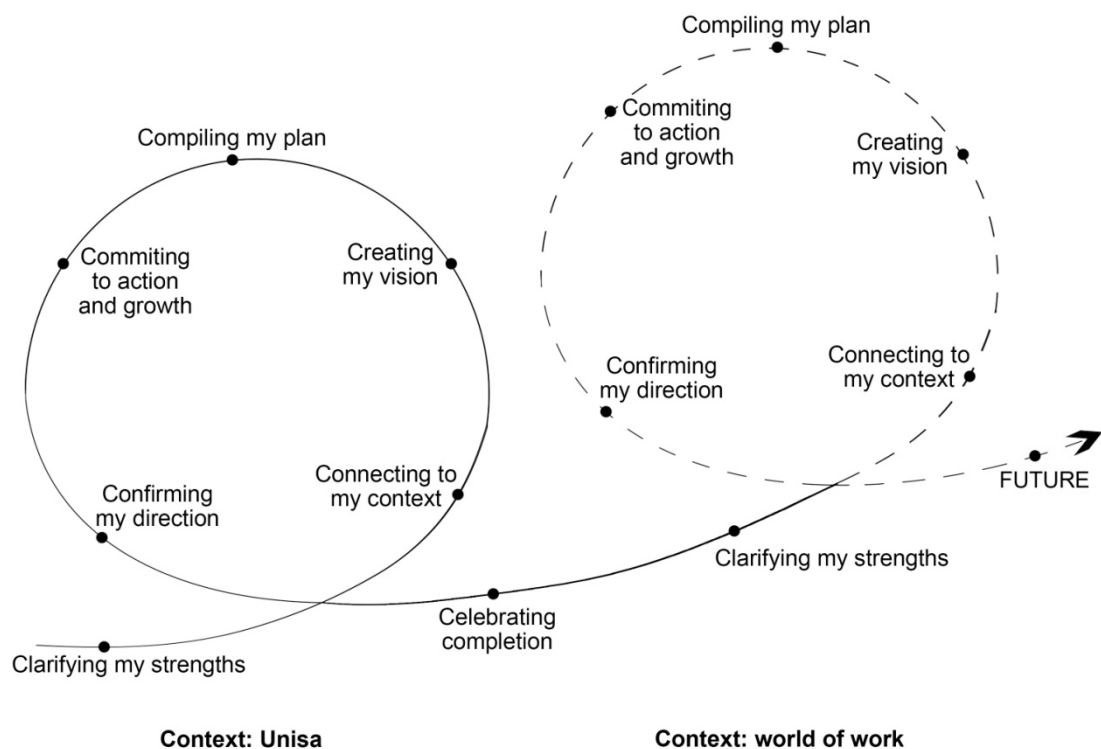


Figure C1 The seven C's and I – A life coaching model to support social work students within an ODL context

The Introduction to the life coaching programme introduces you to the self-coaching support programme. Conversation 1 assists you to identify past positive emotions and achievements, and use these to articulate your strengths. Conversation 2, "Connecting to

your context”, is about opportunity awareness, discovering social work as a profession and discovering the resources within UNISA. Your new self- and opportunity awareness will enable you to clarify for yourself whether you fit within an ODL institution and social work as a profession. These are very important decisions, as they influence your motivation to steer your journey and for you to achieve the success for which you are striving.

During conversation 3 you will create your vision and clarify your academic, personal and professional goals. In Conversation 4 you will plan actions to achieve these goals as part of your own personal developmental plan (PDP). Conversation 5 is about a commitment to change as you focus on personal and interpersonal growth. In conversation 6 you will confirm your direction by monitoring your progress, using your PDP and identifying fields in social work where you may work. Conversation 7 and 8 is about celebrating completion, as you prepare yourself for employment, reflect on your journey within UNISA, and look forward to graduation and employment.

At the end of each conversation you will have the opportunity to reflect on your growth and give feedback on the usefulness of the coaching process. The conversations include various exercises or activities as growth opportunities. These should not be omitted or rushed. It is a good idea to start a journal which could be an old-fashioned booklet or a blog where you can, preferably in private, reflect on your journey of self-development. It is always good to look back and see where you have come from.

The programme consists of information, stories, quotes, activities, discussions, references to resources, assignments and an opportunity to evaluate the conversations. An introduction at the beginning of each level introduces you to the two conversations of the year. It also provides an indication of where you are at in your life coaching journey within UNISA. Symbols are used to identify the different components of the programme.

In 2010, a group of social work students were involved in a research study to identify their support needs as students within an ODL context. I decided to share some of their stories or experiences with you at the end of some conversations, as it might mirror your own journey. Please note that these quotes have been language edited.

A coach uses the skills of listening, asking questions and giving feedback to facilitate the growth of the coachee. Questions have been included in the conversations to facilitate and empower you to reflect, set goals, take action and evaluate your progress. By completing the various self-assessments and questionnaires, you will provide yourself with feedback. You will have to do the listening.

To ensure that the self-coaching programme is integrated with the rest of the curriculum, it has been linked to the practical modules of each level (SCK1503; SCK2604; SCK3705B and SCK4802). By participating in the online self-coaching programme and completing one assignment per year, you will earn marks for these modules. As the life coaching programme will be in an online format, students will be made aware of the programme in Tutorial Letter 101 of SCK1503.

In Conversation 8 you will be requested to give feedback on the life coaching programme. Your feedback will assist us to improve this programme. I hope you will enjoy the experience of coaching yourself and carry the self-development skills you will gain into your life career!



Introduction 2: An introduction to Conversation 1 and 2 1. and 2.

You are now enrolled as a first-level student at UNISA, taking one or more social work modules. On your life coaching journey you will engage with Conversation 1, “Clarifying my strengths” and Conversation 2, “Connecting to my context” (cf. Figure C2).

In Conversation 1 you are taken on a journey to self-awareness. Through various activities and reference to resources you become aware of your strengths, interests or passions and your values. You are the most important person on your journey; that is why we want to start with you.

You have decided to study at UNISA, an ODL institution, and as you have chosen one or more social work modules, you might be considering social work as a career opportunity.

Conversation 2 assists you in getting to know the opportunities and requirements of UNISA as an ODL institution as well as social work as a profession. An assignment facilitates reflection on whether you, with your unique interests and strengths, “fit” with social work. If you “fit”, you will be motivated to develop on a personal, academic and professional level. If not, your journey may become a burden.

If you are sure that you “fit” with UNISA and social work, Conversation 1 is the place to start. If you still have doubts about whether you will be able to study through an ODL institution or are meant for social work, start with Conversation 2.

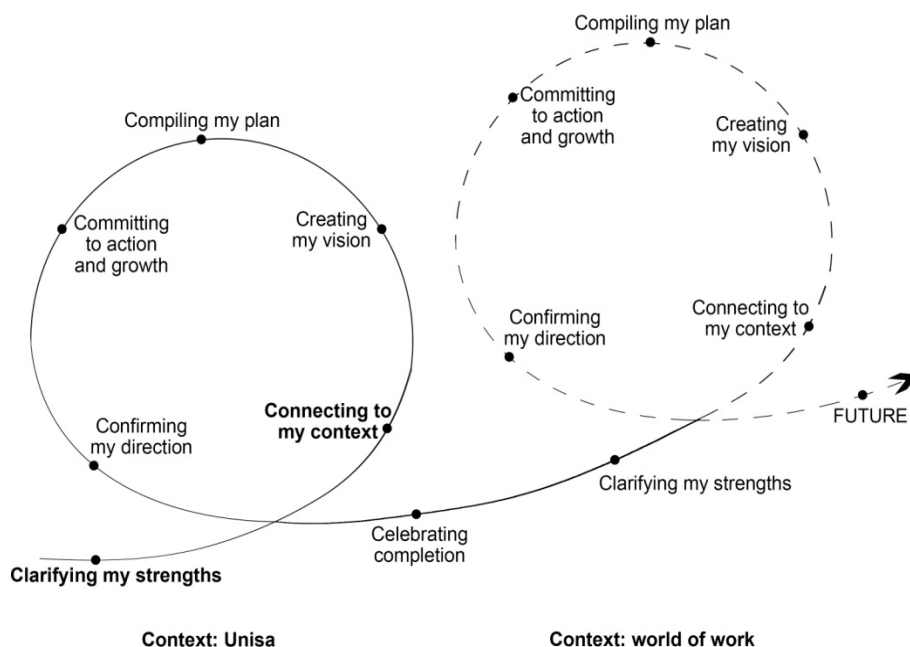


Figure C2 The seven C's and I – Conversation 1 and 2 on your life coaching journey within UNISA

Enjoy the look in the mirror!

C₁

Conversation 1: Clarifying my strengths

The objective of Conversation 1 is to facilitate your awareness of your strengths, passions and values. This will enable you to not only celebrate who you are, but also to decide whether you are on the journey of your choice. Conversation 1 is quite short, but requires a lot of time to reflect.

1.1 Clarifying my strengths: a journey to self-awareness

This self-coaching programme is built on the following assumptions (Kumar, 2007:10):

- You, as a student, are a unique individual full of potential.
- The world is full of opportunities.
- Access to these opportunities are “differently available” to individuals and you need to select opportunities suitable to you.
- To make informed choices about opportunities you need to enhance your self-awareness – knowing your strengths, interests and values.
- By tapping into your past success and excellence, new energy becomes available to you to achieve the success for which you are striving.

In the following sections you will explore your strengths, interests and values.

1.1.1 My strengths

Strengths are “capacities a person has which they are instinctively good at and which energise them when practiced” (Driver, 2011:27). Signature strengths are the positive characteristics that are unique to a person (Compton, 2005:172). When people exercise their strengths, they tend to feel invigorated, enthusiastic and have a sense that their “real self” is being expressed (Compton, 2005:172).



Activity 1: At my best

Previous experience and how we feel about it, provide us with a lot of information on our strengths (Driver, 2011:19; O’Hanlon & Bertolino, 2012:75). 13.

Think of three occasions when you were at your best, when you did something you really felt good about. The occasions can be of any duration from a few minutes to a year. Relive the experiences. If you can, tell somebody close to you a story about these experiences. List a few areas of strengths which characterised you on each occasion. (Example: A person mentioned that he had learnt to ride a bike at the age of 43 years which, for him, represented courage, perseverance and commitment to learning.)

1. An occasion when I was at my best

.....

.....

When I was at my best, I became aware of the following strengths:

.....

.....

2. An occasion when I was at my best

.....

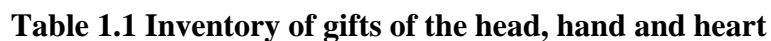
.....

When I was at my best, I became aware of the following strengths:

.....

.....

.....

[illegible]

I have discovered the following about myself by doing this exercise:

.....

.....



Activity 3: My signature strengths

The concept of character or signature strengths evolved from positive psychology. It refers to the unique character strengths which distinguish one person from another. Peterson and Seligman (2004) in O'Hanlon & Bertolino (2012:9) identified 24 character strengths and grouped them under the following six core virtues:

Virtue 1: Strengths of wisdom and knowledge. This includes positive traits related to the acquisition and use of information in the service of the good life.

1. Creativity
2. Curiosity
3. Love of learning
4. Open-mindedness
5. Perspective

Virtue 2: Strengths of courage which entail the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of external or internal opposition.

6. Authenticity
7. Bravery
8. Persistence
9. Zest

Virtue 3: Strengths of humanity, including positive traits that manifest in caring relationships with others.

10. Kindness
11. Love
12. Social intelligence

Virtue 4: Strengths of justice. These are broadly social in nature, and related to the optimal interaction between the individual and the group or the community.

- 13. Fairness
- 14. Leadership
- 15. Teamwork

Virtue 5: Strengths of temperance which are positive traits that protect us from excess.

- 16. Forgiveness
- 17. Modesty/humility
- 18. Prudence
- 19. Self-regulation

Virtue 6: Strengths of transcendence. These allow individuals to forge connections to the larger universe and thereby provide meaning to people's lives.

- 20. Appreciation of beauty and excellence
- 21. Gratitude
- 22. Hope
- 23. Humour
- 24. Religiousness/spirituality

To complete a self-assessment, the VIA Strengths Questionnaire on the Internet and free of charge, go to <http://www.authentic happiness.org>. Create a login, log in and complete the questionnaire. The online questionnaire takes about 30 minutes to complete. Review your results and answer the following questions (Driver, 2011:21):

- My five top strengths

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

- How are you currently using these strengths?

.....

- What specifically can you do to use them more?

.....

- Which of these strengths are you using to some extent?

.....

- How specifically can you use them more?

.....



Additional resources

There are many psychometric instruments and self-assessments available which are used to facilitate self-awareness, job allocation and team interaction; e.g., the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Enneagram and the DISC. Based on your answer to lists of questions, your typical behaviour and interaction patterns with others are recorded and divided into categories. These self-assessments can be very valuable to create self-awareness, but we should always remember that any assessment is only one “perception” or metaphor and refers to how we respond to the questions in a specific context at a specific moment in time.

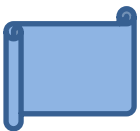
The Enneagram is one of the latest personality systems in use and distinguishes between different ways a person can perceive the world. It has become very popular within self-help and personal growth movements but is also used by psychologists, managers and teachers. Nine types of personalities are identified, namely the Reformer (“I do everything the right way”); Helper (“I must help people”); Motivator (“I need to succeed”); Romantic (“I am unique”); Thinker (“I need to understand the world”); Sceptic (“I am affectionate and sceptical”); Enthusiast (“I am happy and open to new things”); the Leader (“I must be strong”) and the Peacemaker (“I am at peace”) (9types.com., n.d.). You can go to <http://www.similarminds.com/test.html> to complete a free self-assessment which takes about 20 minutes to complete. You will be provided with a report on your personality type, a score in all nine types and suggestions in which areas to set goals.

The DISC is a behaviour assessment tool based on the DISC theory of psychologist William Marston and distinguishes four personality traits: Dominance/Drive, Inducement/Influence, Submission/Steadiness and Compliance/Conscientiousness. Go to <http://www.123test.com/disc-personality-test/> to complete a questionnaire in about 10 minutes and you will receive a graph depicting your DISC type, a textual characterisation of your personality profile and explanations of the DISC factors (DISC personality test, n.d.).

Now that you have gained a new perspective on your strengths, we can have a look at your interests or passions.

1.1.2 My interests or my passions

During an interview with mythologist Joseph Campbell, Bill Moyers asked, “If a student came to you for advice about their life and career direction, what would you say?” Campbell answered, “I will tell them: Follow your bliss. If you follow your bliss, you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there for a while, waiting for you, and the life that you ought to be living is the one you are living. Whatever you are – if you are following your bliss, you are enjoying that refreshment, that life within you all the time.” To discover your bliss, you need to find out what is deeply satisfying and meaningful to you (O’Hanlon & Bertolino, 2012: 33).



Story

O’Hanlon and Bertolino (2012:33) tell the story of Darwin, a natural scientist, who loved nature and had a large bug collection so that he could study the different varieties. One day, while walking several miles from home, he came across three large beetle types he had never encountered before. He desperately wanted them for his collection, but having only two hands, he would only be able to bring back two specimens. He decided to pop one in his mouth and ran the whole way home with it squiggling in his mouth!



Activity 4: Discovering my interests or passions

List activities in the past which have created a great deal of satisfaction or inner joy to you. Are you pursuing these activities? If not, what is holding you back?

Sometimes you do not have a sense of what will give you this bliss energy. Then your answers to the following questions might give you some indication (O'Hanlon & Bertolino, 2012:34):

- What makes you come alive?

.....

.....

- What are you passionate about?

.....

.....

- What makes you happy?

.....

.....

- What do you find yourself returning to again and again in your leisure time?

.....

.....

- With what are you soulfully obsessed?

.....

.....

When you do what you feel passionate about, you will feel energised and motivated to do what you have to do to reach your goals, even when the process to reach your goals is not always that pleasant.

1.1.3 My values

Every person has a unique set of values that motivates his/her actions. If we set goals and make decisions according to our values, we can live an authentic and fulfilling life. It is, however, not always easy to define what motivates us to do what we do (Strong, 2007:51-52). Values form the core of social work. If you do not respect a client, you cannot really accept the client and facilitate real change. If you choose social work, you need to be aware of and reflect on your own values long before you engage with your first client.

The following activity will help you to name and prioritise your core values which should assist you in confirming your career choice, and set academic, personal and professional goals.



Activity 5: Naming my values

Think about moments in your life when you really felt good or happy. It might have been when you received your matric results, secured your first job and you felt independent, or when you got married and felt a sense of belonging. Where themes repeat themselves throughout your key memories, it may indicate your core values. Think of three “feel good” moments and answer the same questions about all three (Strong, 2007:58):

Feel good moment 1

- What was it?
- When was it?
- How did you feel?
- What core values do you recognise?

Feel good moment 2

- What was it?

- When was it?
- How did you feel?
- What core values do you recognise?

Feel good moment 3

- What was it?
- When was it?
- How did you feel?
- What core values do you recognise?

You can also identify your most important values when you think about people you admire. List three people you admire and answer the following questions about each person (Strong, 2007:66):

First person you admire

- His/her name:
- His/her relationship to you:
- Things you admire about the person:

Second person you admire

- His/her name:
- His/her relationship to you:
- Things you admire about the person:

Third person you admire

- His/her name:
- His/her relationship to you:
- Things you admire about the person:

Sometimes we lack words to describe our values. The list below may help you with this (Strong, 2007:76):

Love	Marriage	Respect
Security	Power	Achievements
Health	Passion	Acceptance
Happiness	Integrity	Humour
Family	Success	Kindness
Adventure	Freedom	Independence
Travel	Trust	Excitement
Honesty	Compassion	Intimacy

Select nine values which are important to you. For example, if you have chosen security, what would make you feel secure – money, love, a pension plan? When you set goals you need to know that you will get the result you really value.

Now list your most important values from one to nine:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.



Additional resources

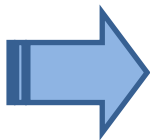
You can visit YouTube and watch the following video: “Clarifying your personal values”.



Discussion 1: Discussion with fellow students during e-tutoring session – self-awareness

During a session of an hour, your e-tutor will initiate an online discussion pertaining to the following questions:

- Why is it important for me as a social work student within UNISA to know myself?
- What should I know about myself?
- Why are strengths, interests and values important?
- How can I get to know myself?
- What have I discovered about myself during conversation 1?



Evaluating the conversation

1. Three things that I have learnt from this conversation are
2. Things I will do differently as a result of this conversation are

**Quotes**

Question to the student during a research study: “Why did you choose to study social work?”

Student: “It begins within yourself. You know that you love working with people or hate working with people. You know your temper. You know you can’t handle this; you can handle that. It is about knowing yourself, what you can handle. You just add on what you already have, just making it professional. You have grown up respecting young people, elderly people. You grew up with that value. Now you are adding on to it, just taking it from a personal to a professional level.”

“Don’t ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

(Howard Thurman, cited by O’Hanlon & Bertolino, 2012:33).

C₂

Conversation 2: Connecting to my context

Conversation 2 wants to facilitate your awareness of the opportunities and requirements of studying within UNISA as an ODL institution, and to assist you to assess the fit between you and the institution. In the same way, it wants to facilitate your awareness of the opportunities and requirements of studying social work.

2.1 Connecting to my context: a journey to opportunity awareness

This conversation is about “opportunity awareness”. Opportunity awareness can be defined as “awareness of possibilities that exist, the demands they make, and the rewards and satisfaction they can offer (Watts & Hawthorn, cited by Kumar, 2007:8).

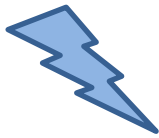
In the context of study and the world of work, opportunities can refer to an institution of higher education and the resources it offers, a specific career choice as well as employers and employment opportunities. By exploring and exploiting opportunities you can facilitate your own learning and development now, but also as part of lifelong learning (Kumar, 2007:11).

You have enrolled for one or more social work modules at UNISA, an ODL institution. The two available “opportunities” with which you have engaged are therefore, UNISA and social work as a career. In order to really be in the driver seat of your journey and to achieve success, you need to ensure that you are aligned or fit with your decisions to study at UNISA and to study social work.

This conversation will guide you to research the choices you have made. We will also look at the opportunities and demands that the changing world of work has brought about, and support that the relationships in your life offer as well as their demands.

2.1.1 UNISA as an opportunity for development

UNISA is an open and distance learning institution, meaning that it is accessible – it overcomes geographical restrictions, provides opportunities to many students who cannot study through residential universities due to age, disability, employment or financial restrictions. Annually, more than 300 000 students from different places, languages, cultures and disciplines study through UNISA. UNISA provides flexibility and affordability. It is student-centred and promotes lifelong learning. UNISA also makes provision for access courses to assist students who do not have matriculation exemption. It is, however, not always easy to study through a distance learning institution – you have to be a motivated, diligent and independent student with enough support.



Activity 6: Reflecting on studying at UNISA

To see what UNISA as an ODL institution represents, visit YouTube “my Studies @ Unisa (1): introduction”.

Reflect by using the following questions:

- How are UNISA’s values consistent with your own, as described in Conversation 1?
- How does UNISA provide you with the opportunity to use your strengths?



Activity 7: Motivation to study through UNISA

As mentioned earlier in the study, social work students were asked why they had decided to study at UNISA. The following questionnaire was compiled, based on their answers.

Complete the following questions to become aware of your motivation for studying at UNISA:

Table 2.1 Motivation to study at UNISA

Motivation to study at UNISA	Yes	No
1. Residential universities were too far from where I reside.		
2. I am working while I am studying.		
3. I am an older student.		
4. My financial restrictions motivated me to study through UNISA.		
5. I applied too late at other institutions.		
6. My applications at other institutions were unsuccessful.		
7. Other reasons (specify)		

If you didn't really want to study through UNISA but were obliged to do so, the following activity might assist you to assess whether your strengths comply with the requirements of UNISA as an ODL institution.



Activity 8: My fit with UNISA as an ODL institution

The following questions will help you to assess what you need to succeed. There are no right or wrong answers; simply answer “yes” or “no” for each statement (adapted from my Choice @ Unisa, 2013:14-15).

Table 2.2 Is the UNISA journey for me?

Abilities statement	Yes	No
1. I obtained a minimum of 50% for English or Afrikaans and enjoy reading and writing.		
2. I am goal-directed, my actions are determined by having end results in mind which I usually achieve.		
3. I am self-motivated. I do not need pressure or control from		

others to take action.		
4. I am a self-starter, because I require little or no supervision or direction to take action to achieve my goals.		
5. I like to get things done today rather than putting them off until tomorrow.		
6. I am self-disciplined, because I am diligent and conscientious in my work and duties.		
7. I can work independently, because I can deal with matters free from outside control.		
8. I do not give up easily, because I persevere with a course of action in spite of difficulty with little or no indication of success.		
9. I am capable of independent study, because I can study on my own.		
10. I think I am ready for university-level work, because I am willing to master new and difficult ideas.		
11. I am an organised person, because I plan my life and do things step-by-step.		
12. I use time effectively, as I put aside sufficient time to study.		
13. What I learn and do not learn is my responsibility.		
14. I consider myself to be responsible because I find study help when I need it.		
15. I am confident in my ability to read academic texts.		
16. I am confident in my ability to write examinations.		
17. I consider myself to be a capable reader.		
18. I know how to make notes from study guides, textbooks and tutors.		
19. I read extensively (fiction and non-fiction).		
20. I consider myself to be a university-level reader, as I am willing to read difficult books that require much effort.		
21. I know how to use a library to search for specific information.		
22. I know how to use the Internet to search for specific information.		

23. I am able to analyse the possibilities in multiple-choice questions in order to decide on answers.		
24. I am willing to learn how to analyse multiple-choice questions.		
25. I know how to structure and write an academic essay.		
26. I am willing to learn to structure and write an academic essay.		
27. I can do basic calculations (add, subtract, multiply and divide numbers).		
28. I can apply ideas that I learn about to real-life situations.		
29. I am comfortable to prepare for examinations.		
30. I know how to prepare for examinations.		
31. I know how to manage my stress levels during exam time.		
32. I am willing to participate in programmes to prepare me for university studies.		
33. I have made arrangements so that my studies are priority until I graduate.		
34. I am aware that I need to purchase textbooks that may be expensive.		
35. I have regular access to a computer and the Internet, and am confident about my computer skills.		
36. I read books, newspapers and magazines, and am comfortable with gathering information.		

Count your “yes” answers.

31-36 “yes” answers: Open and distance learning suits you. If you experience challenges later in the journey, there are support services available at UNISA to assist you.

18-30 “yes” answers: Get to know the support services that UNISA offers and make use of tutors, discussion classes, myUnisa and counsellors.

6-17 “yes” answers: You may find it difficult to study successfully at UNISA. Study your answers and identify what you can do to improve your score. If improvement is relatively easy, register for the minimum number of modules and make use of as many of UNISA’s support services as possible.

0-5 36 “yes” answers: You are not suited to open and distance learning at this stage. Use your score to identify changes you need to make to improve your abilities. Continue to re-assess your readiness.

The “no” answers represent barriers to your chances for academic success but can be changed.

Ask yourself:

- How can I further strengthen my abilities, as indicated by the “yes” answers?
- In which areas related to the “no” answers can I improve?
- How can I do this?
- By when do I want to make these improvements?

Remember these goals when we do planning during conversation 3.



Activity 9: My personal circumstances

Your personal circumstances could affect your journey within UNISA and the effort it takes to reach personal excellence. Tick the relevant statements in the following table to assist you to identify aspects of your present situation which may influence your studies (my Choice @ Unisa, 2013:16-17).

Table 2.3 Aspects of my personal circumstances that affect my success at UNISA

My personal circumstances	Tick
1. I am a special needs student and require special assistance.	
2. I live in a rural or urban area without postal services.	
3. There is no examination centre close to where I live (go to p102-107 to check).	
4. I do not have access to a computer or the Internet.	
5. I am a single parent with small children to look after.	
6. I work full time.	

7. I work during the day and at night/weekends.	
8. I do not have access to a cellphone.	
9. I am battling financially and do not know how I will fund my studies and buy books.	

The statements you have ticked represent possible challenges to your chances of academic success. Ask yourself:

- What changes can I make to overcome these challenges?

.....

- Who can help me?

.....

- By when can I make these changes?

.....

Remember these goals when we do planning during Conversation 3.

2.1.1.1 Resources within UNISA

UNISA offers many resources to assist students along their study journey. Resources can be in the form of facilities (e.g., library, classrooms), material (study material, online programmes), finances (e.g., bursaries or loans) or people (e.g., lecturers, tutors, counsellors). It is extremely important to know and use these resources along your journey.

It is your responsibility to access and use these resources, as needed (Herbst & De la Porte, 2006:93). It is important to **study** the two brochures, **my Studies @ Unisa** and **my Choice @ Unisa**, available at www.unisa.ac.za. Go to *Study at UNISA* and download the brochures.





Activity 10: Resources within UNISA

Use these two brochures to create your own list of resources available at UNISA. You can draw a mind map depicting the resources you may use during your studies and stick it on your wall. Include the following:

- The regional centre close to where I stay (my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:23, 72-79)
- Services provided at this regional centre or the centre I will visit (my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:23, 72-79). If you visit a regional centre regularly, ask a senior student to take you on a trip through the campus and show you where facilities are, e.g., the library, computer centre, printers, study venues, support services.
- Important contact details of departments who can render support (cf. my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:65)
- Tutorial programmes per regional office (cf. my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:80)
- Academic literacy centres (cf. my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:50)
- Bursaries and loans (cf. my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:60-64)
- Counselling and career development services per regional office (cf. my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:25, 68)
- Information on assignments (cf. my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:51-57)
- Information on examinations (cf. my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:69-71)
- Information on the libraries (cf. my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:26, 82-87)
- Services to students with disabilities (cf. my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:24)
- Health and wellness services, and service opportunities (cf. my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:46-47)
- Booksellers (cf. my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:58-59)
- Contact details for application-related student assistance (my Choice @ Unisa, 2012:114-117).

The people or departments within UNISA who can support you, almost become your own “little UNISA”, but it is your responsibility to create and populate your supportive institutional environment.



Activity 11: My “little UNISA”

Every student “must create his/her own world of rigorous academic engagement; his/her own little UNISA” (Schmidt, 2012a). This means that every student is responsible to build his/her own personal and virtual support system. Think about this statement and complete the diagram below, indicating support people and systems within UNISA which you currently use or can start using. Plan on how you can ensure that your personal “little UNISA” works for you (cf. my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:28).

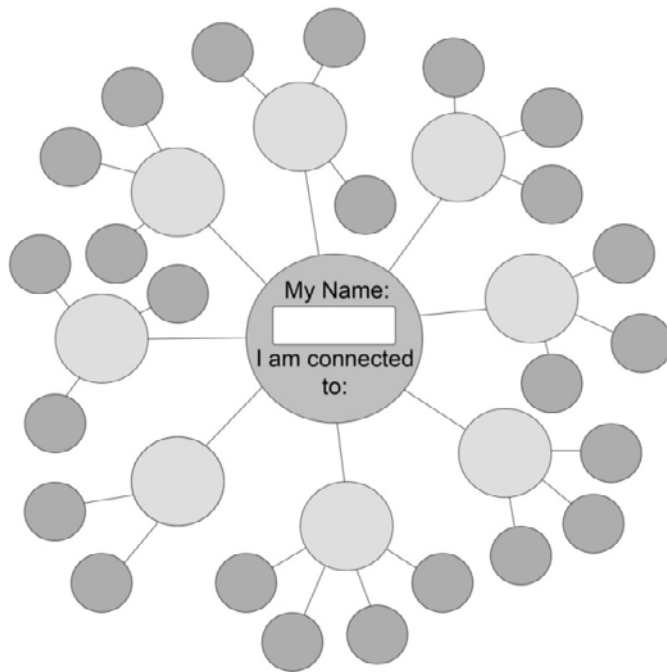


Figure 2.1 My support network within UNISA

The next section focuses on an overview of social work as an opportunity.

2.1.2 Social work as an opportunity for development

This section provides you with an overview of what social work is all about, the wide range of fields or career opportunities within social work, attributes of a good social

worker, requirements of the degree BSW and what you can expect when studying social work at UNISA.

You may have decided on social work as a career or have only taken Social Work modules as a second major or elective. Even if you know that you are not going to become a social worker, you can still benefit from this conversation by doing the assignment, but focusing on the career option of your choice.

2.1.2.1 What is social work?

There are many definitions of social work. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) formally adopted the following definition of social work in June 2001 (IASSW, cited by Nicholas, Rautenbach & Maistry, 2010:5):

“The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental in social work.”

Social work, in its various forms, addresses the transactions between people and their environments. The mission of social work is to enable people to develop their full potential and to prevent dysfunction. Social workers, therefore, facilitate change in the lives of individuals, families, groups and communities (IASSW, cited by Nicholas et al. 2010:5). Social work is a profession, as it has a distinctive body of knowledge, a code of ethics, practice standards and accredited training (Higham, 2006:11).

In South Africa, social workers have to complete the BSW degree registered by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) on an NQF level 8. The qualification has 27 outcomes which have to be achieved before a candidate can obtain the BSW degree. The purpose of this professional four-year qualification is to equip students with (SAQA, Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work. n.d.):

- Skills to challenge structural sources of poverty, inequality, oppression, discrimination and exclusion
- Knowledge and understanding of human behaviour and social systems, and the skills to intervene at the points where people interact with their environments in order to promote social well-being
- The ability and competence to assist and empower individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities to enhance their social functioning and their problem-solving capacities
- The ability to promote, restore, maintain and enhance the functioning of individuals, families, groups and communities by enabling them to accomplish tasks, prevent and alleviate distress, and use resources effectively
- An understanding of and the ability to demonstrate social work values, and the principles of human rights and social justice while interacting with and assisting the range of human diversity
- The understanding and ability to provide social work services towards protecting people who are vulnerable, at risk and unable to protect themselves
- Knowledge and understanding of both the South African and the global welfare context, and the ability to implement the social development approach in social work services
- Understanding of the major social needs, issues, policies and legislation in the South African social welfare context, and the social worker's role and contribution
- The skills to work effectively within teams, including social work teams, multi- and inter-disciplinary teams as well as multi-sectorial teams.

In conversation 4 we will use these outcomes to set development goals.

Social work is a profession characterised by critical thinking, a function in society, a method of knowledge-building, a pedagogy, an ethical responsibility to advance professional interest and professional association (Morris, cited by Nicholas et al., 2010:232). A profession is often protected by a professional board or council. All practicing social workers in South Africa have to register with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACCP) which is the professional board that regulates social work education and practice in terms of the Social Service Professions Act, No. 110 of 1978.

From their second level, students have to register with the Council as student social workers. They pay a once-off fee to the SACSSP that is valid for the entire duration of their studies. Registration is one way of ensuring a basic standard of professional conduct when someone practices as a social worker. The SACSSP provides a code of ethics which has been adopted in 1986 and consists of guidelines for ethical conduct (Nicolas et al., 2010:14). 3.

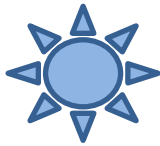
Social workers have to unite their voices on important social and professional issues. They are encouraged to join professional associations, such as the National Association of Social Workers, South Africa (NASW, SA); the Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions (ASASWEI) and the South African Association of Social Workers in Private Practice (SAASWIPP). Social workers are also encouraged to read and publish, especially in two South African professional journals, namely *Social Work/ Maatskaplike Werk* and *The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher/ Die Maatskaplikewerk-Navorsers-Praktisyn* (Nicolas et al., 2010:27). 5.

Barsky (2006:295-296) and Cournoyer and Stanley (2002:90) identify five common phases that social workers progress through during their careers: pre-professional (when you consider studying social work), academic, early professional, midcareer and late career phase. When you enrol for the BSW, you move from the pre-professional to the academic phase of your social work career. 7.

2.1.2.2 Options within social work

Social work renders many opportunities for professional and personal development, as it can be practiced in many environments, focusing on a variety of presenting problems. As you have seen on the DVD on your journey as social work student within UNISA, distributed to students doing SCK1503, you can follow various pathways with a BSW degree. The following bulleted list briefly describes the job description of social workers in various fields (Department of Social Work DVD, 2012; National Organisation of Forensic Social Work, 2013):

- A social worker in the field of child and family welfare helps children and families modify their behaviour or circumstances to promote a healthy family life.
- A community social worker identifies and addresses the social and economic pressures people experience that may cause social problems. He/she is concerned with housing, child-care, rehabilitation of persons dependent on drugs and alcohol, the aged or people with disabilities.
- A geriatric social worker works with older people within institutions and the community.
- An occupational social worker takes care of the social welfare of a group of employees in a workplace where he/she administers employee wellness programmes.
- A forensic social worker focuses on legal issues and litigation, both criminal and civil, which includes child custody issues involving separation, divorce, neglect, termination of parental rights, child and spouse abuse, juvenile and adult justice services as well as mandated treatment.
- A medical social worker works with clients in hospital and psychiatric care, while focusing on the client's physical and mental health.
- A counsellor in the field of substance abuse helps the drug addict or alcoholic to rehabilitate and re-establish a constructive life in society.
- A marriage and divorce counsellor assists couples experiencing marital problems or going through a divorce.
- A school social worker takes care of the welfare of the children in a school by providing education and information on life skills, as well as individual, family and group counselling.
- A lecturer teaches and develops courses for social work students, assesses students, and conducts research into practical and academic questions.
- A social welfare researcher explores causes of social problems and methods of overcoming these problems.



Additional resources

You can consult the following websites to gain more information on social work:

- www.sacssp.co.za
- www.ifsw.org/policies/definition-of-social-work/
- <http://www.pacecareers.com/careercentre/Careers.aspx>
- <http://www.prospects.ac.uk/>

When you consult the SACSSP's website, see if you can find information on the different fields of speciality. Read the code of ethics. 3.

You can also watch the following **YouTube videos**:

- "Choosing to be a social worker"
- "Social work in a new light"

After reflecting on the various fields within social work, can you already identify a field that you will be passionate about? Make a note in your journal, as it will be interesting to see whether your preference will change over time.

2.1.2.3 Attributes of a good social worker

In 2010 I asked UNISA social work students to identify the attributes of a good social worker. According to them a good social worker has:

- A sound theoretical and practical knowledge base, and undergoes continuing professional training
- Effective intervention and administrative skills
- A clear set of values that results in ethical behaviour by showing respect to all clients, adhering to confidentiality, being non-judgmental towards all clients, allowing all clients self-determination, and aligning their personal values and professional values

- An attitude of service – he/she has the desire to help people, is patient, friendly and kind, is able to set boundaries, is willing to give time to clients, is willing to learn from clients, and is aware of negativity and the misuse of power.



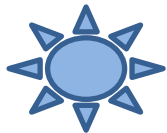
Activity 12: Attributes of a good social worker and I

Reflect on the following:

- In view of the attributes of a good social worker mentioned above and your strengths, interests and values discovered during Conversation 1, which of these attributes do you already have?
- Which attributes do you want to work on, cultivate or strengthen?

2.1.2.4 Requirements for the BSW degree at UNISA

At this stage you have already enrolled and may know what the requirements for studying social work are. However, you might not have decided on your second major or may wonder about requirements for doing practical work.



Additional resources

For the requirements to enrol for and complete the BSW degree at UNISA, consult the my Registration @ Unisa, 2013 brochure of the College of Human Sciences or go to www.unisa.ac.za; then Study at UNISA; Download Brochures; download my Registration @ Unisa 2013, College of Human Sciences; cf. Bachelor Social Work (p132).

To enrol, you need to have completed a National Senior Certificate (degree endorsement) with at least 50% in the language of teaching and learning (English). If you do not qualify, you may follow UNISA's alternative pathways (cf. my Choice @ Unisa, 2013:44-45).

Please note the rules for registration as well as the pre/co-requisites for registration of modules at all levels.

- The curriculum comprises 40 modules and practical social work.
- The major subjects are social work and one of criminology, communication science, development studies, philosophy, psychology or sociology. (It is often difficult to decide on a second major. As a rough guide, students who are interested in dealing with people in a one-on-one situation will find psychology helpful; those who are interested in dealing with juvenile and adult offenders will find criminology appropriate and those who have a strong interest in working with and understanding larger communities and developmental work will find sociology and developmental studies useful. Students who want to understand human reasoning can choose philosophy and those who want to understand the process of communication can choose communication science).
- You are required to be able to attend workshops or practice sessions at approved UNISA centres in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Polokwane, Umthatha, Nelspruit, Durban and Bloemfontein at each level. Depending on the number of students, workshops will also be held in other centres – you will be notified via tutorial letters.
- You are required to have passed all 30 modules on first to third level to register for your fourth level.
- You are advised to do your fourth level over two years due to the demands of the practical work.
- In your fourth level you are placed at a welfare organisation where you do practical work for at least one day a week. If you are already working, you have to make arrangements with your employer in this regard.
- If you have completed a bachelor's degree at a South African university and majored in one of philosophy, communication science, criminology, developmental studies, psychology or sociology, you can qualify as a social worker by passing all social work modules, one marriage counselling module and two social welfare law modules. This qualification will, however, be for non-degree purposes.

If at this stage of your studies, you are still confused about the choice of modules, you can obtain career counselling from the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development (cf. contact details – my Studies @ Unisa, 2013:66-68).

2.1.2.5 Practical work

Since social work is a skills-based profession, practical work is an essential requirement of the qualification. During the first two levels you complete different practical tasks that you reflect in a portfolio of evidence. During your first level you enter into communication with people to get to know a community of your choice, and to develop self-awareness of your own values and attitudes.

In your second level you have to show evidence that you can use the basic skills of attending, listening and basic empathy, and start thinking and working with groups of people and communities.

During the third level you have to participate in a number of workshops, where you meet as a group with a workshop facilitator and do role plays, practicing your skills with other students.

During your fourth level you again do a number of practical workshops. You are also placed at an organisation such as an NGO, the Department of Social Development, a school or a hospital where you do practical work at least one day a week. You work with individuals, groups and a community, and have to write reports on this. You meet once a week with a small group of fellow students and a supervisor who guides you in the integration of theory and practice. You have to build up a portfolio of evidence for case work, group work and community work (Department of Social Work DVD, 2012).

It is important to know what awaits you as far as practical work is concerned so as to decide whether you will be able to commit yourself as far as time and finances are concerned. The practical work will also influence your family life, as all the requirements will imply that you have less time to spend with them.



2.1.3 Motivation to study social work

We will now look at your motivation to study social work. If you are taking social work modules as electives, apply the questions below to the career of your choice.



Activity 13: My motivation to study social work

Use the following questionnaire to assist you in identifying your motivation to study social work (Barsky, 2006:27-29):

Table 2.4 My motivation to study social work

Motivation to study Social Work	Yes	No
1. I have a passion for helping people.		
2. My past experiences motivated me to study social work.		
3. Volunteering or my work situation motivated me to study social work.		
4. Social work seems to be an easy course.		
5. I was influenced by other people, e.g., my parents, friends or a role model.		
6. I want to create social justice in the world.		
7. I was influenced by the media (e.g., TV, radio, Internet).		
8. I want to learn the professional skills of social work.		
9. I want a job which has status.		
10. I want to earn a good salary.		
11. I received a bursary from the Department of Social Development.		
12. Other reasons (specify)		

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. Many of the above could indicate that Social work is right for you. If you have a passion to help people and want to make a difference in their lives, you may be able to overcome many obstacles because you are really motivated to achieve your goals. However, you should perhaps reconsider if your motivation is numbers 4, 9, 10 and 11. Social work within NGOs is not highly paid. However, social work in government departments or some corporate businesses employ social workers to render employee wellness programmes that are better paid positions. If past experiences like trauma motivated you, you might be looking for a way to work through your pain and counselling may be a cheaper option. If you study social work only because you were awarded a bursary, you may not really find yourself at the driver seat of your journey and it might be difficult to persevere.

2.1.4 My fit with social work as a career opportunity

In Conversation 1, you completed various activities to understand yourself with your unique strengths, interest and values. To assist you to gain more information about social work and to decide whether social work is a fit with you, complete the following assignment:



Assignment 1: Do I fit with social work as a career opportunity?

The *purpose and learning outcomes* of the assignment are:

- To gain more knowledge on social work as a career
- To practice informational interviewing skills
- To build networks in the field of social work
- To link the demands of the career with your knowledge about your own strengths, interests and values, and to assess your suitability for or fit with the job
- To write a well-structured 600 word report on your findings (a transferrable skill!).

NB: If you know you are not going to do social work, indicate this and do the assignment on the career for which you are preparing.

Preparation for the assignment

Consult at least six sources from the library and Internet on social work as a career. Approach a welfare organisation to spend a day to volunteer, to observe a social worker (shadowing) and to have an interview with this or another social worker.

During shadowing, observe the following (Barsky, 2006:11):

- What roles/tasks does the social worker fulfill within this organisation?
- What types of concerns or presenting problems does the social worker help clients to address?
- How does social work “help” or does intervention occur?
- How does the social worker manage time performing different tasks?
- What type of support does the social worker receive from others?
- With what types of stresses does the social worker have to deal?
- What are the most fulfilling and most frustrating parts of the social worker’s day?

When interviewing the social worker, you can use the following questions as guidelines for your discussion (Barsky, 2006:15):

- How did you decide to enter the social work profession?
- How has your actual experience in social work been similar to or different from what you originally expected?
- What are the aspects of social work practice that you appreciate most?
- What are the most difficult challenges you face as a social worker?
- What regrets, if any, do you have concerning your decision to become a social worker?

The format of the assignment (adapted from Kumar, 2007:196)

1. *Introduction:* Briefly explain your reasons for choosing social work as a career and indicate the methods you have used to conduct your research (5%).
2. *Main body of the report:* Interpret your findings on different aspects of social work as a career, e.g., tasks and responsibilities, team work, time management, challenges, the environment. Link the information you have found on social work

with the various aspects of your new knowledge about your strengths, interests and values, as discussed in Conversation 1 (80%).

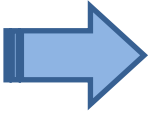
3. *Concluding paragraph:* Summarise your findings and indicate whether you are suitable for or fit with social work. If not, mention which alternative option/s you will now follow up.
4. *Overall presentation:* style, layout, spelling and grammar (10%).

When you have completed the assignment and you feel that you do not really fit with social work, it is better to start investigating other alternatives and/or to make an appointment with a career counsellor to assist you to explore further. One route to follow is to see what career options the second major you chose could lead you to (adapted from Barnard and Deyzel [2012:36-38]).

Table 2.5 Alternative career options

Second major	Possible job titles
Psychology	Registered counsellor, psychometrist, clinical, counselling, educational, research, industrial, neuro- or forensic psychologist
Criminology	Correctional service officer, crime prevention consultant, forensic criminologist, police officer, victim counsellor
Developmental studies	Development facilitator, development consultant, training officer, development researcher
Communication science	Communications officer, public relations officer, marketing manager, event manager, teacher
Philosophy	Researcher, teacher, journalist
Sociology	Sociologist, lecturer, social researcher, policy designer

If you complete a general degree (e.g., a BA), the table above may help you to identify alternative career opportunities in the field of your second major. You will have to speak to a career counsellor about the choice of degree and modules to be selected.



Evaluating the conversation

1. Three things that I have learnt from this conversation are
2. Things I will do differently as a result of this conversation are



Quote

One of the social workers interviewed as part of the 2010 research study shared the following on why she studied social work:

“I chose social work because of my personal background. My parents were divorced when I was in matric. We grew up in a very violent home. My father always beat us and I remember one time I reported my father to the social worker, and they called him in for a joint interview, and he lied and they believed him, and I thought, what kind of people are these? So I thought, let me study social work, and that was what motivated me.”



Introduction 3: An introduction to Conversation 3 and 4 1.

You have completed your first level social work modules successfully. During your second level you will participate in two important conversations, namely Conversation 3, “Creating my vision” and Conversation 4, “Compiling a plan”.

As part of your life coaching journey (cf. Figure C3) you have probably decided that you fit with social work, are ready to create a long-term vision, and set personal, academic and professional goals. You will use a personal development plan (PDP) as a tool to plan your actions in such a way that you achieve your goals. You will, however, come across some challenges along the way which could be seen as opportunities for further growth.

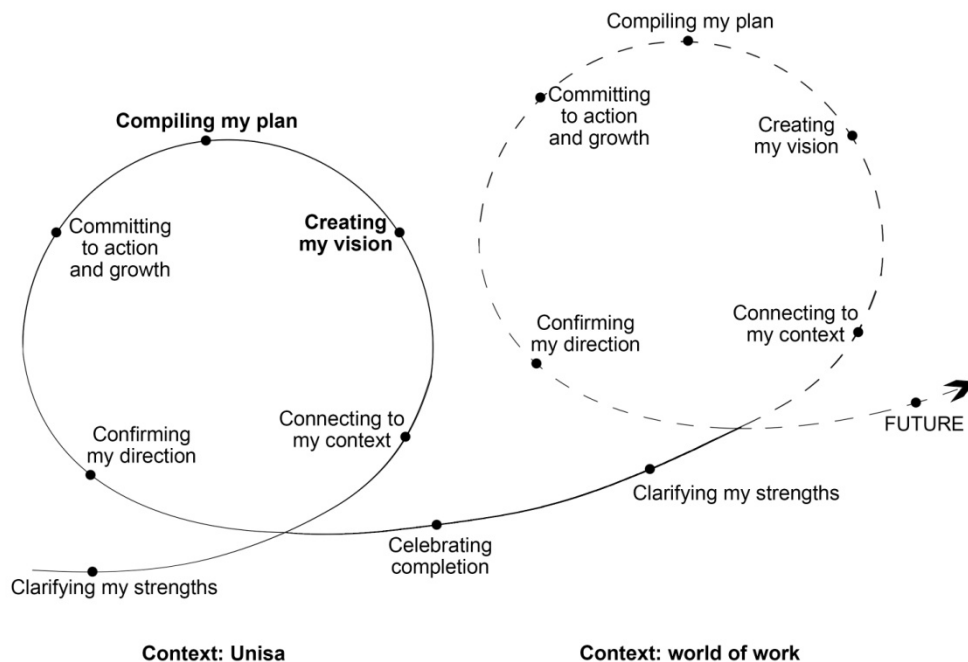


Figure C3: The seven C's and I – Conversation 3 and 4 on your life coaching journey within UNISA

C₃

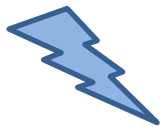
Conversation 3: Creating my vision

The objectives of Conversation 3 are to create a vision, and to set your personal, academic and professional goals. As a “whole” person, you cannot only focus on academic goals, but you will also find that your goals may overlap, for a personal goal may, for instance, influence the way you study and how you grow as an emerging professional social worker.

3.1 Creating my vision

In the previous conversations you have become more aware of yourself and the choices you have made. In this conversation you will dream a little! You will think about how you want your life to be and how the choices you have made fit within your life vision.

A vision is a mental picture of the future you want. It is experienced with emotion and is based on values (Schenck et al. 2010:175). A compelling vision should be desired (what you really want), inclusive (involving important people in your life), a believable stretch (stretch beyond what is, but still reachable), require collaboration (who can assist), and requires creativity and innovation (needs creative action) (Whitney et al. 2010:143).



Activity 14: My vision – a letter from the future

Imagine your life five years after graduation. What work are you doing? Where do you work? Where do you live? What is the role of your family? How do you spend leisure time?

Now write a letter from your future self to your present self, describing how your life is now that you have achieved success and how you feel (adapted from Bloom, Hutson & He, 2008; New Insights, Africa, 2010:14; Whitney et al., 2008:143).

3.2 Setting goals

To move from your current to your preferred life, as described in the letter, you need to clarify of what your dream or vision consists. You can do this by writing one or more

affirmative statements about yourself in the future which articulate your vision, for example “I am a dynamic community worker who really makes a difference in the lives of poor people” or “I am financially independent and provide in my family’s needs.” These statements, written in the present tense, serve as guides or motivation tenets, expressing your vision (Barett & Fry, 2005:65, 66).

Related to vision are goals, including a reference to effort which will be made. You will also need specific goals guiding your plan of action towards your vision. A goal is your aim or your desired result. Sheldon (cited by Driver, 2011:83-84) distinguishes between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic goals* as well as *imposed* and *autonomous* goals.

An *intrinsic goal* offers a reward or payback which comes from within, such as a warm glow or warm feeling of satisfaction that you have done your best. An *extrinsic goal* is externally validated; for example, obtaining a good mark or good feedback from a lecturer. You may feel good that you have learnt a specific skill, or you may be relieved when you have passed a module you don’t like but need to complete your degree. A further distinction is an *imposed goal* which is set by somebody else, while an *autonomous goal* is your own which you set. For example, the 27 outcomes needed for the BSW degree are imposed goals that you have to reach; yet, many of these goals may overlap with your autonomous goals because you have a passion to become a good social worker.

When setting goals, it will be useful to ask yourself the following questions (Mumford, 2007:145-146):

- *Is my goal specific?* To have a goal that you want to complete, a specific module in a specific time is more specific than just “to study”.
- *Is my goal measurable?* How will you know when you have achieved your goal? You will know that you have mastered exam skills when you can write most of your exams relaxed and successfully.
- *Is my goal achievable?* You will not be able to study social work if you do not meet the entrance requirements.
- *Is my goal realistic?* You may not be able to complete your degree in four years with practical work if you work full-time.

- *Is my goal time bound?* If your goal is to complete an assignment, you not only need to plan when the assignment should be completed but also when to start and keep track of the deadlines of other assignments as well.
- *Am I enthusiastic about the journey towards my goal?* Are you so inspired by the desired destination that you are also enthusiastic about the things you have to do to reach it? Does wanting to be a social worker help you to be enthusiastic about completing your portfolio?
- *Is the goal a natural one for me?* If your goal is to study social work but you hate working with people, then the goal to study social work is not natural for you and social work is not likely to be the right career for you.
- *Is the goal understood by the key people in my life?* If your goal is to study social work, does your family know what impact the social work course will have on their lives as well?
- *Am I prepared for the journey to my goal?* Do you know what it will take time, money and effort to reach your goal to become a social worker?

Strong (2007:122-123) provides further guidelines about goals:

- Write down your goals.
- Visualise achieving your goals.
- Action is vital; avoid procrastination and take small steps every day.
- If you are stuck, ask yourself what the easiest step is you can take in the direction of your goal.
- Adjust your goals when necessary. Replace goals that no longer inspire you.
- Enjoy the journey, not only the destination.



Enjoying the journey – a guided fantasy (Mumford, 2007:124)

Think of your future life goals as if they are features of a far-distant horizon. You will be able to see, some way ahead of you in the distance, the shapes and colours of a mountain, or a lake, or a village. But nothing in sharp relief because you are too far away.

You can choose to head towards the mountain or the lake or the village – which ever seems more appealing to you from where you are now. As you get closer, you begin to see the terrain on the mountain, the whirls on the lake, the houses and the buildings in the village. You get a stronger sense of whether your choice to head for the mountain was the right one. Or maybe now that everything is a little more in focus and you have gathered speed along the way, that the lake or village seems to be a better destination.

You can still change course, even quite late in the day, and make your final decision about your destination. You might even notice something you couldn't see from your starting point. Just around the corner from the mountain is a valley that looks appealing. And when you finally reach your destination, you have no regrets because you've had the most amazing journey along the way.

Reflect in your journal how this guided fantasy has affected you.

The next activity is about goal-setting. Goal-setting can be a very effective tool for making progress because it ensures a clear awareness of what one must do so that one's dream or vision becomes a reality.

Although you will identify your personal, academic and professional goals, these three sets of goals are not necessarily separate from one another. You may find that these goals overlap and influence one another. The process of goal-setting itself is regarded as an important component of personal development. The goals you set are not meant to be unchangeable. You will find that your goals will change from year to year as you reach some, identify others or set goals about the same subject but on a deeper level.

3.2.1 My personal goals

A person beginning social work studies has to first and foremost develop from a person with a vision to becoming a social worker into a person with the attributes of a social worker, as already discussed. To become the social worker you want to be you will develop on a personal, academic and professional level.



“Personal goals are goals set by an individual to influence the direction of his efforts” (eHow. 2013). Personal goals can be set in any area of your life and are unique to you. You may be wondering: “How do I know what my personal goals are?” or “How do I go about setting goals about my personal development?”

Life coaching offers us a valuable tool, namely the wheel of life, to look at our lives as a whole and identify those aspects that we want to work on and then set goals.

The wheel of life is used to (Holroyd & Field, 2012:118):

- Identify an aspect of life about which an individual wants to set and achieve goals
- Work with a work/fun balance, building a sense of perspective
- Help identify aspects which are important in an individual’s life
- Help to re-establish priorities
- Increase self-awareness of what is important to the individual.



Activity 15: My wheel of life

- To create your own wheel of life, use the circle in Figure 3.1. You can use the segments and labels as is or create new ones (Holroyd & Field, 2012:134).
- Assess each segment and decide on how much attention you are currently devoting to that aspect of your life, and then reflect on why and what the consequences are. Assess which aspects are priorities for you at the moment and why. Which aspects are aligned to your goals and which are not?
- Along the spokes for each aspect place a dot to represent how satisfied you are with this particular aspect of your life. Use a scale of 1-5 (1 being the lowest score and inner ring with 5 the outer ring, representing being most satisfied).
- Join the dots and observe the roundness of your wheel. The ideal is to have a round wheel which represents a balanced life. Now identify the aspects with which you are satisfied and the aspects that need attention.

- To identify your ideal, use another colour and again place a dot along the spokes of each aspect to identify how you want things to be. Join the dots. You now have two patterns – one presenting the current situation and the other your ideal situation.
- Identify the priorities on which you want to work. Identify the three things that would make the biggest difference in your life if they changed. Set goals using the guidelines mentioned above (Holroyd & Field, 2012:118; Williams & Menendez, 2007:180).

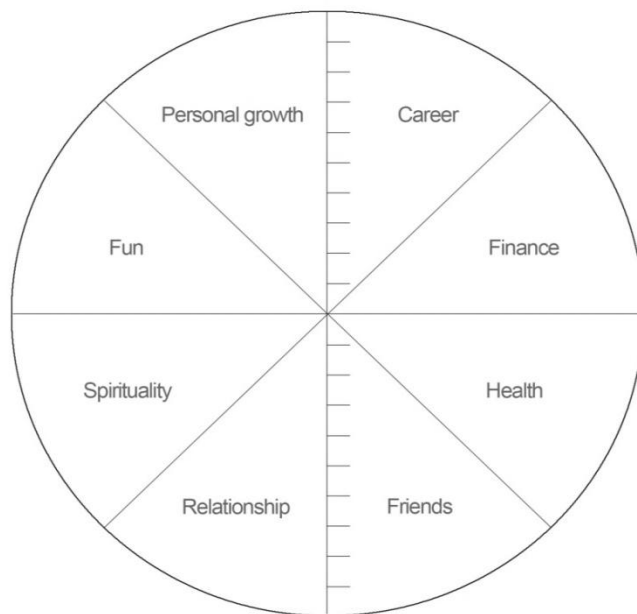


Figure 3.1 My wheel of life



Additional resources

Also look at www.unisa.ac.za/counselling, going to The Directorate: Counselling and Career Development [manage myself; spiritual wellness, intellectual wellness, emotional wellness, physical wellness, occupational wellness, social wellness, environmental wellness and financial wellness] and do the activities linked to each to assist you to set your goals below.

My personal goal 1

Life aspect:

Current rating: Ideal rating:

My goal is:

.....

My personal goal 2

Life aspect:

Current rating: Ideal rating:

My goal is:

.....

.....

My personal goal 3

Life aspect:

Current rating: Ideal rating:

My goal is:

.....

.....

(Adapted from New Insights, 2010:10)

You can identify more than three goals if you want to. As you study, you may want to set academic goals. The next section may assist you to become aware of and to formulate your academic goals.

3.2.2 My academic goals

An academic goal “is the purpose or objective that an individual or group of individuals set out to attain in education” (Ask.Education, n.d.). Academic goals may focus on mastering the content of specific modules, such as “I want to learn more about the developmental

stage of children” or the process of studying, e.g., “I need to learn how to write a well-structured assignment”. Activity 16 focuses on the process of studying.



Activity 16: My academic goals

The following tick list may assist you to identify some academic goals:

Tick “yes” or “no”. Aspects ticked “no” may be academic goals.

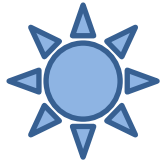
Table 3.1 My academic goals

Academic goal	Yes	No
1. I know how to access and assess information from the library and the Internet.		
2. I can read and understand complex material.		
3. I can summarise material I have read and take notes.		
4. I know how to write an assignment.		
5. I know how to prepare for and write an examination.		
6. I know how to use myUnisa effectively, use discussion groups, blogs etc.		
7. I know how to manage my time.		
8. I can manage stress related to my studies.		

With the above answers in mind, set academic goals especially addressing items where your answer was “no”.

Based on the above, I set the following goals:

1.
2.
3.



Additional resources

The Directorate: Counselling and Career Development have wonderful resources to support students with study skills, including questionnaires, booklets and even podcasts. You can also go online to find the assistance of an e-counsellor.

- See www.unisa.ac.za/counselling and then log on to Manage my Studies. Here you will find the study process questionnaire, assisting you to identify possible problem areas in the way you study. You will also find information on peer collaborative learning, getting started with your studies, starting a study group, study skills and accessing study support. Information on study skills includes booklets and podcasts on academic literacy, learning styles, balancing work and studies, managing isolation, concentration, note making, managing exam stress, exam preparation, reflecting on exam failure and time management.
- Also consult the my Studies @ Unisa brochure (2012) or find it on www.myUnisa.ac.za. Go to *Study*, then *Download Brochures* and select the *my Studies @ Unisa* brochure.
- There are *my Studies* videos available on YouTube; for example, “my Studies @ Unisa (8): Putting your support system in place”; my Studies @ Unisa (4): Where do I begin? My starter pack” and “my Studies @ Unisa (17): Preparing for examination”.

Since you are preparing yourself for a profession, your personal and academic goals will contribute to reaching your professional goals which are all about becoming the social worker you want to be.

3.2.3 My professional goals

Professional goals or career goals are objectives people set to evaluate their progress along their career paths (WiseGEEK, n.d.). The most difficult task is to set goals to develop into a “good” social worker, as has been discussed in Conversation 2, paragraph 2.1.2.3. We need to distinguish between competencies needed to qualify as a social worker and transferable skills needed in the workplace.

3.2.3.1 Competencies to become a good social worker

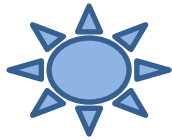
You can follow different routes to set goals in this area. The one is to list the skills or attributes a social worker needs (cf. Conversation 2, paragraph 2.1.2.3), and to tick off which ones you have and which ones you need to work on, or to assess yourself against the 27 outcomes for the BSW degree, or you can use both.

3.2.3.1(a) Outcomes for the degree BSW

The outcomes of all the social work modules are based on some aspects of the 27 outcomes for the degree BSW. These outcomes can provide you with information on the knowledge, skills and values you need to acquire for a BSW degree, and therefore, to formulate your professional goals. Like the personal and academic goals, your professional goals will change from year to year. You may experience that you repeatedly set goals about the same aspect but each time differently or relating to a deeper or richer level.

Also remember that many of the goals you set now and start working on, you will only be able to reach during your fourth level when you start doing practical work within an organisation. At this stage you may be able to acquire knowledge on a specific outcome or observe other social workers perform such a task, but you will only do it during the latter part of your study.

By being aware of the 27 outcomes, you will be able to observe more intentionally or even be able to develop some of the competencies doing voluntary work. Your knowledge of the 27 outcomes will also be useful when you have completed your studies and need to compile a CV or go for a job interview. You will be able to use your knowledge of the 27 outcomes to articulate your competencies.



Additional resources

You can find the outcomes for the SAQA: Bachelor of Social work, SAQA ID: 23994 at www.SAQA.co.za. The outcomes were converted into questionnaire form which you can use as a guideline (adapted from Cournoyer and Stanley [2002:97-115]).



Activity 17: My knowledge and expertise on the 27 outcomes for BSW

The word “expertise” includes skills, competencies, values and attitudes needed to become a social worker. Complete the following questionnaire by ticking the appropriate blocks to identify the extent of your knowledge on the outcomes. At this stage of your studies there are many items of which you may have no or only minimal knowledge but the questionnaire will help you become familiar with the outcomes. Remember that no social worker will have excellent knowledge and expertise of all the outcomes. Use this as an honest guideline to assist you to formulate professional goals.

1. I can develop and maintain professional social work **relationships with client systems** including individuals, families, groups, communities and organisations.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

2. I can assess **social functioning of client systems**, including roles, needs, interactions, strengths, challenges and aspirations.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

3. I can plan and implement appropriate social work **intervention strategies and techniques** at micro level (individual, family and small, informal group), mezzo

level (formal organisations, groups and networks) and macro level (broader levels of community and society as well as international and global spheres).

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

4. I can access and utilise **resources** appropriate to the needs and strengths of client systems. These resources may include physical, financial, technological, material and social resources as well as relevant professionals and other persons.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

5. I can produce and maintain **records** of social work interventions, processes and outcomes which include, for example, situational analyses, assessments, processes, progress and statutory reports as well as correspondence relating to client systems.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

6. I can evaluate **the outcomes** of social work intervention strategies, techniques and processes.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

7. I can terminate social work **intervention**.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

8. I can negotiate and utilise **contracts** during social work intervention.

Minimal	Modest	Satisfactory	Superior	Excellent
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knowledge and expertise	knowledge and expertise	knowledge and expertise	knowledge and expertise	knowledge and expertise
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9. I can demonstrate social work **values** while interacting with human diversity. Human diversity includes race, culture, religion, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, political orientation, age, differential abilities and socio-economic status.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

10. I can appraise and implement the **ethical principles and values** of social work.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

11. I can use, plan and execute **social work research** which includes knowledge and appropriate application of the various research designs and methodologies used.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

12. I can work effectively with social workers and members of intersectoral and **multi-and/or interdisciplinary teams** in social service delivery.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

13. I can identify, select and implement various **techniques, methods and means of raising awareness**, developing critical consciousness about the structural forces of oppression, exclusion and disempowerment, and use such awareness to engage people as change agents.

Minimal	Modest	Satisfactory	Superior	Excellent
---------	--------	--------------	----------	-----------

knowledge and expertise	knowledge and expertise	knowledge and expertise	knowledge and expertise	knowledge and expertise
-------------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

14. I can analyse human behaviour with regard to the **intersections** of race, class, culture, ethnicity, gender, differential abilities and sexual orientation.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

15. I can critically appraise social welfare and social work from a **global, regional** (African) and **national perspective**.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

16. I can critically appraise the current status and position of the **social work profession** within the South African welfare context.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

17. I can apply and uphold the **basic values and principles** enshrined in the Bill of Rights in the SA Constitution in relation to social work service delivery.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

18. I can elucidate national, provincial and local **governance structures**, and the general laws and charters governing social welfare policy and social work services in South Africa. This includes relevant sections like the Non-Profit Organisations Act, the Social Services Professions Act, the National Advisory Council's Act, the Social Assistance Act, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, the Skills Development Act, the Labour Relations Act and agreements, such as the

International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

19. I can demonstrate understanding of how **social policies and legislation on social issues** impact on these issues, and how to use legislation ethically and accountably in order to protect and improve the quality of life of client systems from a social work perspective. Pertinent social issues may include poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, child abuse and neglect, drug abuse, disabilities, domestic violence, prostitution, compulsive gambling, crime and housing.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

20. I can demonstrate understanding of how **social welfare policy and legislation** are developed and influenced.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

21. I can demonstrate understanding of the roles, functions, knowledge and skills for effective social work **supervision and consultation**.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

22. I can demonstrate understanding of roles, functions, principles and characteristics of **management and administration** within social service delivery.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

23. I can formulate a **business plan** for the funding of social services.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

24. I can identify the influence of the relationship between **socio-political** and **economic factors** on social services.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

25. I can demonstrate understanding of the roles and functions of the social worker within relevant **statutory frameworks**.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

26. I can identify how **social security** is used optimally for the benefit of client systems.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

27. I can identify the purpose, functions and principles of social work within the **social development paradigm**.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

It is a good idea to keep useful evidence of your knowledge and expertise that you might include in your CV after completing your degree; e.g., a good assignment showing

knowledge and insight into a specific area or a letter from an organisation stating that you have participated in a project as a volunteer. 12.

In the next section we will list categories of skills needed in most work situations which can assist you to formulate your professional goals.

3.2.3.1(b) Transferable skills

Transferable skills are skills that are required in many occupations, but definitely in social work. Barnard, Deyzel and Makhanya (2011:6) identified the following sets of generic/basic, team work and personal management skills:

Table 3.2 Transferable skills

Generic basic skills			
Communication	Information management	Problem-solving	Numeracy
Read and understand information in different formats (e.g., word, graphs)	Find and gather information using various methods	Assess situations and identify problems	Make estimates and check calculations
Clear writing skills	Organise and synthesise information for others to understand	Identify root causes of the problem	Decide what needs to be measured and how
Speaking so that others can understand		Seek different points of view and integrate them	
Presentation skills		Identify solutions to a problem	
Share information through different mediums (e.g., electronic, written)		Evaluate solutions to make recommendations or decisions	

mail, letter)			
		Implement solutions	
Team-work skills			
Cooperation		Participation in projects an tasks	
Be open-minded: be open to different ideas from others		Plan, design and complete a project from start to finish	
Lead or support when appropriate, motivate a group for higher performance		Work to agreed quality standards	
Accept and provide feedback in a constructive and considerate manner		Select and use appropriate tools and technologies for a task or project	
Contribute by sharing information and expertise		Adapt to changing requirements and information	
Manage and resolve conflict appropriately		Monitor success of a project or task	
Punctual and reliable: not delaying the work of others		Think of ways to improve a project or task	
Personal management skills			
Attitudes and behaviours	Be responsible	Learn continually	Be adaptable
Feel confident	Set goals and priorities, balancing work and personal life	Be willing to learn continually	Keep an open mind
Deal with people, problems and situations with personal integrity, honesty and personal ethics	Plan and manage time	Assess personal strengths and areas for development	Switch from the bigger picture to details
Recognise the good efforts of others	Plan and manage money	Set your own learning goals	Be willing to learn new ways of doing
Show interest, initiative and effort	Manage risk	Identify and access learning	Adjust your way of doing based on

		opportunities	needs of the situation
	Be accountable for your actions	Plan for and achieve your learning goals	Accept feedback and adjust accordingly
	Be socially responsible and contribute to your community		Improvise and experiment in new situations
			Embrace change

When you become aware of social work skills as well as transferable skills which you have already developed, it will enable you to articulate this in your CV when you start applying for a job at the end of your fourth level (cf. Conversation 7 and 8).



Activity 18: Where do the modules of my other subjects fit in?

To stay motivated and see the value of each module (even those you hate) within your bigger journey, ask yourself at the beginning of each level or semester where each one of the modules related to all your subjects fits within the bigger picture of your personal, academic and professional goals; e.g., gaining knowledge about the developmental stages in psychology will help you in your work with children so that you may understand each child within the context of his/her developmental needs.

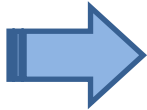


Discussion 2: Discussion with fellow students during e-tutoring session – goal-setting

During a session of one hour, your e-tutor will initiate an online discussion regarding the following questions:

- Why is it important for me to have a vision, and to set academic, personal and professional goals?

- Are my personal goals relevant in this context? How?
- How can I identify my academic goals?
- How can being aware of the 27 outcomes for BSW enrich my learning process?
- Do transferable skills really matter in the world of work?
- Can voluntary work help me to reach my goals? Where can I find opportunities to do voluntary work?



Evaluating the conversation

- Three things that I have learnt from this conversation are
- Things I will do differently as a result of this conversation are



Quotes

When asked “What makes you hopeful?”, one of the fourth-level students, who was part of a focus group in 2010, answered, “I think, for me, one day I will be a professional. One day I will be able to help people in a positive way. I see the light; I know I am going somewhere. I am doing something with my life. I will be a professional person, I become fulfilled; that is everything.”

“Start with an end in mind” (Covey cited by Kumar, 2007:57).

“Life is a journey into the unknown future. Our goals act as a compass, guiding us to better relationships, improved health and wealth, more job satisfaction and greater personal fulfilment; it is the goals we set that define the path to making our dreams come true” (Strong, 2007:122).

C4

Conversation 4: Compiling my plan

Challenges encountered while study social work through UNISA and available resources will be addressed in Conversation 4. In Conversation 4 you will start to operationalise your personal, academic and professional goals by using a personal development plan (PDP).

You will use the PDP to articulate your changing goals and evaluate your progress toward achieving these goals throughout your study journey. At the end of your third level (Conversation 6) you will evaluate your progress and update your PDP. At the end of your fourth level (Conversation 8) you will evaluate your whole study journey. When you enter the workplace, you can again update your PDP to guide your lifelong learning. Challenges encountered while studying social work through UNISA and available resources will be addressed in Conversation 4.

4.1 My personal development plan (PDP)

It is not enough to have a vision and goals. For a vision to become reality, you need a personal development plan (PDP). A PDP can be defined as “a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and achievement, and plan for their personal, educational and career development” (Kumar, 2007:20). A PDP is also referred to as a personal learning plan, an individual learning plan or an individual development plan. It is used within the context of education, coaching and social work (Kumar, 2007:19; Miller & Reyes, 2007:51, 205; Rostron, 2009:45).

A PDP benefits a student, coaching client or social worker by helping them to:

- Become more effective, independent and self-directed students
- Understand how they are learning, and to place their learning within a wider context
- Improve their transferable skills and career management
- Articulate their goals and evaluate their own progress toward achieving success
- Develop a positive attitude towards lifelong learning

- Meet changing job requirements, demonstrate accountability or pursue new career interests (Cournoyer & Stanley, 2002:57; Kumar, 2007:20).

There are many formats for the PDP and you may want to adjust the format I have compiled to suit your own needs. The idea is to write your PDP, and review your progress and goals on a regular basis, at least at the beginning and end of each level.



Assignment 2: Developing my personal development plan (PDP)

Develop your own PDP, using the goals you have identified in the earlier exercises. Each category (personal, academic and professional goals) counts 30 marks; 10 marks are allocated for coherent thinking.

Please put your PDP in your portfolio at the end of your second, third and fourth level. You can use your PDPs to keep track of your growth. Make two copies of your PDP: one with goals you are prepared to share and which you place in your portfolio and a “private” copy which includes the goals you do not want to share with others. 11.

Table 4.1 My personal development plan (PDP)

My personal goals						
Goal (What do I want to achieve?)	Rationale (Why do I want to achieve this?)	Objectives (How can I break my goal down?)	Action Plan (How can I achieve my objectives?)	Timeline (When do I want to achieve my objectives?)	Support (What support or resources do I need?)	Evaluation (How will I know that I have achieved my goal?)
My academic goals						
Goal (What do I want to achieve?)	Rationale (Why do I want to achieve this?)	Objectives (How can I break my goal down?)	Action Plan (How can I achieve my objectives?)	Timeline (When do I want to achieve my objectives?)	Support (What support or resources do I need?)	Evaluation (How will I know that I have achieved my goal?)
My professional goals						
Goal (What do I want to achieve?)	Rationale (Why do I want to achieve this?)	Objectives (How can I break my goal down?)	Action Plan (How can I achieve my objectives?)	Timeline (When do I want to achieve my objectives?)	Support (What support or resources do I need?)	Evaluation (How will I know that I have achieved my goal?)

(Table 4.1 is adapted from Cournoyer and Stanley, 2002:66.)

I am not going to focus on time management, as I have already referred you to valuable resources within UNISA where you can find more information on study skills; however, keep the following in mind (Kumar, 2007:242):

- Keep a simple list in your diary, setting out tasks for a particular day.
- Keep a week planner where you can see your study timetable and/or work week at a glance.
- Develop a year planner, including dates of important personal, study and work events/deadlines.

The following self-audit will assist you to have a closer look at how you plan and manage your work.



Activity 19: Self-audit: planning and managing study and work

This self-audit is a tool to assess how well you plan and manage your work. Complete the self-audit by rating yourself on each item (Kumar, 2007:243).

Rating scale: 4 = very frequently, 3 = frequently, 2 = rarely, 1 = never	
To what extent do I plan and manage my priorities to achieve my goals?	Rating 4-1
I focus on my goals and what I need to do in order to achieve them – in the short-, medium- and longer term.	
I break down complex end goals into shorter, simpler, more manageable tasks and action steps.	
I clarify precisely what type of action I need to take at each stage at an appropriate level of detail to meet critical deadlines.	
I prioritise and set out a plan for managing my task objectives on a daily, weekly and longer basis so that the urgent and important tasks are completed on time.	
I identify and use various sources of information appropriate to my tasks at each stage.	
I organise in advance the help and resources I need to complete my	

tasks.	
I organise my study/work environment systematically.	
I manage routine distractions effectively (e.g., I respond to emails or phone calls promptly).	
I balance and schedule my study, work and leisure activities to make the best use of my time and resources.	
I recognise my progress towards my goals and reward myself for keeping on track with difficult and complex tasks.	
I anticipate barriers to achieving important goals and plan for contingencies.	
I flex priorities according to changing needs and opportunities.	

Items for which you have scored a 4, may indicate a strength – use these strengths in working towards your goals.

4.2 Celebrate success

When you work towards your goals, it is important to recognise success to identify goals or objectives you have achieved. Celebrate it by rewarding yourself or sharing your success with others. You can even develop a small ritual to celebrate; e.g., eating an ice cream or ticking it off a list when you feel you have reached a specific goal.



Activity 20: Celebrating my success

Decide how you want to celebrate when you achieve your personal, academic or professional goals.

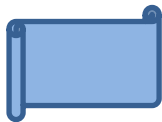
4.3 The “F-word”

What we do not always experience is success or reaching our goals. The F-word . . . No! Not what you think! “Failure” (Greaves, 2004:155). Most of us have learnt that failure is

bad; something we need to hide or ignore. Often we stop taking risks because we are afraid of making a mistake or experience failure; therefore, we limit our choices out of a fear for failing. However, toddlers do not learn to walk by reading a book; they learn by falling, crawling and standing up – again and again. There is a difference between failing and being a failure. We are not failures, even if we fail at times (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House & Sandahl, 2007:93).

Failing is “feedback” – we can learn from every mistake we make. Things do not need to be perfect or right the first time we try it. Sometimes failing takes away our dreams. Korten (in Schenck et al., 2010:84) says we should “embrace error” which means that it is accepted that mistakes will be made and it should not be denied, as mistakes are learning opportunities. Mistakes are seen as sources of data for making adjustments and new plans for the future.

Ask yourself, “What would I do if I knew I couldn’t fail?” You might need a short time to pause, absorb the “bump”, reflect on the feedback and continue your journey (Holroyd & Field, 2012:38, Mumford, 2007:286; Whitworth et al., 2007:94).



Edison and the light bulb

Thomas Edison, the American inventor, is thought of as being one of the most creative and intelligent men in history – yet, the history books tell us that he attended school in Michigan for only three months before being expelled at the age of 12 because his teachers thought he was educationally subnormal. In later years, Edison was to become famous for his saying “Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration.”

This was certainly true for him in his attempts to convert electricity into light, one of his most famous endeavours. He was reputed to have tried and failed over a thousand times to perfect the incandescent electric light bulb. When advised by his colleagues and friends to give up the whole project because it was doomed to fail, he replied with total conviction and some surprise, “Why, I haven’t failed. I’ve just found a thousand ways in which my formula doesn’t work!”

It was as much Edison's positive and tenacious attitude to endeavour and problem-solving as his obvious intelligence and creativity that, in the end, were his most powerful allies (Parkin, 2010:109).

4.4 Identifying and managing possible challenges to success

Many internal or external obstacles could contribute to failure. Internal challenges are things like a belief that you cannot achieve success, or negative thinking patterns such as overgeneralising, polarised thinking, catastrophising and negative, degrading self-talk (Dembo & Seli, 2008:120). Feelings like fear of failure or anxiety can also stand in your way, as can patterns of wasting time and procrastination (Dembo & Seli, 2008:130, 141, 157).

External obstacles are factors such as financial responsibilities (having to pay mortgage or bills); having to look after someone; exposure to a threatening or demanding situation; trying to meet the expectations of others, and social stereotypes, for instance aspects of race or disability (Kumar, 2007:244).



Additional resources

The DRIVER programme

One of the resources you can use to improve your exam performance after failing one or more modules, is the DRIVER programme (DCCD, 2013f). The programme aims to motivate and equip students to be the drivers of their lives or destinies instead of being driven by outside influences. Although the programme has been written specifically to deal with failure during examinations, the same method of thinking and problem-solving can be used for all obstacles in the way of reaching success.

DRIVER stands for:

D – Define the problem

R – Review and reflect on the information available

I – Investigate the problem further and identify possible solutions

V – Verify the most likely solution and develop a project plan

E – Execute the chosen solution

R – Reflect on the outcome and revise the actions, if necessary.

In step 1, “Define the problem”, you are guided with an activity consisting of questions to identify the problem and reflect on the impact of the problem on you and your future.

Step 2: You review the information and identify the root causes of the problem by completing an electronic self-assessment reflecting on your preparation for the examination and writing the examination. Possible areas where causes for failure could be located are identified; e.g., relationships, time management or emotional state on the day of the examination. You can ask for assistance if you cannot make sense of the information.

Step 3: You investigate the possible causes, gather more information, if required, and identify possible solutions. An activity guides you to list identified root causes and possible solutions.

In step 4 you develop a project plan, return to the possible solutions identified in Step 3 and do a planned activity linked to each possible solution. The objective, action, timeline, responsibility, resources, risks and deliverables are listed for each possible solution in the form of a table.

Step 5: You execute your plan.

In step 6 you reflect on your experience with an activity that facilitates reflection on the outcome of the DRIVER process by looking at external and internal causes of success. You are referred to further resources.

You can access this very useful programme by going to www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=28464.



Story: Changing course

A battleship had been at sea on manoeuvres in heavy weather for several days. The captain, who was concerned about the deteriorating conditions, stayed on the bridge so that

he could keep an eye on all the activities. One night, shortly after dark, the lookout on the bridge suddenly shouted, “A light, Captain, bearing on the starboard bow.”

“Is it a steady or moving astern?” the captain asked.

The lookout confirmed that it was steady. It meant that the battleship was apparently on a dangerous collision course with the other ship.

The captain then called to the signalman, “Signal that ship: ‘We are on a collision course. Advise you change course 20 degrees north’.”

Annoyed at the arrogance of the response, the captain said, ‘Send: I am the captain, change course 20 degrees north’.”

“I am a seaman second class”, came the reply, “you had still better change course 20 degrees south.”

By this time, the captain was furious. He shouted, “Send: ‘I am a battleship. Change course 20 degrees north’.”

Back came the flashing light: “I am a lighthouse.”

The captain changed course.

In what ways do you need to be flexible and change course?

4.5 Building resilience

One way of dealing with challenges is to build your resilience. When you fail or go through difficult times, resilience refers to the ability to keep going or stand up after a fall (Driver, 2011:45, 50-51). “The hallmark of successful individuals is that they love learning, they seek challenges, they value effort, and they persist in the face of obstacles” (Dweck, cited by Kumar, 2007:127).

There are various techniques to build resilience of which the following are a few (Driver, 2011:50-51):

- When you feel negative, deliberately try to think more positively; e.g., consider an event a challenge and not a threat.
- Do the “gratitude” exercise. Each day, for a week, write down three things for which you are grateful that day.
- Do the smallest thing you could do to make the biggest difference at the moment.
- Do something that can have the biggest impact on the present situation.



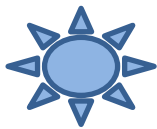
Activity 21: My lifeline

It can be meaningful to look at our life experiences and see how they have influenced our development. When we do this, we often discover our own resilience. Make notes on what you discover about yourself in your journal. The activity is adapted from exercises by Kumar (2007:102-103), and Schwarz and Davidson (2009:193).

A **lifeline** is a way of taking stock of past experiences that may have contributed to your present situation and decisions. It helps you to gain insight into events which have had an impact on your life and to see how you have responded to them.

1. Take a blank piece of paper, turn it horizontally and draw a line from left to right across the middle to represent your life from birth to the present. Mark it from 0 to your current age and section it off in five- or ten-year periods.
2. Chart on this line the significant events of your life at the age they occurred. Mark positive, happy events and factors in black ink above the line and sad or difficult events below the line in red, using the distance from your lifeline to indicate the degree of impact the event has had on you. Examples of events are changes, such as starting school, marrying, leaving home, significant holidays, turning points, achievements and setbacks or meeting significant people.
3. Use the following questions to reflect on your life experiences:
 - Which experiences (inner or outer) led to personal growth and discovery of strengths?
.....
 - Who or what helped or hindered your progress? Which experiences were the most challenging?
.....

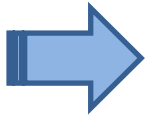
- What is the most noticeable feeling that arises when you review your lifeline?
.....
- What would an objective observer say you have achieved?
.....
- Do you see any patterns in your life experiences that you have not noticed before?
.....
- Is it possible that some experiences may influence your work as a social worker? For example, if you have been raped, it may be very difficult for you to work with a person who has raped somebody else. 6.
.....
- Do you perhaps need counselling to work through some of these experiences?
.....



Additional resources

As further comments you can watch YouTube:

- “Do you have a personal development plan?”
- “The three major obstacles to success”
- “Positive emotions build resilience”.



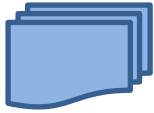
Evaluating the conversation

- Three things that I have learnt from this conversation are
- Things I will do differently as a result of this conversation are



Quotes

One of the social workers interviewed in 2010, highlighted the importance of seeing where each module fits into the bigger picture of preparing for the profession of social worker: “I think from school and how the teachers were teaching things, but also the training [at UNISA]. We sometimes focused on the books and writing exams and collecting modules. If I did one [a module] I couldn’t remember the contents after I had finished the other modules, and it was a bit difficult when we got to level 4 [doing practical work]; then reality struck and it was difficult.”



Introduction 4: An introduction to Conversation 5 and 6 1.

You are now enrolled for one or more third-level Social work modules. This year you will start with workshops and practise counselling skills during role-plays. You will start writing case work, group work and community work reports. 4. Conversation 5, “Committing to action and growth”, and Conversation 6, “Confirming my direction”, will facilitate personal and interpersonal growth, and guide you to evaluate the progress you have made in achieving your personal, academic and professional growth. By doing the assignment presented in Conversation 6 you will discover the wide variety of fields within social work. Based on the self-knowledge you have developed in Conversation 1, you can start reflecting on your niche within social work.

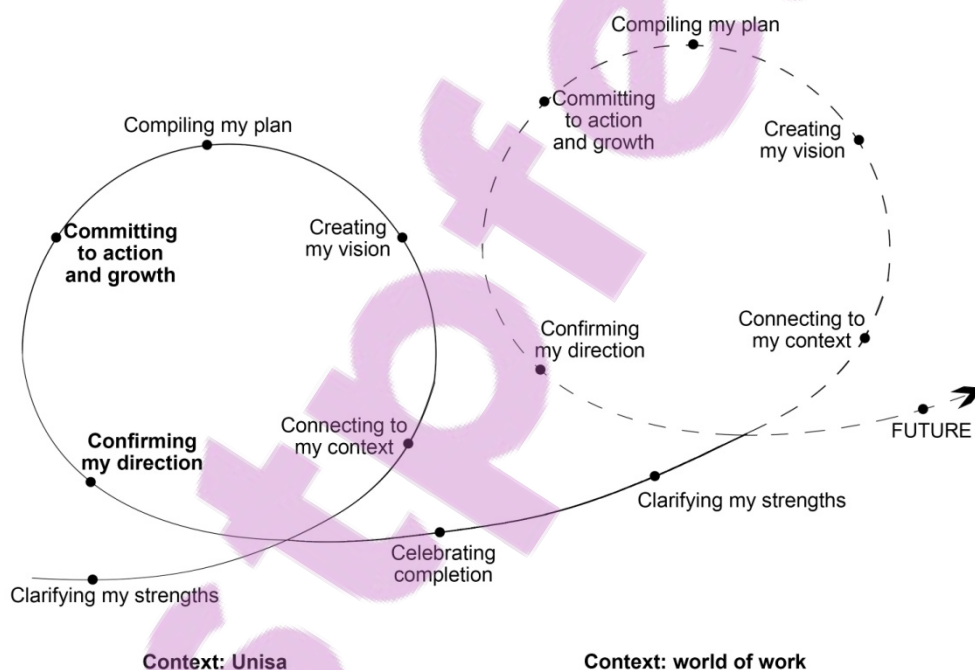


Figure C4 The seven C's and I – Conversation 5 and 6 on your life coaching journey within UNISA

In the life coaching journey, you are slowly moving towards completion of your journey (cf. Figure C4).

C₅

Conversation 5: Committing to action and growth

The objective of Conversation 5 is to facilitate your personal and interpersonal growth. Although the content of the curriculum and learning opportunities presented during workshops will assist you, you need to take responsibility for your own growth.

5.1 Committing to action and growth: my personal and interpersonal growth

Students, especially in an ODL context, have to commit themselves to action and growth, and take responsibility if they want to realise their vision and reach the goals set in the PDP. This ability to self-manage is referred to as autonomy, self-directed learning, situated learning or self-authorship. In Conversation 1 it was referred to as the student being in the driver seat.

This self-coaching programme wants to facilitate the development of your self-authorship as a student. This development from reliance on external authority to relying on one's own capacity takes place on three levels, namely on the epistemological, intrapersonal and interpersonal levels. On an epistemological level, the transition is from the view that knowledge is certain and obtained from authorities, to a view that knowledge is contextual and constructed. On an intrapersonal level students' sense of self changes from a perspective defined primarily by the opinions of others, to one based on self-awareness and choice. On an interpersonal level self-authorship implies a shift from relationships characterised by dependency to ones based on interdependence.

In this conversation we are going to focus on intra- and interpersonal growth (Piper & Mills, 2007:217-235; Van Schoor, 2012b:82).

5.1.1 Intrapersonal development

The “intrapersonal” refers to a person's inner world of resources and strengths that affect self-authorship. On an intrapersonal level, we are going to look at the concepts of “self-

efficacy”, “locus of control” and “attribution” originating from the positive psychology. We will also look at emotional maturity.

5.1.1.1 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a concept developed by Bandura and refers to the belief a person has that he/she can reach a specific goal or outcome. Self-efficacy is not a perceived skill or a motive or a personality drive; nor is it the same as self-esteem (Driver, 2011:104-105). Research has shown that self-efficacy is an important predictor of student motivation and self-management behaviour. Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to choose difficult tasks, expend greater effort, persevere, use more complex study methods and experience less anxiety regarding study activities (Dembo & Seli, 2008:71; Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011:105).

Self-efficacy is specific to a situation. You may have a high self-efficacy for doing an assignment but a low self-efficacy for writing an examination on the same module. Rating your efficacy too high or too low can be detrimental to your success (Dembo & Seli, 2008:71).

Self-efficacy can be enhanced by setting your own goals and monitoring your achievement of these goals. This is what you did in Conversation 4. Self-efficacy can also be enhanced in various ways (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011:105; H&H Publishing Company, n.d.; Kumar, 2007:94-96) by:

- Learning how to use different learning strategies
- Focusing on your inner and outer resources
- Using feedback from others
- Reducing anxiety through reflection on successful outcomes in similar situations in the past
- Imagining yourself behaving effectively in hypothetical situations
- Avoiding to focus on failure and not allowing failure to keep you from trying again
- Listening to the encouragement from other people, especially those whose opinions are valued, and ignoring discouragement from others.

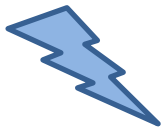


Activity 22: My self-efficacy

Reflect on the content of the self-coaching programme so far. Has it helped you in any way to experience more self-efficacy? If so, in which areas or situations? If not, in which areas or situations do you experience low self-efficacy and how can you improve that?

5.1.1.2 Locus of control

Let us start with an activity, this time, to illustrate to you the “feeling” behind the concept “locus of control”.



Activity 23: Being in control

List three tasks that you do because you decide to do them. Then list three tasks you do because someone else wants you to do it or rewards you for doing them. Recognise how you feel about the different tasks (H&H Publishing Company, n.d.).

The sense of having personal control refers to the belief that we have some control over the events in our lives. This belief is described with the term “locus of control”. Locus of control is understood as being on a continuum from internal to external locus of control. A person with a strong internal locus of control tends to contribute outcomes to their own efforts and not external factors or chance. For example, if you get an unexpected “A” in an examination, you believe it is due to your efforts. An external locus of control is the belief that events in your life are the result of outside factors. From this perspective, you may believe the marker was in a good mood to give you an “A”. A belief in chance is a perception that no one is in charge of outcomes. The “A” just happened (Compton, 2005:48-49).

More recent research refers to “personal control” rather than an internal locus of control, defining it as “the individual’s belief that he or she can behave in ways that maximise good outcomes and/or minimise bad outcomes” (Peterson, cited by Compton, 2005:49). This belief includes that a person can influence events, choose among outcomes, cope with consequences of choices and interpret these consequences (Compton, 2005:49).

5.1.1.3 Attribution

“Attributions are the explanations we give ourselves for why things happen” (Driver, 2011:36). Our explanations for the causes of our past successes or failures will determine how we approach a similar task in future and how long we will persevere. For example, students who attribute their past successes to their own ability or efforts will be more likely to accept similar challenges; they will be less enthusiastic if they thought they had succeeded because of the good mood of the marker (Dembo & Seli, 2008:72).

Driver (2011:37, 38) distinguishes between different attribution styles – attributing an outcome to internal or external factors, or attributing an event to enduring factors, such as social attitudes or temporary factors, such as a short illness.

Table 5.1 Attribution styles

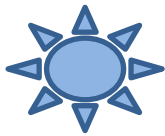
	Internal	External
Enduring	“It went well because I am an excellent presenter.”	“It went well because they like me here.”
	“I didn’t get the job because I am hopeless with interviews.”	“I didn’t get the job because they don’t like women directors.”
Temporary	“It went well because I prepared well.”	“It went well because they asked me things I knew.”
	“I didn’t get the job because I went out the night before and was still hung-over during the interview.”	“I didn’t get the job because they changed the format of the session.”

According to research, internal enduring attributions can facilitate success, while external temporary attributions can contribute to failure (Driver, 2011:38).



Activity 24: My attributions

Think of an examination or an assignment in which you did not perform well. How did you explain your failure? Try to identify the type of attribution you have used. Would any other attributions be valid?



Additional resources

Consult YouTube for more information on attribution:

- “Self-efficacy, motivation and goal revision”
- “Attribution theory”.



An autobiography in five short chapters (Nelson, cited by Williams & Menendez, 2007:283-284)

Note the attribution in the following:

I

I walk down the street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk

I fall in.

I am lost . . . I am helpless.

It isn't my fault.

It takes forever to find my way out.

II

I walk down the same street.
 There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
 I pretend not to see it.
 I fall in again.
 I can't believe I am in the same place.
 But it isn't my fault.
 It still takes a long time to get out.

III

I walk down the same street.
 There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
 I see it is there.
 I still fall in . . . it's a habit . . . but
 My eyes are open.
 I know where I am.
 It is my fault.
 I get out immediately

IV

I walk down the same street.
 There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
 I walk around it.

V

I walk down another street.

5.1.1.4 Emotional maturity

Our personal and interpersonal growth and well-being are linked to emotional maturity or competence – to be a good social worker we need to be emotionally mature. Emotional maturity refers to our capacity to deal with our emotions – our ability to interpret, express and deal with our emotions in relationships (Starr, 2011:228).

Emotional maturity is also referred to as “emotional intelligence”. Like intelligence quotient (IQ), emotional quotient (EQ) can also be measured (Cournoyer & Stanley,

2002:17). Daniel Goleman did a lot of work in the field and developed a model of emotional competence which will be discussed according to the framework provided by Starr (2011:228-251). Information provided by Cournoyer and Stanley (2002:17-19) and Holroyd and Field (2012:12) will be added.

In his model of emotional intelligence, Goleman (in Starr, 2011:233-234) distinguishes between two main areas, namely our ability to relate to ourselves (personal competence) and our ability to relate to others (social competence). Emotional competence can be divided into self-awareness and self-management, while social competence consists of awareness of others and relationship management.

Within the four competencies, specific skills can be identified. A person will be stronger in some competences than in others or show more maturity in some.

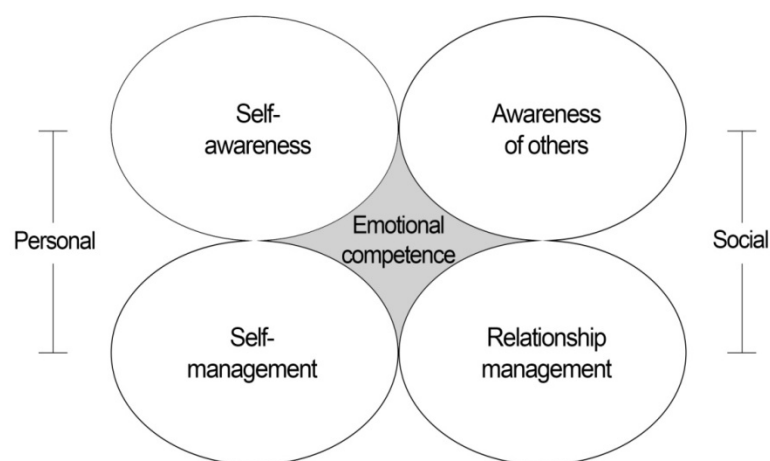


Figure 5.1 The four elements of emotional competence

- **Emotional competence: self-awareness (personal competence)**

Self-awareness, which was also explored in Conversation 1, relates to your ability to understand yourself (Starr, 2011:234). Specific skills related to self-awareness are emotional self-awareness (your ability to read and understand your emotions and the impact they have on your life and others), accurate self-assessment (a realistic evaluation of your strengths and limitations) and self-confidence (a positive sense of self-worth) (Holroyd & Field, 2012:12).



Activity 25: My emotional competence: self-awareness

Hopefully you are quite self-aware after Conversation 1! You can ask yourself the following questions to assess your self-awareness (Starr, 2011:236):

- What are my strengths?
- What is it that people really value me for?
- What do I need to get better at?
- How do people experience me generally?
- How am I different when I am under pressure?
- What three things do I need to start doing or do more of to be more effective?
- What three things could I stop doing that will make me more effective?

You can become more self-aware by completing personality profiles or self-assessments (like we did in Conversation 1), seeking feedback from others (we will do the 360° Feedback in Conversation 6), keeping a learning diary, attending workshops and reading (Starr, 2011:236).

- **Emotional competence: self-management (personal competence)**

Self-management refers to your ability to influence yourself and to choose your responses; e.g., to stay with a difficult decision or do something or refrain from doing something, not because you want to but because of a “greater good” (Starr, 2011:238). Several skills are associated with self-management: self-control (the ability to keep disruptive emotions and impulses under control), trustworthiness (being honest and act with integrity), conscientiousness (the ability to manage yourself and your responsibilities), adaptability (the skill to adjust to changing situations and difficulties), achievement orientation (the drive to meet an internal standard of excellence) and initiative (being ready to use opportunities).



Activity 26: My Emotional competence: self-management

Reflect on the following questions (Starr, 2011:240):

- What were the three things you have identified that you want to do more of to improve your effectiveness?
- What is it going to take for you to do these things more often?
- What were the three things you have identified under the previous questions as things you would like to stop doing?
- What is it going to take for you to stop doing these things?
- If you decided to have these six things as goals, how likely would you be to attain them?

You can improve your self-management by setting specific goals and monitoring your progress and talking to others, such as friends, coaches or mentors, and rewarding your improvements to weigh up costs and benefits of change (Starr, 2011:242).

- **Emotional competence: awareness of others (social competence)**

Awareness of others refers to our ability to observe other people and acknowledge what they are experiencing (Starr, 2011:242). Skills associated with awareness of others are empathy (sensing others' emotions, understanding their perspectives and responding appropriately); developing others (sensing others' developmental needs and bolstering their abilities); service orientation (anticipating and meeting others' needs); leverage diversity (cultivating opportunities through different kinds of people) and political awareness (reading a group's emotional state and power relations) (Cournoyer & Stanley, 2002:19).



Activity 27: My emotional competence: awareness of others

Ask yourself (Starr, 2011:244):

- During conversations, how well are you able to interpret the emotional state of the person to whom you are talking?
- How well can you read people; e.g., gauge them and interpret their intentions?
- During conversations, how much of your attention is focused on the words or content of the discussion?
- How quickly can you gain a true understanding of someone; e.g., what is important to them, their temperament, typical behaviour and attitudes?
- How accurately do you empathise with others; e.g., demonstrating an understanding of how things are for them?

You can develop awareness of others by reflecting on a conversation you have had, even making notes of where you think the person is (you will do a lot of process notes during your third and fourth level!) and/or by thinking about people's values and motivation (Starr, 2011:246).

- **Emotional competence: relationship management (social competence)**

Relationship management builds on the previous three elements. It refers to social abilities and the ability to induce desirable responses from others (Cournoyer & Stanley, 2002:19). Relevant skills are influence (the ability to wield persuasive tactics); communication (skill to listen and send clear messages); conflict management (negotiating and resolving disagreements); leadership (inspiring and leading individuals and groups); change catalyst (initiating and managing change); building bonds (building and maintaining a web of relationships); collaboration (working with others on shared goals) and teamwork (building and maintaining teams) (Cournoyer & Stanley, 2002:19; Holroyd & Field, 2012:12).



Activity 28: My emotional competence: relationship management

Reflect on the following questions (Starr, 2011:248):

- How easily do you build new relationships?
- How good are you at sustaining relationships over time?
- How good are you at managing conflict?
- Can you naturally get other people to support you?
- How good are you at working in teams?
- How good are you at influencing others?
- How good are you at negotiating?

You can improve your relationships with others by reading more about humans and interaction; e.g., negotiating skills or conflict managing. Also ask feedback from others on how they experience you on an individual and group level. You can reflect on two relationships you have had in the past – one good and one where you have experienced difficulties. Write about the relationships, what the nature of each relationship was, how it developed, trying to see the relationship from the other person's perspective. What will you do differently in other relationships? (Starr, 2011:248).

5.1.1.5 360° Feedback

The 360° Feedback is a well-known tool in the world of work and coaching to obtain feedback about a person from the people working and living close to him/her. The coach or a colleague could interview the people chosen to provide feedback and share findings with him/her or the person can provide his chosen significant others to answer questions about him/her. The feedback can, however, be informative but also provoking. It is important to remember that the feedback is only other people's perspectives.

I will provide questions you can use to ask friends, family and/or colleagues to answer. It may be easier to give them the questions and ask them to write the feedback to you. It may be a good idea to discuss the feedback with somebody you trust (Law, Ireland & Hussain, 2007:106-108; Starr, 2011:204-207).



Assignment 3: 360° Feedback

Select four people (with whom you have different kinds of relationships; for example, a friend, your brother or sister, a fellow-student and/or a colleague) to complete the set of questions and the questionnaire as feedback about how they perceive you. Remember, it is only their perceptions – do not feel threatened and fight with the person about how he/she sees you!

This is also an opportunity to experience for yourself how important it is to be non-judgmental and create a safe environment for your client when he/she is vulnerable and shares personal experiences with you. 10.

360° Feedback guideline with open questions (adapted from Starr, 2007:206)

- What is ... (your name) good at?
- What do you value the most about ... (your name)?
- What does ... (your name) need to get better at?
- What does ... (your name) need to do to be successful in his/her current situation?
- What does ... (your name) need to do to become a good social worker?
- Do you have any messages for ... (your name)?

360° Feedback questionnaire (adapted from Law et al., 2007:107)

Key to score: 4 - disagree entirely with the statement, 3 - do not agree with the statement, 2 - agree with the statement, 1 - agree fully with the statement

Characteristic	Score 4-1
1. He/she seems to be at ease with him-/herself.	
2. He/she seems to accept people rather than judge them.	

3. He/she seems to be able to read accurately how people feel.	
4. He/she seems to be in tune with his/her feelings.	
5. He/she seems to be able to manage his/her stress.	
6. He/she seems unperturbed by changing conditions.	
7. He/she seems to be consistently him-/herself with different people and in different situations.	
8. He/she expresses his/her feelings easily but chooses when and how to do so.	
9. He/she seems to keep calm when others are angry.	
10. He/she seems to trust others, but seems to be aware of the risks.	
11. He/she tends to have contingency plans in place to be surer of a good outcome.	
12. He/she seems to have an understanding of cultural differences.	
13. He/she seems to be comfortable with others from different social backgrounds.	
14. He/she seems to be able to motivate others to set inspirational goals.	
15. He/she uses body language effectively to support his/her communication.	
Any other feedback you want to give this person	

- How did you experience the feedback?
- With which aspects of the feedback you have received, do you agree and with which aspects of the feedback you have received do you disagree?
- What are you going to do with the feedback you have received?

Mark allocation

- Summary of feedback on questions (20 marks)
- Summary of feedback on questionnaire (20 marks)
- Your reflection on the feedback (10 marks)

5.1.2 Interpersonal development

Group work skills and working in teams are seen as essential transferable skills. Why is this? In a global economy, people often work in teams to solve complex problems or are expected to communicate with others worldwide via e-mail, Skype or videoconferencing. Employees are expected to be able to communicate clearly with people from diverse backgrounds. By working in teams, ideas are pooled for a better solution, resources are more and used more effectively. It compensates for individual limitations by using others' strengths and it can increase productivity (Kumar, 2007:168, 171).

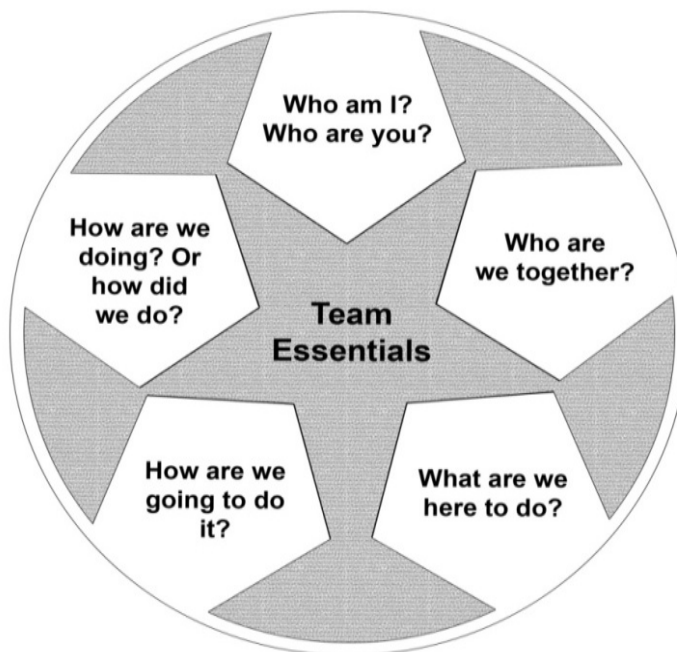


Figure 5.2 Self-evaluation on team work

The figure above provides some essential questions you can ask yourself whether you work effectively in a team (Kumar, 2007:169). You can utilise these questions in any situation where you work in a team to create awareness of the team process and your own role.



Activity 29: Team audit

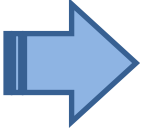
You can use the following self-evaluation to evaluate the extent to which you understand and display effectiveness in working with others by rating each statement on a four-point scale (Kumar, 2007:169):

Table 5.2 Self-evaluation on team work

4 = very frequently, 3 = frequently, 2 = rarely, 1 = never,	
Ideal behaviour in a group or team	Rating 4-1
1. I am aware of my core strengths in contributing to a group project.	
2. I offer support and share information freely with my group/team.	
3. I am aware of the role I tend to adopt in working in a group.	
4. I appreciate and use the different roles and strengths of others in my team.	
5. I take group projects at university seriously.	
6. I know why project teams are important in the workplace.	
7. I understand how collective effort can be more productive than isolated individual efforts.	
8. I am aware of the factors that make groups dysfunctional.	
9. I adapt my ideas and views to suit	

the collective group aims.	
10. I help to create commitment to common goals among group members.	
11. I ask for support or information when I need it.	
12. I adjust to changes in team members, goals, values, as and when necessary.	
13. I accept personal responsibility for my contribution to the team.	
14. I respond to requests from others in a timely and helpful way.	
15. I keep my promises to others in the group.	
16. I admit my limitations and mistakes, and take steps to rectify them.	
17. I challenge dysfunctional behaviours in others; e.g., intolerance and divergent personal agendas.	
18. I involve team members in decisions and plans that affect them.	
19. I encourage others to express their views and listen respectfully.	
20. I challenge unsound or illogical ideas tactfully.	
21. I give credit where it is due.	
22. I facilitate a win-win solution or compromise when conflict arises.	
23. I focus on resolving a problem or addressing an issue rather than blaming others.	

High ratings indicate that you demonstrate frequent behaviour that makes you effective in a team. Low ratings indicate that you will have to work on your team skills. Look for opportunities to practise group or team skills during your studies, at work, during leisure activities or when you do volunteer work (Kumar, 2007:171).



Evaluating the conversation

- Three things that I have learnt from this conversation are
- Things I will do differently as a result of this conversation are

C₆

Conversation 6: Confirming my direction

Conversation 6 is about you, your goals and the context of social work in which you will work in the near future. In Conversation 6, at the end of your third level, you will monitor the progress with your personal, academic and professional development, and update your PDP. You will have the opportunity to reflect on the field/s within social work in which you want to do your practical work during your fourth level and where you want to work after completing your degree by means of a group discussion during a workshop. The importance of your own well-being is also emphasised.

6.1 Confirming my direction

In this conversation, you will review your personal, academic and professional goals, as you may have reached some goals and others may have changed. You will be guided to explore the various fields in social work to discover your field of interest so that you can make an informed decision about where you would like to do your practical work in your fourth level. Having identified the field/s of your preference will enable you to start networking with the view of finding a job upon completing your studies. We also look at the importance of being in touch with the broader context of social work and invest in your own holistic wellness.

6.1.1 Monitoring the progress with my personal, academic and professional development

Setting goals, planning and managing time are all actions with your future in mind. However, at some point you need to look back and monitor your progress, observe and check your actions, and evaluate whether you have reached your goals. In the light of your findings and perhaps changing circumstances, you may decide to adjust your actions or goals, or both (Kumar, 2007:242). You can even review your PDP at the end of each level/semester to assess your progress and update your PDP at the beginning of each level/semester to set new goals, as you will have started with new modules.

Any form of feedback is useful in monitoring your progress. Feedback on an assignment, an examination mark or comments from your lecturer or e-tutor provides useful ways of monitoring your progress. It is, therefore, important not to view an assessment as a threat, but rather as a meaningful source of feedback assisting your growth along your way. “When you learn how to monitor and control your own performance, you become your own coach or mentor. You can practice skills on your own, critique your own performance and make the necessary changes to meet your goals at a high level of success” (Dembo & Seli, 2008:17).



Activity 30: Monitoring my progress

You can use the following table to monitor your progress (adjusted from Drew & Bingham, 2001:258):

Table 6.1 Using my personal development plan (PDP) to monitor my progress

Personal goals						
Objectives reached	Enabling factors	Objectives not reached	Challenges	Further action needed	Resources/Support needed	Timeline
Academic goals						
Objectives reached	Enabling factors	Objectives not reached	Challenges	Further action needed	Resources/Support needed	Timeline
Professional goals						
Objectives reached	Enabling factors	Objectives not reached	Challenges	Further action needed	Resources/Support needed	Timeline

Where you have reached your objectives, enabling factors include your strengths, as discovered during Conversation 1, as well as external resources.

You can also monitor your progress by asking the following questions (Kumar, 2007:9, 243):

- “What is working well and why? How can I do more of this to create even more success?”

- “Where I have not yet reached my goals, what can I do differently to achieve them?”

Are your personal, academic and professional goals still the same or have they changed? They will probably have changed; if so, you need to update your PDP. Table 6.2 below is adapted from Cournoyer and Stanley (2002:60).

Table 6.2 Updating my personal development plan (PDP)

My personal goals						
Goal (What do I want to achieve?)	Rationale (Why do I want to achieve this?)	Objectives (How can I break my goal down?)	Action Plan (How can I achieve my objectives?)	Timeline (When do I want to achieve my objectives?)	Support (What support or resources do I need?)	Evaluation (How will I know that I have achieved my goal?)
My academic goals						
Goal (What do I want to achieve?)	Rationale (Why do I want to achieve this?)	Objectives (How can I break my goal down?)	Action Plan (How can I achieve my objectives?)	Timeline (When do I want to achieve my objectives?)	Support (What support or resources do I need?)	Evaluation (How will I know that I have achieved my goal?)
My professional goals						
Goal (What do I want to achieve?)	Rationale (Why do I want to achieve this?)	Objectives (How can I break my goal down?)	Action Plan (How can I achieve my objectives?)	Timeline (When do I want to achieve my objectives?)	Support (What support or resources do I need?)	Evaluation (How will I know that I have achieved my goal?)

Remember, you can use this format of the PDP or an adjusted version which works for you throughout your life.

6.1.2 Finding my niche within social work

Many people find social work a very attractive career because it offers such a variety of career opportunities in many different types of work environments or fields. As you discovered in the assignment you had done during Conversation 2, social workers work with many different presenting problems, diverse groups of people and within various work environments. Social workers serve prevention and intervention functions in helping people affected by poverty, unemployment, physical, sexual and mental abuse, physical and mental illness, disability, substance abuse, displacement, trauma and conflict. They

work in government, non-governmental organisations, schools, hospitals, churches, communities, companies and private practices (Cournoyer & Stanley, 2002:42).

All of these options can, however, be overwhelming when you have to find a place where the unique you can fit. Looking for your niche starts with having to decide about where you will really make a difference. The self-awareness you have gained in Conversation 1 should assist you with this important decision. In your fourth level, you have to identify an organisation where you can do your practical work. It will be wise to find an organisation working within a field in which you are interested rather than conveniently deciding on an organisation close to where you live.

Various factors may influence your choice of a specific field in social work, such as your strengths, interests, values (as explored during Conversation 1), previous experience and the lifestyle you want. If your choice does not correlate with your expectations, you may become very unhappy and even explore an alternative career.

Even with a good choice, your preferences may change; for example, you may now be single and would choose to do “on-call” emergency work or to travel, but when you have children and family responsibilities you may want to work from an office with a specified number of work hours (Cournoyer & Stanley, 2002:41). When you do choose an organisation to work with after completing your studies, it is also important that the organisation’s priorities and values “fit” with yours (Kumar, 2007:98).



Discussion 3: Discussion with fellow students during a workshop – exploring the field within social work

During a session of an hour, your workshop facilitator will initiate a group discussion regarding the questions listed below. The objective of the discussion is to explore the fields within social work.

Create a big mind map:

- List and describe the various fields within social work; e.g., child and family welfare, health care, school social work, gerontology, drug and alcohol dependency.
- List at least three organisations that work within each field.
- What are the roles of the social worker in each field?
- Which social work method/s is/are mostly used within the field; e.g., case work, group work or community work? 4.
- Does the social worker work in a team? If so, who are the team members?
- In which of the fields do you not want to work in due to values or previous experience, for instance?
- In which of the fields would you want to work? List your preferences.
- Do these options fit with your strengths, interests, values and previous experiences, as explored during Conversation 1? Please give a clear motivation.
- List three organisations in your preferred field that you could approach to do your practical work at your fourth level.



Activity 31: Finding my niche in social work

The following exercise may help you to decide on your niche.

Imagine your ideal work day (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:12)

- What time of day is it?
- Where are you? If travelling, how are you travelling?
- Describe the place where you work.
- Who are the people with whom you come into contact?
- How are you dressed?
- What is the first thing you do at work every day?
- What skills and talents will you use today?
- Will you sit at a desk? What is on the desk?
- What do your immediate surroundings look like?
- Are the surroundings quiet or noisy?



- Is your preferred job predictable or fast-paced?
- Will you be working alone, as part of a team or both?
- What kind of supervisor do you have, if any? Describe this person's managerial style.
- Will you stay in the same location most of your day? Travel? Move around?
- What passions, interests or values form part of your work?
- How are you compensated for your work?
- How do you feel after your work today?
- What do you do after work?
- How do you feel when it is time for the next work day?

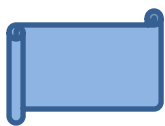
It is easier to visualise yourself within a specific work context if you have enough information about the specific context.



Additional resources

For more information on the various fields in social work, watch the following YouTube videos:

- “This could be you: the many faces of social work”
- “Getting jobs with a social work degree”.



The story of the marbles

The following story is told of a man at a local grocery store. He noticed a small boy, ragged but clean, who he described as hungrily appraising a basket of freshly picked peas. The man was looking over some of the new fresh produce on his way out when he overheard the conversation between the store owner and the ragged boy.

“Hello, Barry, how are you today?”

The hungry boy replied: “Hello, Mr Miller. Fine, thank you. Jus’ admirin’ them peas ... sure look good.”

Each time the little boy would come to the store the conversation would have a similar tone. He would ask the boy how he was doing and how his mom was. She was sick and they just didn't have much at home. Yet, this hungry young boy's attention was always on the fresh produce.

Mr Miller would ask if Barry would like to take some home. Barry would reply, "No, Sir. Got nuthin' to pay for them with."

And Mr Miller would say, "Well, what have you to trade me for some of those peas?"

Barry would say, "All I got is my prize marble here."

"Is that right? Let me see it."

Mr Miller would take a careful look at it and compliment the boy on his prized marble. Mr Miller would say, "Well, only thing is this one is blue and I sort of go for red. Do you have a red one at home?"

The little boy would say not exactly, but he had one sort of like it. Mr Miller would send the boy home with the marble and the peas, and ask him to bring the red marble back when he found it.

Mrs Miller, the store owner's wife, came back to help the man looking at the produce with an ear turned towards the conversation of the store owner and the little boy. With a smile she said, "There are two other boys like him in our community. All three are very poor. Jim (Mr Miller) just loves to bargain with them for peas, apples, tomatoes or whatever. When they come back with red marbles he decides that he doesn't like red marbles and sends them back with a bag of produce to search for another colour."

Years later Mr Miller passed away. The man who had witnessed his kind acts happened to be in town the night of his viewing. The friends he was visiting wanted to attend and the man decided to join them.

As they arrived and waited in line, offering condolences to the family of the generous man, ahead of them in line were three finely dressed men. One was in an army uniform and the other two in nice dark suits with white shirts. All were very professionally looking.

The three young men approached Mrs Miller, standing composed and smiling by her husband's casket. Each of the young men hugged her and then kissed her on the cheek. Her light blue misty eyes followed them one by one, as each young man stopped briefly and placed his one warm hand over the cold pale hand in the casket. Each left the mortuary wiping his eyes in recognisable sorrow.

The man's turn came to meet Mrs Miller. He reminded her of the story she told him long ago about her husband's generous bargaining with the marbles. With her eyes glistening, she took the man's hand and led him to the casket.

"Those three young men who just left were the boys I told you about," she said. "They just told me how they appreciated the things Jim 'traded' with them. Now, at last, when Jim could not change his mind about the colour or size . . . they came to pay their debt."

Mrs Miller said, "We've never had a great deal of the wealth in this world, but right now, Jim would consider himself the richest man in Idaho."

With loving gentleness, she lifted the lifeless fingers of her deceased husband. Resting underneath were three exquisitely shiny red marbles (Digital spark marketing, n.d.: 2-5).

You can make a difference in your own way.

6.1.2.1 Doing volunteer work

In order to find your niche it is very important to do as much volunteer work as you can. In this way you develop skills, get to know the fields of social work and network with social workers in the field. You can volunteer at organisations like Lifeline, Childline, the Hospice Association of South Africa and FAMSA. The Department of Social Development also has a complete list of non-profit organisations in each province available at <http://www.dsd.gov.za/nop/>. You can also visit the GreaterGoodSA website at <http://www.myggsa.co.za> to investigate volunteer opportunities.

When you do volunteer work, make sure to ask for a reference letter or some proof of your volunteer work and the experience you have gained. Keep this in your career management portfolio.

6.2 Awareness of the broader context of social work s.

Although you need to set priorities as to the field/s in which you want to work, you need to be aware of the broader context of social work within South Africa and the world. Remember it is your responsibility to keep in touch with what is happening in the field of social work; as a student, but also after you have qualified.

This requirement is also referred to in the purpose of the BSW degree: “Knowledge and understanding of both the South African and the global welfare context as well as the ability to implement the social development approach in social work services” (SAQA Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work. n.d.). By understanding the wider context you will better understand the demands of employers, understand your role and be better equipped to utilise resources.

How can you become more aware of the wider context of your profession? Here are a few ideas:

- Subscribe to at least one of the South African Social work journals – *Social work/Maatskaplike Werk* or *The Social work Practitioner-Researcher/Die Maatskaplike Werk Navorsers-Praktisyn*.
- Become a member of a national or even international association for social work, such as the National Association of Social workers, South Africa; the Association of South African Social work Institutions (ASASWEI), the International Federation of Social workers (IFSW) and/or the International Association of Schools of Social work (IASSW).
- Read widely – read more than just your prescribed and recommended books.
- Talk to social workers in the field.
- Read and attend courses on relevant legislation, e.g., the Children’s Act, Act No. 38 of 2005; the Domestic Violence Act, Act No. 116 of 1998; the Maintenance Act, Act No. 99 of 1998; the Mental Health Care Act, Act No. 17 of 2002; and the Prevention and Treatment of Substance Abuse Act, Act No. 20 of 1992.
- Read government policies and comments on these Acts, such as the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997); the White Paper on the Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997); and the National Policy Framework and Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Management of Child Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation.
- Visit relevant websites on a regular basis:
<http://www.sacssp.co.za>
<http://www.dsd.gov.za>
<http://www.asaswei.org.za>
<http://www.childwelfare.co.za>
<http://www.famsa.org.za>
<http://www.sancanational.org.za>

<http://www.nicro.org.za>

<http://www.ncppdsa.org.za>

<http://deafsa.co.za>

<http://www.safmh.org.za>

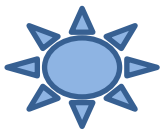
- Read newspapers to follow stories related to social work.

6.3 My own wellbeing

As a social work student or as a social worker you will be continuously listening to and working with the pain and trauma of others. You need to be aware of and nurture your own wellbeing. This can be done by managing your stress, working through your own painful experiences and even by being mindful of the language you use!

6.3.1 Managing my stress

Social work is a stressful career in which you have to empower others to cope with and solve their problems. Stress that is not managed can damage your health.



Additional resources

Read my Studies @ Unisa (2012:44-45) for information on how to recognise mental, emotional, physical and behavioural stress symptoms. The following are a few tips:

- Detect the signs of stress early. Learn how to become aware of the stress levels in your body, for example tension in your neck or shoulders, and decide on a way to de-stress by exercising or going to bed early, for instance.
- Use relaxation techniques like breathing or visualisation techniques.
- Exercise regularly, getting rid of pent-up feelings or tension.
- Eat regular, well-balanced meals; drink enough water and sleep enough.
- Develop hobbies.

Breathing exercises are useful in dealing with stress and can make a huge difference (Williams & Menendez, 2007:305).

- Take four minutes, sit in a quiet place and focus your attention on your breathing. Exhale fully from the deepest place inside your being. Simply be aware of your breathing. When distracting thoughts come, take note of them and simply refocus on your breathing.
- Create a rhythm of inhaling and exhaling. Inhale to the count of eight, hold your breath to the count of four and exhale to the count of eight. Counting focuses your attention on the present (here and now).

6.3.2 The writing ritual

Research has shown that writing about painful experiences can enhance immune response, reduce recovery time from illness and surgery, and promote physical, psychological and social well-being (Pennebaker in O'Hanlon & Bertolino, 2010:80). Pennebaker conducted studies with students, people in nursing homes, arthritis patients, rape victims, new mothers and prisoners. He found that writing down thoughts and feelings about trauma or crises for as little as 15 minutes a day for four or five days has shown to be correlated with an increase in T-cells, reduced anxiety and depression, improved grades as well as increased physical and mental health.

If you have experienced a trauma or are going through some crisis, you may benefit from the following exercise (O'Hanlon & Bertolino, 2010:80):

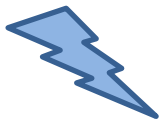
- Try to find a private place to write.
- Try to write at the same time each day.
- Don't worry about spelling or grammar. Just write.
- Write honestly and openly about your deepest feelings and thoughts about the situation in which you find or have found yourself. Make sure that you keep this writing private or you might find yourself censoring them. Perhaps you can even make a ritual of destroying them when you are done.
- Write for a relatively short time like 15 minutes. It is less draining than writing for a long period and ensures that you will make the time.
- Write only for four or five days. It is just a guideline; if you need more time, do so.
- Writing can be powerful, but you can also speak into a recorder or camera.

Writing is a good self-help tool; however, there may be times when we “need our own medicine” and should go for counselling. Social work students often think they should be able to cope on their own because they are in a helping profession but they have a responsibility to look after themselves in order to be able to give their best to their clients.

If you need a counsellor, you can make an appointment to see a counsellor or use an e-counsellor from the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development. You can also ask your lecturer or one of the secretaries at the Department of Social work for a list of counsellors. 6.

6.3.3 Using positive language

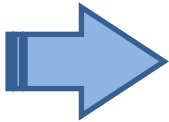
Using positive language energises us and changes the way we view our world.



Activity 32: The power of words

1. Slowly repeat the following words aloud: *sad, helpless, bored, defeated, lonely, doubtful, uninterested.*
2. Read the following statement: *Life is so hard. Nothing seems to go my way. There is no one to turn to or count on. It feels like I have been forgotten. Times are tough. Nothing helps. Things will not get better. In fact, they will probably get worse. There is no hope.*
3. What did you notice about how you felt from reading step 1 and 2? What were your internal sensations? What did you think?
4. Repeat the following words aloud: *exciting, fun, laughter, anticipation, possibility, aliveness, love, peace.*
5. Read the following statement: *When I think about the future I become excited. I'm energised. There is so much I can accomplish. Life is wonderful and there are so many possibilities in the world.*
6. What did you notice about how you felt from reading step 4 and 5? What were your internal sensations? What did you think?

7. What do you notice when you compare your experiences in step 3 and 6? What was the difference?
8. Over the next week, consider how you can make changes to the statements you make about yourself, others and the world around you. Note any differences in how you feel when you change negative statements into positive statements (O'Hanlon & Bertolino, 2010:155).



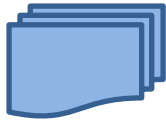
Evaluating the conversation

- Three things that I have learnt from this conversation are
- Things I will do differently as a result of this conversation are



Quotes

- One of the social workers who participated in the 2010 study shared the following:
 “I think I did a lot of voluntary work and I am always involved in some part of something in the community. So, that helped me to gain self-esteem and to persevere for these years that I wanted to finish [my studies].”



Introduction 5: An introduction to Conversation 7 and 8 1.

When you are introduced to Conversation 7, you are on your fourth level. You will be doing case work, group work and/or community work at an organisation as part of your level 4 practical work. You will be working with real clients for the first time.

Conversation 7 and 8, both called *Celebrating Completion*, may come as a shock to you. You may not feel ready to start preparing to enter the world of employment. In Conversation 7 you start preparing your own career portfolio and identifying a support network which may assist you in find employment. Tips on going for an interview are also provided. Conversation 8 facilitates reflection on your progress in your personal, academic and professional development. You also evaluate your journey within UNISA.

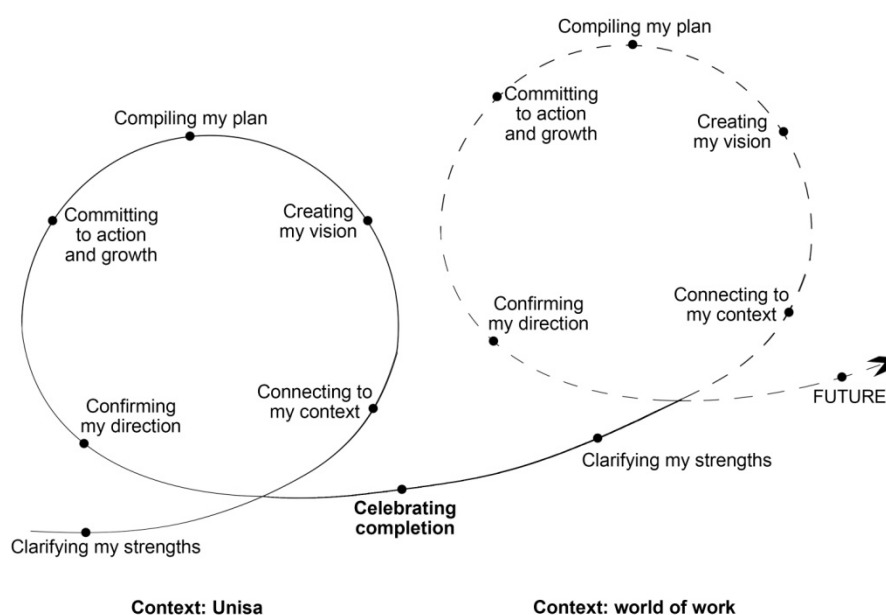


Figure C5 The seven C's and I – Conversation 7 and 8 on your life coaching journey within UNISA

In the life coaching journey, you are completing your first spiral within the context of studying social work at UNISA. We are moving now into the new spiral, indicating the context of working as a social worker (cf. Figure C5 above).

C7

Conversation 7: Celebrating completion

The objective of Conversation 7 is to prepare you for the transition from being a student to becoming a practising social worker. You will develop a career portfolio as an assignment. The activity on drawing your professional support network will hopefully serve as a comfort to you to recognise that you already know many people within the profession of social work who may know of an available job opportunity.

7.1 Celebrating completion: building my career

In the fourth level, you start preparing to complete your studies and secure employment. Although it may feel much too early and you still have a year ahead of you, Conversation 8 will look at how you can start building your career by developing a portfolio, looking for a job and preparing for a job interview.

Previously, a “career” was seen as paid employment. Career is now increasingly being viewed as “a pathway or progress through life or history, involving a sequence of life and work experiences” or “a lifelong process of developing skills and personal qualities that I can transfer between a range of work and project tasks, study and leisure activities” (Kumar, 2007:15). A career is, therefore, not a position; it is a “unique possession of the individual” and includes skills, values and experiences from different life roles and stages (Kumar, 2007:17).

Career development concerns the person in the ever-changing contexts of his/her life. Jarvis (cited by Kumar, 2007:18) outlines the High Five principles of career development learning. These are also the principles of this self-coaching programme:

- Know yourself, believe in yourself and follow your heart.
- Focus on the journey, not the destination.
- You’re not alone. Access your allies and be a good ally.
- Change is constant and brings with it new opportunities.
- Learning is life-long. We are inquisitive by nature and most alive when we are learning.

So far, the self-coaching programme has focused on you as a person, your career choice and your unique goals which span across your whole life. To embark on your career journey, you need to be able to market your unique knowledge, values and skills. Developing a career portfolio which you can use throughout your life can facilitate this process. Before we discuss a career portfolio, it may be meaningful to look at the common phases or processes of a typical social work career.

7.1.1 Phases of a social work career 7.

As mentioned in Conversation 2, Barsky (2006:295-296), and Cournoyer and Stanley (2002:90) identify five common phases that social workers progress through during their careers: pre-professional, academic, early professional, midcareer and late career.

During the pre-professional phase individuals explore various career options, become interested in social work and decide that social work will be a good fit with their own values and goals. They seek admission and enrol at a university of their choice.

During the academic phase the social work student learns broad, generalist social work knowledge skills and starts to develop a social work identity. He/she can select one or more areas of interest. After graduation, he/she begins the process of job search or continues with postgraduate education.

The early professional phase is highlighted by securing employment, and identifying the gaps in knowledge and skills needed in the job situation. The young social worker uses supervision, in-house training and observing others to maintain and improve his/her competence.

The midcareer phase is when individuals gain comfort in generalised social work and may have developed a specialised area of practice. Learning adds depth and breadth to knowledge, values and skills. Social workers start sharing their expertise with others through teaching, sharing at conferences or even writing books.

During the late career phase, social workers may serve as mentors to others in the early and midcareer phases. However, continuous learning is still required.

Remember, these are only common phases, but each person's pathway is unique, and may even be characterised by moving in and out of the social work profession. Throughout all of these phases a career portfolio can contribute to the social worker's growth and successful movement between jobs.

7.1.2 My career portfolio

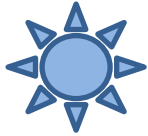
You may ask what a career portfolio is, what goes into it and how you go about compiling one.

7.1.2.1 What is a career portfolio?

A career portfolio is a visual tool that provides a comprehensive view of your skills, evidence of your achievements, efforts and growth as well as a collection of examples of your best work (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:14). Applied specifically to social work, Cournoyer and Stanley (2002:1) define a social work portfolio as a "well-organised and carefully prepared collection of documents related to one's readiness for professional social work practice. The portfolio reflects documentary evidence for an active, self-directed approach to learning and on-going growth as a social work student or practitioner."

You can use a career portfolio to write an updated CV, to prepare for an interview, and to provide evidence during an interview of skills and experience. A career portfolio is valuable, as it highlights your abilities, grasps the attention of the interviewer, creates a more personal atmosphere during an interview, enables you to influence questions asked during the interview and illustrates your growth over time (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:15).

A career portfolio consists of a document centre (e.g., expander file or Google Docs or Dropbox online) where you gather information as well as a smaller presentation file which could be a file with plastic pockets or an online portfolio (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:15).



Additional resources

- You can create an online portfolio by going to Google and searching “online portfolio”. You can also use blogging services, such as Wordpress and Blogger to create your online portfolio.
- Explore further what a career portfolio is by visiting YouTube, “Career portfolio – Dr James” and “How to get a job: how to create a portfolio”.

7.1.2.2 What goes into a career portfolio?

Barnard, Deyzel and Makhanya (2011:16) suggest the following content for a career portfolio:

Table 7.1 Contents of a career portfolio

Statement of originality	A statement claiming that the portfolio is your own work and should be regarded as confidential
Work philosophy	A brief description of your beliefs about yourself and the world of work.
Career goals	Your professional goals for the next two to five years
Skills areas	Information on various skills areas to be provided, e.g., social work knowledge, values and skills as well as transferable skills. Your personal development plan provides the information for this section. Examples from practice, e.g., reports or letters of recommendation that verify your skills in a specific area
Works in progress	A brief list of work, activities, projects or efforts you are in the process of completing
Community service/ voluntary work	Photos of projects completed, programmes and brochures related to community service projects where you have

	been involved, letters of recommendation
Professional membership	Membership cards and letters related to professional organisations
Your CV	A copy of your CV

Cournoyer and Stanley (2002:71) suggest the following as a generic format for a Social work portfolio:

- Title (cover page)
 - Submission letter
 - Inside title page
 - Table of contents
 - Introduction
 - Curriculum Vitae
 - Personal statement
 - Learning products and self-reflective assessments
 - Summary
 - Appendixes (certificates, course syllabi, performance appraisals, letters of reference and recommendations, PDPs, career timeline, learning journal entries).
12. You can include evidence gathered during your study career such as a well-written report, proof of voluntary work done or evidence of experience gained during your practical work in your fourth level.

7.1.2.3 How do I go about compiling a career portfolio?

It is a process to compile a career portfolio (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:17).

Step 1: Complete a career plan. Take time to formulate a work philosophy as well as your career goals (which are part of your PDP) and write them down.

Step 2: Gather information. It is a good idea to develop a habit of documenting experiences and reflecting on them to determine what you feel about the experience, what you have learnt from it and will do differently in similar situations. File all your experiences and samples of work to illustrate your skills and competence in your document centre which is your working portfolio. From there you compile your presentation portfolio, depending on the audience.

Step 3: Update your CV and references. Focus on the skills and competencies necessary for the position for which you apply.

Step 4: Develop criteria for selecting specific items. Ask yourself some of the following questions to facilitate decision-making: What is the purpose of my portfolio? Why am I including this specific item in my presentation portfolio? What skill do I wish to illustrate?

Step 5: Assemble the portfolio and ask a mentor to review your portfolio before an interview. Based on the feedback received, refine your portfolio.

7.1.2.4 My Curriculum Vitae

A Curriculum Vitae is an essential part of your career portfolio. A Curriculum Vitae is a Latin term meaning “course of life”; it is a reflection of your work experience, educational background and skills. It is a tool with which you market yourself. Together with the rest of your career portfolio, it gives you the opportunity to promote “your special brand” (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:25; Mumford, 2007:174).

You cannot compile a CV the day before you need to submit it; it is a process which takes time and consideration. You can also not use the same CV for every position; you need to adapt it for each opportunity (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:25).

Recruiters use CVs to screen applicants from whom they select a few for an interview. Your CV is the first and often last impression you can make. Think carefully about how you introduce yourself to prospective employers – you need to highlight your unique strengths and your fit with the available position. Never lie in a CV. If you are appointed and you may not have some of the skills you said you have, you may be dismissed. Your CV should provide evidence about your educational, work and life experiences as well as knowledge, skills and values you have developed (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:26).

When compiling your CV, keep the following tips in mind:

- Use a consistent layout, e.g., all headings font 14, and the rest of the text normal and size 12.
- Check spelling and grammar.
- Keep it simple – no unnecessary fancy fonts or paper.

- Accentuate the positive; use strong verbs; e.g., managed, organised.
- Make sure it is not too long; e.g., 3-4 pages should be sufficient.
- Use clear headings.
- Make sure that all the detail is updated.

(Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:26; Cournoyer & Stanley, 2002:49)

After compiling your CV, use the following questions to assess its quality (Cournoyer & Stanley, 2002:49):

- Overall appearance: Do you want to read it? What is the first impression?
- Contact information: Are your name, address, phone numbers and e-mail address clearly presented on the front page? Do your name and a sequential page number appear on each page?
- Content: Does the content clearly describe your qualifications, skills, accomplishments and experience? Is the content organised thematically or chronologically according to the style chosen? Is the writing style clear?
- Relevance: Has extraneous information been deleted? Are relevant job-related skills and experiences clearly noted?
- Length: Is it long enough to include everything you want the recruiters to know but short enough to be read easily and completely?



Additional resources

- Visit www.unisa.ac.za/contents/faculties/service_dept/bsccd/my_employability.pdf to view an example of a CV on page 27 of the employability booklet.
- You can also watch YouTube, “How to make a Curriculum Vitae”.

7.1.2.5 Application pack

When you apply in writing for a position, you usually submit an “application pack” consisting of your CV, cover letter and application forms, if applicable.

7.1.2.5(a) Cover letter

A cover letter is a formal letter directed to a potential employer in which you express your interest in employment within their organisation. A good cover letter persuades the reader to look at your CV.

The purpose of the cover letter is to introduce you and to convince the employer to invite you for an interview (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:23). The following should be stated clearly (Cournoyer & Stanley, 2002:55; Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:23):

- The purpose of the letter
- A short summary of your qualifications and accomplishments, and how these aspects match the requirements of the position
- A description of how your unique talents and experience could help meet the needs and goals of the organisation
- The expected outcomes of the letter and CV; e.g., a personal interview or an opportunity to meet the employer
- Close the letter on a positive, confident note, offering to supply more information, if needed.

Print or write your letter in white A4 paper. Write clearly and to the point. If you know the name of the recruiter, end the letter with “Yours sincerely” and your name and signature. If you do not know his/her name, you end with “Yours faithfully” and your name and signature. Always keep a copy (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:23).

7.1.2.5(b) Application form

If applicable, the potential employer will make application forms available to you – usually this should be filled out online. Make sure that you fill in the correct information, corresponding with that on your CV. Read the form in full before completing it and complete all sections, except those marked “for office use”. If you fill it out in writing, write clearly, using a black or blue pen. Check your spelling and grammar. If you have made a mistake, try to obtain another form; if you can’t, neatly correct the mistake neatly. Sign the form, if requested to do so. Remember to include all documents referred to on the form.



Assignment 4: My career portfolio

Although you still have at least a few months of study ahead of you, use this assignment to start compiling a career portfolio. Use Table 8.1 as a guideline and compile a draft career portfolio. The assignment will count 100 marks.

Mark allocation

Statement of originality	2
Work philosophy	5
Career goals	10
Skills areas	20
Works in progress	1
Community service / voluntary work	5
Professional membership	2
Your CV	50

7.1.3 Starting to look for employment

Although we know there is a huge need for social workers, it may still be difficult to find employment. Employers may look for experienced workers. This should not be such a big problem if you have done voluntary work or are willing to do temporary work in the field. It will help if you have additional knowledge; e.g., courses you have done in your field of interest (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:19).

In the present financial climate many welfare organisations are struggling and often use the services of auxiliary workers to save costs. It may be easier to find work or continue working at an organisation if you have been an auxiliary worker in their service.

7.1.3.1 What are employers looking for?

Employers are looking for people with the education and experience fitting the job or position available; employees with a positive attitude to their work; people who are willing to do more than expected; workers who show an interest in continuous improvement, dress and behave appropriately and who are punctual (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:19; Barnard & Deyzel, 2012:12).

But do not despair: You have much to offer – you know yourself; why you fit with the profession; have worked on your PDP through your studies, and can articulate clearly the knowledge and skills you have to offer! If you have researched the organisation and its mission, you can also reason and explain why you can contribute to this specific organisation.

7.1.3.2 How do I go about job-hunting?

The following steps may serve as a guideline:

- Use your career plan to guide your search.
- Know yourself (you do!) and research the labour market, jobs and companies.
- Be confident.
- Use different ways to look for opportunities; e.g., networking, knocking on doors of organisations which interest you, the Internet, newspapers, community notice boards, the Yellow Pages, labour centres of the national Department of Labour, etc.
- Research job opportunities by asking the following questions:
 - What skills are required?
 - What qualifications are required?
 - What characteristics are required?
 - What experience is needed?
 - What kind of position is it (part-time or full-time) and what is the job description?
 - Where is the organisation located?
 - What is the organisation's field of specialisation, its history, its mission, projects in which it is involved, sources of funding?

- Check your online profile (e.g., Facebook, Twitter). Is there any information you do not want employers to see? Remember, most employers will go online to get a first impression of you.
- Make sure your CV and career portfolio is ready.
- Develop good interview skills.
- Develop a job search plan. Plan what you need to do and when. Make sure to follow up on applications.
- Create a job-search folder. This could be part of your career portfolio or a separate file where you keep track of job leads and all applications as well as feedback received. You can also store copies of your CV, ID and information on various employers in this folder.
- Find a mentor and/or a support group to assist you.

(Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:19-22; Barnard & Deyzel, 2012:18)



Activity 33: My support network

Social/personal networking is perhaps one of the most effective ways of finding employment. Networking means that you develop a list of contacts, people you know or have met and ask them for job leads, advice or information about a specific field or to introduce you to somebody who may have other contacts or knows about opportunities (Barnard & Deyzel, 2012:19).

To become aware of your network, complete the diagram below, filling in the names of your network – starting with family, friends, neighbours, fellow-students, co-workers, bosses, social workers you know, people you meet at conferences, workshops (Barnard & Deyzel, 2012:19). Remember to build trust in these relationships; otherwise people may not be willing to refer you. Stay in contact with your network. You can also keep a file with business cards or keep the information on your computer.



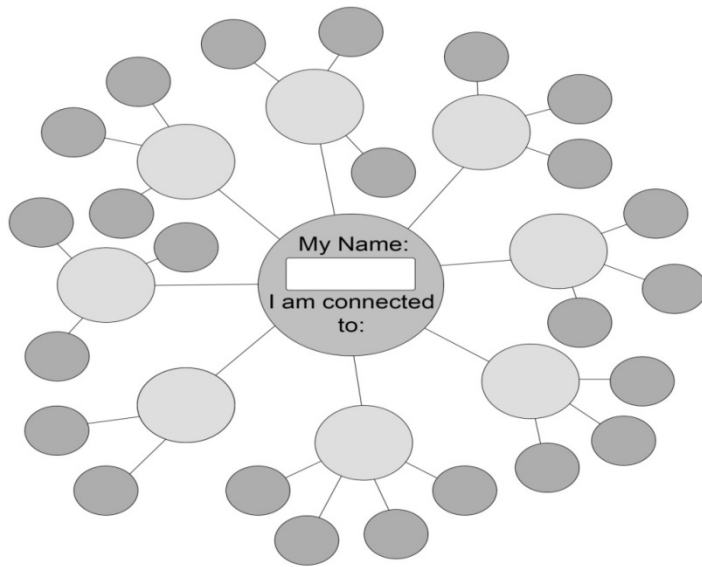
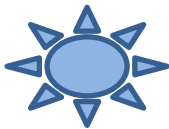


Figure 7.1 My support network



Additional resources

Links to online job sites

Career Junction (<http://www.careerjunction.co.za>)

PNet (<http://www.pnet.co.za>)

IOL Jobs (<http://www.ioljobs.co.za>)

Careers 24 (<http://www.careers24.com>)

Job Mail (<http://www.jobmail.co.za>)

jobs.co.za (<http://www.jobs.co.za>)

GradX.net (<http://www.gradx.net>)

The Directorate: Counselling and Career Development has a facility where employers can recruit UNISA students.

7.1.3.3 The job interview

It is important to prepare well for the interview. You have already researched the organisation and the position for which you apply – be prepared to talk about it and ask questions. The interview is not just about offering or accepting employment. Both parties

need to clarify whether there is a fit between the applicant and the available position. Table 7.2 is adapted from Barnard, Deyzel and Makhanya (2011:30).

Table 7.2 Clarity to be obtained during the interview

For the employer	For you (the applicant)
Requirement: Do you meet the requirements of the position in terms of skills, abilities and competencies?	Organisation: What is the organisation all about?
Skills: What is the level of your interpersonal skills and are you an all-rounded person?	Fit with organisation: Will you fit in with the organisation's culture?
Fit with organisation: Will you fit in with the organisation's culture?	Visualise: Can you picture yourself working for this organisation?
Match of needs: Is there a match between your career development needs, and the demands and priorities of the organisation?	Evidence: Will you have the opportunity to provide examples of the skills and abilities you claim on your CV?

Having an idea of what each party wants from the interview enables you to prepare for the interview.

7.1.3.4 Before and during the interview

Confirm the date, time and venue of the interview, and make sure that you arrive at least 5-10 minutes before the time to relax in the reception room. Greet the secretary politely – the recruiters may observe your entrance as well. Greet the interviewer with a firm handshake, smile and look him/her in the eye. Greet him/her by name and introduce yourself (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:30). Be prepared that there might be a few interviewers – do not feel intimidated and focus on the person who has asked a question.

The following table gives you an idea of what happens during a typical interview (adapted from Barnard, Deyzel and Makhanya [2011:31]):

Table 7.3 Stages of a typical interview

Stage	Why?
• Greeting	
• Getting comfortable	• Ensuring that you are relaxed
• Ice breaker question	• To get you to feel comfortable about the interview
• Background of the organisation	• Gives you an idea of what the organisation does
• An outline of the position	• So that you know something about the position
• Probe your experience	• Establish if your experience matches what is required for the position
• Probe your abilities or competencies	• Establish if you are capable of performing the duties required by the position and if you will cope
• Invite you to ask questions	• To obtain clarity on certain issues
• Wrap up the interview	• Closing and informing you of the next step

Knowing the stages of a typical interview will help you to be more relaxed during the interview.

7.1.3.5 Questions employers may ask

Employers often ask some of the following questions during the interview (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:33; Kumar, 2007:111-112):

- What interests you about this position?
- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your greatest strengths? And weaknesses?
- What do you do with your free time? What are your hobbies?
- What do you want from life?
- Why should I employ you?

- Why did you leave your previous job?
- What motivates you?
- Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years' time?
- Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
- Can you work under pressure?
- Do you have time management skills to meet deadlines?
- Give me an example of a time in your life when you had to make an important decision. How did you go about making the decision?
- How well do you work with people? Do you prefer to work on your own or in teams?
- What do you do when people disagree with you?

It is important to be honest and give practical examples when you answer.

7.1.3.6 Guidelines to follow during an interview

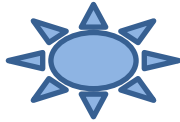
It is important to remember the following during a job interview (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:32):

- Look enthusiastic and energetic.
- Apologise if you are late.
- Wait for the interviewer to lead you to where you should sit.
- Get to the point of the answer immediately.
- Ask the interviewer to clarify a question if you did not understand.
- Sit still and try to relax.
- Keep appropriate eye contact.

Do not engage in the following (Barnard, Deyzel & Makhanya, 2011:32):

- Answering more than only “yes” or “no” to questions
- Mumbling
- Babbling
- Getting personal with the interviewer
- Mentioning politics or religion
- Asking about salary or benefits, unless the interviewer mentions it

- Arguing or losing your temper
- Degrading previous employers
- Slouching in your chair
- Sitting with your elbows on the table or resting your head on your hands
- Speaking too softly or loudly.

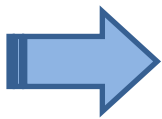


Additional resources

You can further prepare for a job interview by watching the following on YouTube:

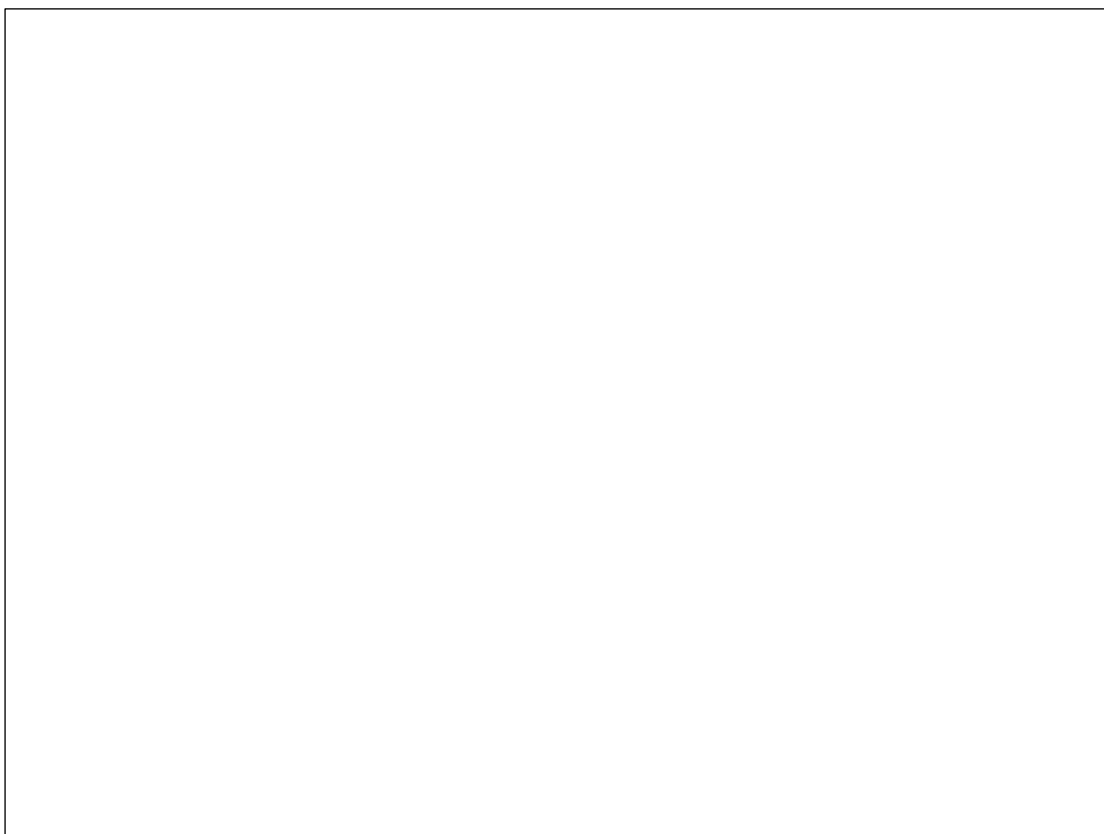
- “Job interview tips – job interview questions and answers”
- “Five mistakes to avoid for job interviews”.

Hopefully this conversation would have energised you to work hard and complete your degree at the end of the year!



Evaluating the conversation

- Three things that I have learnt from this conversation are
- Things I will do differently as a result of this conversation are





Conversation 8: Celebrate completion

You have reached the final phase of your study journey! In Conversation 8 you will evaluate your study journey and the online self-coaching programme, and prepare for the beginning of lifelong learning.

8.1 Celebrating completion: Evaluating my journey within UNISA

The previous conversation was also about celebrating completion, but focused on creating a career portfolio, job hunting and interviewing skills. During this last conversation you will, as a fourth-level student, look back and reflect on your whole study journey, consolidate your learning, celebrate your success and look forward to lifelong learning.

For many students this will be a time for transition – leaving the world of being a student to becoming the social workers they prepared to be. Some students feel prepared for the change, having planned for it, while others react with anxiety and paralysis (Kumar, 2007:227). Hopefully you will be more prepared, having already started with a career portfolio and researched where you would want to go from here.

8.1.1 Evaluating my personal, academic and professional development

In Conversation 5 you have monitored your personal, academic and professional progress against goals set in your PDP. It is suggested to do the activity again to see where you are now at your fourth level. Should there be any goals you have not reached yet, this is acceptable as you can continue to use a PDP to work on your growth as part of lifelong learning. From now on you may choose to only focus on professional goals or maybe also personal goals. However, should you decide to study further, academic goals may still be relevant.



Activity 34: Evaluating the progress with my professional goals related to the 27 outcomes for BSW

A good starting point could be to look at the change in your knowledge and expertise in terms of the 27 outcomes for BSW. As a fourth-level student, you are still growing and may not yet have excellent or superior knowledge and expertise in all outcomes. After completing the following questionnaire, it could be exciting to compare your answers with those of the questionnaire Conversation 3, Activity 18 to see how you have grown. (Remember to articulate your self-knowledge in your career portfolio.)

Once again tick the appropriate block.

1. I can develop and maintain professional social work **relationships with client** systems including individuals, families, groups, communities and organisations.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
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2. I can **assess** the social functioning of client systems, including roles, needs, interactions, strengths, challenges and aspirations.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
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3. I can plan and implement appropriate social work **intervention strategies and techniques** at micro level (individual, family and small, informal group), mezzo level (formal organisations, groups and networks) and macro level (broader levels of community and society as well as international and global spheres).

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
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4. I can access and utilise **resources** appropriate to needs and strengths of client systems. These resources may include physical, financial, technological, material and social as well as relevant professionals and persons.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

5. I can produce and maintain **records** of social work interventions, processes and outcomes which include, for example, situational analyses, assessments, process, progress and statutory reports as well as correspondence relating to client systems.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
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6. I can **evaluate the outcomes** of social work intervention strategies, techniques and processes.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
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7. I can **terminate** social work intervention.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
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8. I can negotiate and utilise **contracts** during social work intervention.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
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9. I can demonstrate social work **values** while interacting with human diversity. Human diversity includes race, culture, religion, ethnicity, language, sexual

orientation, political orientation, age, differential abilities and socio-economic status.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
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10. I can appraise and implement the **ethical principles and values** of social work.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

11. I can use, plan and execute **social work research** which includes knowledge and appropriate application of the various research designs and methodologies used.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

12. I can work effectively with social workers and members of **inter-sectorial and multi- and/or interdisciplinary** teams in social service delivery.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

13. I can identify, select and implement various **techniques, methods and means** of raising awareness, developing critical consciousness about the structural forces of oppression, exclusion and disempowerment, and use such **awareness** to engage people as change agents.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

14. I can analyse human behaviour with regard to the **intersections** of race, class, culture, ethnicity, gender, differential abilities and sexual orientation.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

15. I can critically appraise social welfare and social work from a **global, regional (African) and national perspective.**

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

16. I can critically appraise the current status and position of the **social work profession** within the South African welfare context.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

17. I can apply and uphold the basic values and principles enshrined in the Bill of Rights in the **SA Constitution** in relation to social work service delivery.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

18. I can elucidate national, provincial and local **governance structures**, and the general laws and charters governing social welfare policy and social work services in South Africa. This includes relevant sections like the Non-Profit Organisations Act, the Social Services Professions Act, the National Advisory Council's Act, the Social Assistance Act, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, the Skills Development Act, the Labour Relations Act and agreements such as the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

19. I can demonstrate understanding of how **social policies and legislation** on social issues impact on these issues, and how to use legislation ethically and accountably in order to protect and improve the quality of life of client systems from a social work perspective. Pertinent social issues may include poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, child abuse and neglect, drug abuse, disabilities, domestic violence, prostitution, compulsive gambling, crime and housing.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

20. I can demonstrate understanding of how **social welfare policy and legislation** are developed and influenced.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

21. I can demonstrate understanding of the roles, functions, knowledge and skills for effective social work **supervision and consultation**.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

22. I can demonstrate understanding of roles, functions, principles and characteristics of **management and administration** within social service delivery.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

23. I can formulate a **business plan** for the funding of social services.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

24. I can identify the influence of the relationship between **socio-political** and **economic factors** on social services.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

25. I can demonstrate understanding of the roles and functions of the social worker within relevant **statutory frameworks**.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

26. I can identify how **social security** is used optimally for the benefit of client systems.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

27. I can identify the purpose, functions and principles of social work within the **social development paradigm**.

Minimal knowledge and expertise	Modest knowledge and expertise	Satisfactory knowledge and expertise	Superior knowledge and expertise	Excellent knowledge and expertise
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

In future you will revisit these outcomes in a new context, namely the world of work, as an employed social worker. Whenever the outcomes are revisited it is important to make notes of the specific outcomes you want to work on then.



Activity 35: Evaluating the progress with my personal, academic and professional goals

The 27 outcomes are only one part of your professional goals. Let us evaluate your personal, academic and the rest of your professional goals as well (adjusted from Drew and Bingham, 2001:258).

Table 8.1 Evaluating the progress with my personal, academic and professional goals

Personal goals						
Objectives reached	Enabling factors	Objectives not reached	Challenges	Further action needed	Resources/Support needed	Timeline
Academic goals						
Objectives reached	Enabling factors	Objectives not reached	Challenges	Further action needed	Resources/Support needed	Timeline
Professional goals						
Objectives reached	Enabling factors	Objectives not reached	Challenges	Further action needed	Resources/Support needed	Timeline

Goals I have reached and can celebrate:

.....

.....

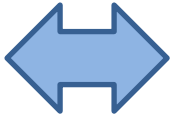
Goals that on which I want to continue working:

.....

.....

8.1.2 Evaluating my journey within UNISA

By now you have nearly completed your journey as a social work student within UNISA, an ODL institution. It may be meaningful to discuss your experiences along your journey with your supervision group.



Discussion 4: Discussion in supervision group – experiences at UNISA

During the 2010 research project final-level students expressed a need for debriefing before leaving UNISA. Looking back, it may be meaningful to note the most important positive experiences as well as experiences that you would have liked to have been different. Your supervisor will facilitate a discussion of an hour, using Table 8.2 and the questions following the table as guidelines.

Table 8.2 My experiences at UNISA

My positive experiences at UNISA	Experiences I would have liked to have been different	What could have made it different?

Is there any “unfinished business” of which you need to take care? How will you do that?

If you need support in “completing” something, whom can you approach?

.....

8.1.3 Evaluating the self-coaching programme

After engaging with the self-coaching programme over a period of four years you are in a position to provide valuable feedback on the programme. Your honest feedback will help

us to determine whether we have reached our goals and how the programme should be adapted in future.



Activity 36: Evaluating my experience of the online self-coaching programme

Please answer the following questions by referring to specific conversations and specific activities:

Table 8.3 Questions about the self-coaching programme

What worked well?	Why did it work well?	What did not work well?	Why did it not work well?	What can be done differently in future?	Why should it be done differently?

Were the goals of the programme, as described in Conversation 1, reached? Tick the appropriate block in the following table:

Table 8.4 Evaluation of the self-coaching programme according to its goals

Score: 3 = the goal was fully met, 2 = the goal was met to some extent, 1 = the goal was not met at all	
Goal	Score 3-1
To enhance your success as a student	

To empower you to take charge of and to determine the direction of your journey	
To facilitate your academic, professional and personal growth	
To develop self-reflection and self-development skills that you can use as part of lifelong learning	
To enjoy your student journey	
To contribute to the curriculum development of the Department of Social work	
To use coaching knowledge and skills to contribute towards your development	

After assessing your own progress and whether the programme has reached its goals, you can reach closure by celebrating success and looking forward to the next phase of your lifelong journey.

8.1.4 Celebrating success

Celebrating success is an important part of the coaching process. “Celebrating recognises successful results. When people celebrate positive results, they generate creative energy and build momentum that helps them sustain growth and change . . . This is because collective honouring of accomplishments and goals provide energy and motivation to carry people through to the next stage of the vision. Celebrating marks the end of one creative cycle and the beginning of a new cycle of accomplishments” (Schwarz & Davidson, 2009:317).

You can celebrate your success with others or on your own. You can celebrate on your own by rewarding yourself by buying a new dress or doing something you really like. Often people feel guilty to be “self-indulgent” or spend money on themselves, but celebrating is important as a way of acknowledging yourself and replenishing your energy (Schwarz & Davidson, 2009:329).



Discussion 5: Discussion in supervision group – celebrating success

You can celebrate your success in a group. It can be meaningful if your supervision group can celebrate the members' accomplishments by, for example, sharing goals reached and dealing with any unfinished business. You can bring some eats or give one another celebration cards. You can read the Solemn Declaration of a Social worker (see below) together and light candles. This can be done in a small group or as a virtual celebration on Facebook.

The Solemn Declaration of a Social worker (SACSSP, 2013)

I, _____, a social worker,
registered at the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP),
registration number: 10_____ in the employ of

_____ and/or in private practice (delete which is not applicable) believe:

- In the uniqueness, responsibility of self-determination and ultimate worth of every human being, irrespective of status, culture, gender, religion, lifestyle and other differences;
- In a society in which all members share the same basic rights, security, opportunities, obligations and social benefits;
- In collective human responsibility for the well-being of society; and
- In the capacity of all people to change, grow and develop under the stimulating influence of other people, through own life experience and through beneficial living conditions.

I therefore solemnly undertake:

- At all times, to conduct myself in such a manner that it will be to the benefit of the profession of social work, its clients, colleagues and social service organisations;
- To serve my fellow human beings and the community, and at all times to strive for the enhancement of their effective functioning;

- To continually strive for the promotion of social justice;
- To always adhere to the ethical code of the profession, as contained in the Social Service Professions Act (Act No. 110 of 1978, as amended); and
- To fully accept the consequences that may result from non-compliance with these provisions.

I declare that I do not have any objection to taking this pledge which I consider to be binding on my conscience, and I commit myself to upholding this declaration.

Signed at _____ (place) on (date) _____

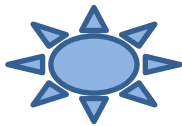
DEPONENT

SUPERVISOR

Endorsed by the SACSSP for completion by registered social workers: www.sacssp.co.za

8.1.5 My graduation

For most students their graduation is the highlight of their journey; proof that they have realised their potential; that they have achieved the success they defined in the beginning of their journey. Savour every moment of this special celebration with family and friends!



Consult www.unisa.ac.za under brochures for *my Link @ Unisa* for information on the phase of “graduating and lifelong learning”. You will find the following (my Link @ Unisa, 2013):

- Information about the graduation process
- What it means to be an alumnus
- How to stay involved with UNISA, such as funding, updating information and events
- How to make contact with the Alumni Directorate
- Lifelong learning, short learning programmes and postgraduate studies
- Convocation.

8.1.6 Postgraduate studies 9.

You could decide to continue your studies by doing a master's degree. This will mean that you will research a specific topic within social work. It is essential to have identified a topic or area within social work about which you are really passionate, as you will spend months or years studying this topic.

The Department of Social work at UNISA currently offers no course-work master's or doctoral programmes. Only master's (full dissertation) and doctoral degrees (theses) by means of research are offered. To be admitted, you need an appropriate bachelor honours degree or an appropriate post-graduate diploma or a 480 credit bachelor's degree with a minimum of 96 credits at NQF Level 8 in social work with an average of 60%.

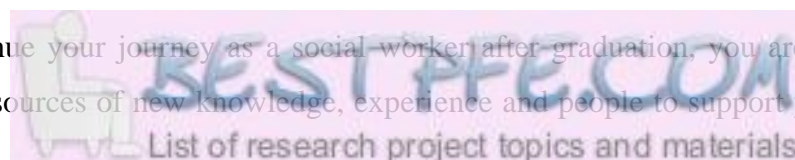
Students must be registered with the SACSSP (in residing in South Africa) and proof of such registration must be provided with application. Applicants residing outside South Africa should provide proof of any social work professional registration or membership in the country of residence.

It is recommended that applicants have a minimum of two years' practical experience as a social worker. For more information you can contact Prof. AH Alpaslan, alpasah@unisa.ac.za or Prof. WJH Roestenburg at roestw@unisa.ac.za.

8.2 Lifelong learning

“Life-long learning for social work refers to the continuous processes associated with the acquisition or construction of information, knowledge, and understanding: the development, adoption, and reconsideration of values and attitudes; and the development of skills and expertise through coursework, experience, observation, conversation, and study from the time someone first explores social work as an educational or professional career choice to the time that person no longer considers him- or herself a social worker” (Cournoyer & Stanley, 2002:4).

When you continue your journey as a social worker after graduation, you are not alone. There are many sources of new knowledge, experience and people to support your further



growth through conferences, workshops, journals, books and, of course, supervision (Barsky, 2006:289-291).

Continual learning is also a requirement of the SACSSP. You need to earn at least 20 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points per year to remain registered.

You could decide to continue your journey of self-development within your new context of employment by following the same process of *The seven C's and I*.

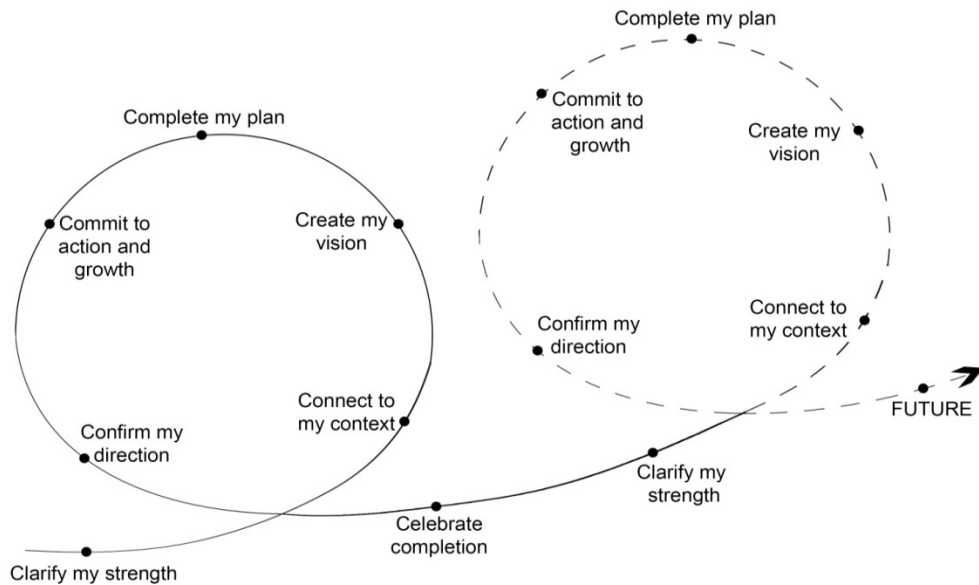


Figure C6 The seven C's and I – Your life coaching journey within the context of employment

The arrow, however, does not disappear at the end of the second cycle, implying that you can take *The seven C's and I* with you and apply it in any context throughout your life. The end of one self-coaching journey is the beginning of the next.

TS Eliot (Brainy Quote, 2013) concluded: “What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.”



A fourth-level student who participated in a focus group concluded: “When I look at the achievements, just in my group, and when I listen to the changes in the community, I am proud. Even to see my project finally happening. It made me think as a social worker. We can go out there and we can make a lot of changes. . .”

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6.3. FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS ON THE LIFE COACHING PROGRAMME FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS WITHIN AN ODL CONTEXT AS PART OF A PILOT STUDY

As described in Chapter 2, paragraph 2.3.3.1, five specialists and 17 students were requested to give feedback on the life coaching programme. Four specialists responded, eight students completed a questionnaire and ten students attended a discussion group.

Participants, both specialists and students, were excited about the programme and were of the opinion that the programme could make a significant contribution to the personal, academic and professional development of social work students studying within an ODL context. They also provided meaningful suggestions which were incorporated into the programme. These suggestions are indicated by a small number in the text of the programme and explained in Chapter 6, paragraph 6.3.2.

6.3.1 Opinions of participants in the pilot study on the life coaching programme

The following statements were quoted from the feedback of specialists:

“’n Uitstekende program . . . ek is sommer lus en studeer maatskaplike werk by UNISA . . . Dit is koste-effektief en sit die leerder regtig op ’n reis van selfontdekking wat so nodig is alvorens ’n mens maatskaplike werk beoefen.”

“The conversations will create lots of awareness for the students. The fact that they are in an ODL context, makes the programme more viable and necessary. I like the issue of continuity with the life coach, as it makes the programme authentic.”

“With little adjustment this can be implemented for the wider UNISA student community too.”

“What really works well in this programme is [added bullets]:

- *Its integration with activities related to the social work practical modules, and the e-tutors and social work supervisors/lecturers who would be involved*
- *The fact that students will be able to get credits for their completion of the programme*

- *Helping the students to think about opportunities once the degree is completed*
- *Linking the programme to the outcomes for the BSW degree*
- *Integration of support services available at the university with the content of the programme.”*

Students gave the following feedback:

“The programme is, for lack of a better word, insightful. It is like a guide/map that equips the student on the journey with relevant resources. What is more amazing is that this guide/map is from the beginning of the student’s journey until the end (the end of studying) but the journey continues (to the workplace) and even further because it is a journey of a lifetime. . . ”

“It opened my eyes. I was unaware of my strengths and capabilities.”

“The conversations are very goal-directed in as far as keeping the student motivated to complete. Furthermore, the conversations are exciting, as the student was anticipating the result.”

“It is a pity that I will miss the opportunity of starting with the programme from first level when it is implemented, as it will be an invaluable tool for those starting their journey as social workers. Anyway, I will go through the programme on my own to learn and develop myself. . . ”

The time it took to work through the programme varied, even on the same level, from 58 minutes to three hours. One fourth-level student reported that it took him 18 hours 30 minutes to work through Conversation 7 and 8. This is an aspect which should be explored further when the programme is piloted in an online format.

Students agreed that the programme reached its goals; instructions given for activities to be completed were clear; activities were meaningful and that students who have only enrolled for Social work as an elective in another qualification can also benefit from this study programme. One student found the questions used within the questionnaire during the pilot study to be unclear.

6.3.2 Suggestions made by participants in the pilot study on the life coaching programme

Although not all of the suggestions made by participants could be implemented, the following changes were incorporated within the support programme:

1. The introduction of the life coaching programme was initially part of Conversation 1. The students suggested that a general introduction should be provided before Conversation 1 and that every conversation should start with an introduction. Where applicable, students should be referred back to the introduction or previous conversations.
2. After a discussion on the order of Conversation 1 and 2, students suggested that the introduction to Conversation 1 and 2 should offer students a choice of where to start. If they were convinced of their choice of study institution and career, they could start with Conversation 1. If not, they should work through Conversation 2 first.
3. The importance of ethics and values should be emphasised in Conversation 2 and 7.
4. Where possible, links should be made to the methods of social work.
5. Participants felt that it was important to stress that becoming aware of and staying in touch with the broader context of social work is the responsibility of the student.
6. There is a possibility that the Department: Counselling and Career Development will only provide e-counselling and no longer face-to-face counselling. The students were of the opinion that it is essential for the social work students to have access to face-to-face counselling in the various regions. The Department of Social Work could provide a list of supervisors or alumina students who could provide counselling to students who needed it.
7. It was suggested during the group discussion that the phases of a social work career should also be mentioned in Conversation 2.
8. Some of the fourth-level students participating in the pilot discussion found the quote of a newly employed social worker who struggled to find employment anxiety-provoking. After the discussion it was decided not to omit it , but to link it to the story of Edison in Conversation 4.
9. A suggestion was made that information about postgraduate research should be included in the programme. Two fourth-level students stressed that they could not

find any relevant information on this topic on the Department's website or elsewhere on the UNISA website.

10. Participants were asked whether the assignment using the 360° Feedback technique would be too threatening. They felt that it was a good learning opportunity for students, but that students could be made aware of the importance of being non-judgmental towards their clients.
11. Participants felt that their personal development plan was personal and should not be included in the portfolios submitted during their third and fourth level. This would, however, limit any input by the workshop facilitator and supervisor. As it is, the student can select what to share and what to keep private.
12. A suggestion was made that students be guided as to how they could include the experience they had gained during their third and fourth level in their CVs. Students should also be made aware earlier during their studies to keep any evidence which might be used in a career portfolio.
13. It was suggested that references only be given at the end of an activity not to distract the students. The researcher is of the opinion that references should be kept as they are in the thesis, but that they could be moved when the written version is converted to an online programme.

General comment: A concern was raised that many students still did not have regular access to the Internet and downloading information from the Internet was costly. It was suggested that an offline site be considered so that students could download and work on the information when offline. Maybe a hard copy should be made available to students who have difficulty accessing the Internet.

6.4 IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

The implementation of the online self-coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context will depend on whether the staff of the Department of Social Work agree to the use of the programme as part of the curriculum. The implementation guidelines are tentative. Should the programme be accepted, staff might have other suggestions, as could other sections within UNISA; e.g., ICT.

The following guidelines have been developed:

- The eight conversations will be spread across the students' four years of study; two conversations per year – the first one in the beginning of the year – about February/March and the second during August/September.
- Should lecturers agree, the programme will be linked to the practical modules SCK1503, SCK2604, SCK3705 and SCK4802. The one assignment per year will count a small percentage towards the year mark of the specific module. This has been built in to motivate students to use the self-coaching programme. The contents of these assignments as well as mark sheets will also be further negotiated with the relevant lecturers. The assignments will be marked by the markers of that specific module under supervision of the lecturer. Students can be reminded by SMS's to attend to their self-coaching programme as well as assignments.
- Students are requested to give feedback on the programme at the end of each conversation as well as in the last conversation. In the online version of the programme, provision will be made for this to be sent to the coordinator or "life coach".
- The "life coach" or coordinator of the programme will be available on e-mail to students at all levels to provide a form of continuity of support. This person can also liaise with the support departments within UNISA and alert students of relevant information or workshops.
- The programme and their part in it will have to be "sold" to e-tutors, third-level workshop facilitators and fourth-level supervisors. The one session per year where this support group provides input will have to be scheduled according to their programs and clear guidelines on their role needs to be provided (cf. table below as an example). SMS notifications can also be sent to remind and motivate e-tutors, facilitators and supervisors.

Table 6.1 Guidelines for e-tutors, facilitators and supervisors (adapted UNISA, 2010:32)

Person involved	Session	Outcomes	Input requested	Time	Additional information
E-tutor	SCK1503 February/ March	To facilitate awareness of the importance of knowing yourself and to share self-knowledge gained	Facilitate online discussion with the following questions: 1. Why is it important for me as a social work student within UNISA to know myself? 2. What should I know about myself? 3. Why are strengths, interests and values important? 4. How can I get to know myself? 5. What have I discovered about myself during Conversation 1?	1 hour	Please consult Conversation 1 as background
E-tutor	SCK2604 February/ March	To facilitate awareness of the relevance of setting goals and doing voluntary work	Facilitate online discussion with the following questions: 1. Why is it important for me to have a vision and set academic, personal and professional goals? 2. Are my personal goals relevant in this context? How? 3. How can I identify my academic goals? 4. How can being aware of the 27 outcomes for BSW enrich my learning process? 5. Do transferable skills really matter in the world of work? 6. Can voluntary work help me to reach my goals?	1 hour	Please consult Conversation 3 as background

			7. Where can I find opportunities to do voluntary work?		
Work-shop facilitator	SCK3705 August/ September	To explore the fields within social work	<p>Create a big mind map with the students:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. List and describe the various fields within social work; e.g., child and family welfare, health care, school social work, gerontology, drug and alcohol dependency. 2. List at least three organisations that work within each field. 3. What are the roles of the social worker in each field? 4. Which social work method/s is/are used most within the field; e.g., case work, group work or community work? 5. Does the social worker work in a team with others? If so, who are the team members? 6. Students need to share with the group members their preferences of fields and where they want to do their practical work, based on their strengths, interests and values. 	1 hour	Please consult Conversation 6 as background
Supervisor	SCK4802 August/ September	To provide the students completing their studies with an opportunity to debrief	Facilitate a discussion on the students' positive experiences as well as experiences they would have wanted to change – cf. Table 8.2 in Conversation 8	1 hour	Please consult Conversation 8 as background

Supervi- sor	SCK4802 August/ September	To celebrate students' success	Celebrate completion – students can decide how they want to do this; e.g., by arranging a “party” or ceremony to read the Declaration of a Social worker.	1 hour	Please consult Conversation 8 as background
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Should the programme be accepted, there will need to be flexibility regarding the implementation, as it will be a new way of working for all involved.

6.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, a self-coaching programme as support for social work students within an ODL context has been presented. The content of the programme is based on the Seven C's and I model (cf. Chapter 6, paragraph

The content of the programme was informed by the needs and suggestions of social work students (as presented in Chapter 3 and 4) as well as functional elements of student support programmes at UNISA, international universities, programmes at social work departments at residential universities as well as coaching programmes described in literature (Chapter 5).

Chapter 7 concludes the study and consists of the summary, conclusions and recommendations made, based on the findings, the research process and the programme developed.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This study has been about the design and development of an online life coaching programme to support social work students within an ODL context. In Chapter 1, the introduction explained the research problem, stated the research questions, the goals and objectives, and gave a description of the planned research methodology. Chapter 2 described how the research methodology was applied, while Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 presented the findings on students' support needs, based on data collected through focus groups and individual interviews with social work students and newly employed social workers. Chapter 5 outlined the functional elements from student support and coaching programmes which could be used in a life coaching programme for social work students. Chapter 6 presented the designed and developed intervention, an online self-coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context.

In this chapter a summary of the previous chapters, conclusions drawn from this research and recommendations will be presented.

7.2 SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSIONS OF CHAPTERS

Summaries and conclusions will be made on each of the previous six chapters, while recommendations in Chapter 7, paragraph 7.8 will be made according to categories.

7.2.1 Summary of Chapter 1: Introduction and general orientation of the study

Compared to other South African universities, the Department of Social Work at the UNISA has the highest intake of social work students but also the lowest throughput (Schenck, 2008:5). As an open and distance learning institution (ODL), UNISA aspires to remove all unnecessary barriers to learning, increase access to education to previously disadvantaged students and provide them with support (De Beer & Bezuidenhout;

2006:64-81UNISA, 2008b:15). Through post-graduate research, the Department of Social Work became aware of the often impeding influence of the personal, social and learning contexts of social work students on their performance, and identified a need for social work-specific student support (Lawlor, 2008; Lintvelt, 2008; Wade, 2009). This required comprehensive research on the specific support needs of social work students within an ODL context.

With the preceding as background, the following central **research question** was formulated:

What would a life coaching programme to support social work students within an ODL context comprise of?

The following sub-questions refined the central research question, namely:

- What are the support needs of social work students within an ODL context to facilitate their “student walk” or journey within UNISA?
- What are the support needs of social work students within an ODL context to successfully prepare them for the social work profession?
- What are the support needs of social work students within an ODL context to grow on a personal level?
- What are the views of social work students of existing support services within an ODL context?
- What are the views of recently graduated and employed social workers of existing support services within an ODL context?
- What are the core elements that should be included in a support programme aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context?
- How should such a support programme, aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context, be implemented?

The central question and sub-questions were thereafter reformulated as goals and task objectives.

7.2.2 Conclusions on Chapter 1: Introduction and general orientation of the study

Based on the information in Chapter 1, the following conclusions can be reached as far as the research problem, research question, goals and objectives of the study are concerned:

- The introduction and problem statement introduced the topic and general purpose of the study with an overview of low throughput of social work students, existing information on social work students' experiences of studying social work within an ODL context, as well as existing student support at UNISA. The gap in knowledge of the specific support needs of social work students within this context and a support programme to address these needs were identified. A literature review indicated the potential contribution of life coaching to fill this gap in student support.
- The research questions suggested the use of a qualitative approach with the purpose of exploring and describing the support needs of social work students, and the use of the IDD model to develop a support programme. The subsequently formulated goal and objectives provided direction to the study. The formulation of the goal changed from developing a life coaching model to developing a life coaching programme. This change was due to an original lack of clarity on the concepts "model" and "programme", as used within the life coaching field.
- Formulating the objectives as task objectives provided a finer focus on the research activities to be executed relating the exploration and description of the academic, professional and personal support needs of social work students, and the development of the support intervention.

7.2.3 Summary of Chapter 2: Application of the research methodology in the development of a life coaching programme as support for social work students within an ODL context

A thick description of the research methodology was presented in Chapter 2. The **qualitative research approach** was used, since the support needs of social work students were not understood well, and which had to be explored and described. Chapter 2

described and illustrated how the characteristics of the qualitative approach manifested in the study. An overview of intervention research and the **Intervention Design and Development (IDD) model** of Rothman and Thomas (1994) were provided. The IDD was adapted and selectively employed, concentrating on Phase 1, 2, 3 (only Step 2) and Phase 4 in order to develop a support programme for this specific context. The use of the IDD is presented in Table 7.1:

Table 7.1 Phases and activities of the IDD model used in the development of a life coaching programme for social work students studying within an ODL context

Phases	Steps/Activities
1. Situation analysis and project planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Identifying clients • Step 2: Gaining entry to and cooperation from settings • Step 3: Involving clients and identifying the concerns of the population • Step 4: Analysing the identified concerns • Step 5: Setting goals and objectives
2. Information gathering and synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Using existing information sources • Step 2: Studying natural examples • Step 3: Identifying the functional elements of successful models
3. Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 2: Specifying the procedural elements of the intervention
4. Early development and pilot testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Developing a prototype • Step 2: Applying design criteria • Step 3: Conducting a pilot test

The use of the IDD model to develop the life coaching programme for social work students can be summarised as follows:

Phase 1 of the IDD model entails **problem analysis and project planning**. All the steps were followed but adapted and used in a changed sequence:

➤ **Phase 1, Step 1: Identifying clients**

The target population included two groups, namely all social work students registered at UNISA in Pretoria at the time of sampling, and all recently graduated and employed social workers who had studied at UNISA and were working in Pretoria at the time of sampling. The researcher used **purposive sampling** to select participants from the two interest groups who met specific criteria. The sample size of the study was determined by data saturation which was reached after interviewing nine focus groups (71 students) and five individual social workers.

➤ **Phase 1, Step 2: Gaining entry and cooperation from settings**

The researcher gained permission to access the sample from the population of **social work students** from the Dean of the College of Human Sciences as well as the Head of the Department of Social Work. During the meetings with potential participants, students and social workers, they were provided with invitation letters and consent forms were signed by them. Willing and interested participants were then provided with an interview guide with questions for discussion during the focus groups and individual interviews.

➤ **Phase 1, Step 3: Involving clients and identifying the concerns of the populations**

The researcher used a qualitative approach with an exploratory and descriptive strategy of inquiry to collect data from social work students in focus groups as well as recently graduated and employed social workers in individual semi-structured interviews on their support needs, how they tried to satisfy these needs as well as their ideas on a life coaching programme for student support. Slightly different interview guides were used for the two groups.

Data was **recorded** by means of digital voice recordings which were transcribed later as well as on forms providing biographical details completed by students and notes made by the researcher on visual stimuli.

➤ **Phase 1, Step 4: Analysing the identified concerns**

The researcher **analysed the transcripts**, using Tesch's (in Creswell, 2009:186) framework for data analysis for qualitative research to ensure a systematic manner of data analysis. **Data verification** was ensured by integrating Guba's model (in Krefting, 1991:214-222) with Yin's (2011:19-20) three objectives for building trustworthiness and credibility.

➤ **Phase 1, Step 5: Setting the goals and objectives for the intervention**

The goal and objectives to design and develop a life coaching programme as support for social work students were set at the commencement of the study when writing the research proposal.

Phase 2, Information gathering and synthesis according to the IDD model of Rothman and Thomas (1994), were executed in three steps:

➤ **Phase 2, Step 1: Using existing information sources**

The researcher did a literature review to gather information for the design of the intervention. This review commenced with the introduction of the study described in the research proposal and Chapter 1. A wide variety of sources, from the fields of ODL, social work, student support and life coaching were consulted, and information synthesised.

➤ **Phase 2, Step 2: Studying natural examples**

No examples of existing life coaching programmes for the support of social work students were found. However, through the research, information was obtained from social work students, and recently graduated and employed social workers on how they had managed to satisfy their support needs. This information had already been accessed through the research mentioned in Phase 1, Step 3. There was, therefore, an overlap between this step and Phase 1, Step 3. The focus here was different; it was on how the participants had coped with their support needs.

➤ **Phase 2, Step 3: Identifying the functional elements**

The researcher gained information from literature, the Internet and personal interviews on functional elements of existing support programmes or models used at ODL institutions abroad, at local residential universities and at UNISA. The researcher also gained

information from applicable social work literature, literature on coaching models, approaches and tools, as well as the existing social work curriculum at UNISA. The features, advantages and limitations of these functional elements were evaluated and those suitable, identified.

Phase 3, Design of the IDD model of Rothman and Thomas (1994:33-35), is divided into two steps, namely 1) designing an observational system and 2) specifying procedural elements of the intervention. During Step 1, a measurement system is developed, which is used in the evaluation of the developed intervention. As the purpose of this study was only to explore and describe the support needs of social work students studying within an ODL context and to develop an intervention programme to fulfil these needs, only Step 2 of Phase 3 was applied in this research study.

➤ **Phase 3, Step 2: Specifying procedural elements of the intervention**

The life coaching programme is an online, self-coaching programme stretching across the four levels of the social work course. The programme consists of eight coaching conversations, one at the beginning and one at the end of each level. It is integrated into the practical modules of the course and is, therefore, compulsory with a written assignment per year to ensure that the students use the programme and available resources within UNISA. On the first and second level, support will be provided by the e-tutors, on the third level by workshop facilitators and on the fourth level by supervisors. A programme coordinator or “life coach” will be available by email throughout the duration of the programme.

Phase 4, Early development and pilot testing, consists of three steps (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:36-37):

➤ **Phase 4, Step 1: Developing a prototype intervention**

The new intervention, the online self-coaching programme for the support of social work students within an ODL context, is presented in Chapter 6.

The goals of the support programme were formulated as follows:

- To enhance student success and throughput
- To facilitate the personal and professional development of students in preparation for the profession of social work

- To empower students to take ownership of their learning process
- For social work students to experience their journey or “student walk” through an ODL institution more positively
- For students to learn self-reflection and self-development skills to be utilised as part of their lifelong learning
- To contribute to the curriculum development of the Department of Social Work
- For coaching knowledge and skills to contribute towards the development of social work students.

- **Phase 4, Step 2: Conducting a pilot test**

A pilot test was done. The programme was reviewed by four specialists from the fields of social work, student support and ten social work students from UNISA. All the reviewers were of the opinion that the support programme could be used effectively. They suggested minor changes that were subsequently made to the self-coaching programme.

- **Phase 4, Step 3: Applying design criteria to the preliminary intervention concept**

Specialists evaluated the support programme according to the following questions used as design criteria:

- What in the programme works well?
- Why does it work well?
- What in the programme does not work well?
- Why does it not work well?

Students evaluated the support programme with the assistance of a questionnaire (cf. Annexure L).

Phase 5, Evaluation and advanced development and **Phase 6, Dissemination** were not implemented in this study. In Chapter 2, the research ethics and the limitations of the study were described.

7.2.4 Conclusions on Chapter 2: Application of the research methodology in the development of a life coaching programme as support for social work students within an ODL context

The researcher has reached the following conclusions as far as the research methodology is concerned:

- The qualitative research approach followed when gathering information with the purpose of exploring and describing new information within a specific context, enabled the researcher to understand the students' support needs on which the development of the new intervention was based.
- Tesch's steps (in Creswell, 2009:186) provided a clear framework according to which data was systematically analysed.
- Data verification could be ensured by integrating Guba's model (in Krefting, 1991:214-222) with Yin's (2011:19-20) three objectives for building trustworthiness and credibility.
- The IDD model of Rothman and Thomas (1994) provided an appropriate strategy for reaching the goal of this study, as it is a clear systematic guideline for the design and development of new interventions.
- The IDD model, although systematic, is not rigid and can be applied flexibly, allowing the researcher to adapt it to real-life situations.
- It also became clear that the implementation of the model is time consuming, labour intensive and complex, demanding a variety of research and intervention skills (Fawcett, Suarez-Balcazar, Balcazar, White, Paine, Blanchard and Embree, 1994:50).

The steps of the model need not be implemented linearly but can link recursively with one another, as described by Gilgun and Sands (2012:350):

- The selected research methods used to operationalise Phase 1, Step 3 (Identifying the concerns of the population) and Phase 2, Step 2 (Studying natural elements),

including purposive sampling, were appropriate as relevant information was obtained on social work students' support needs, as well as ideas on the elements of which a support programme should consist.

- The IDD model of Thomas and Rothman (1994) does not explicitly address the issue of ethical considerations for the development of new interventions.

7.2.5 Summary of Chapter 3: Research findings on the journey of social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution

Two sets of data were obtained from focus groups held with a sample of social work students and individual interviews conducted with a sample of recently graduated and employed social workers.

- **Biographical data of social work students and recently graduated and employed social workers**

The biographical details of participants were depicted in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 in Chapter 3. In total, 71 social work students participated: 18 from level one, 17 from level two, 19 from level three and 17 from level four, and most of the participants were female, between the ages of 20 to 25 years and not working.

All the newly employed social workers who participated were female, while their ages were almost equally distributed between the categories 31-35 years, 36-40 years, 41-45 years and 46-50 years. All of the participants worked at NGOs.

- **A summary of the findings of the research**

Three themes with various sub-themes, categories and sub-categories emerged on the journey of social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution (cf. Chapter 3, Table 3.3). The themes and sub-themes are summarised in the table below:

Table 7.2: A summary of the themes and sub-themes which emerged on the journey of social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution

Theme	Sub-theme
Theme 1: Social work students provided various motivations for studying social work and studying at UNISA as an ODL institution.	Sub-theme 1.1: Social work students' motivation for studying social work (e.g., social work students were passionate about helping people; positive and negative past experiences motivated social work students to study social work)
	Sub-theme 1.2: Social work students' motivation for studying at UNISA as an ODL institution (e.g., social work students were employed; UNISA was more affordable than other universities)
Theme 2: Social work students experienced unsatisfied needs related to their academic, professional and personal development within UNISA as an ODL institution.	Sub-theme 2.1: Social work students experienced unsatisfied needs related to their academic development . Students experienced unsatisfied subsistence needs (e.g., need for affordable and safe housing), understanding needs (e.g., lack of computer, study and writing skills); identity needs; protection needs; affection needs; idleness needs and freedom needs.
	Sub-theme 2.2: Social work students experienced unsatisfied needs related to their professional development . Students experienced unmet subsistence needs, understanding needs (e.g., lack of a driver's licence), identity needs (e.g., a lack of clarity on the role of the social worker within the community), protection needs and transcendence needs.
	Sub-theme 2.3: Social work students experienced unsatisfied needs related to their personal development . The students

	experienced unmet identity needs (e.g., lack in the ability to deal with failure).
Theme 3: Social work students' experiences and suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development	<p>Sub-theme 3.1: Social work students' experiences of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic, professional and personal development. Students experienced satisfiers of their needs within themselves (e.g., self-knowledge and skills). Students experienced satisfiers of their needs within UNISA as a whole (e.g., the library and <i>myUnisa</i>). Students experienced satisfiers of their needs within the Department of Social Work of UNISA (e.g., support from lecturers, supervisors and workshops). Students experienced satisfiers of their needs within the Department: Counselling and Career Development of UNISA (DCCD) (e.g., career guidance and counselling). Students experienced other satisfiers of their needs (e.g., financial resources and support from family).</p>
	<p>Sub-theme 3.2 Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their academic development. Students made suggestions of satisfiers related to their academic development within UNISA as a whole (e.g., during the various stages of their study journey), within the Department of Social Work of UNISA and within the Department: Counselling and Career Development of UNISA.</p>
	<p>Sub-theme 3.3: Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers of their needs related to their professional development. Students made suggestions of satisfiers of their needs within the Department of Social Work of UNISA (e.g., exposure to a wider spectrum of</p>

	theoretical approaches, and not only PCA and a module on statutory work included in the curriculum). Students also referred to satisfiers of their needs provided by other people .
	Sub-theme 3.4: Social work students' suggestions of satisfiers related to their personal development (e.g., counselling and debriefing).

7.2.6 Conclusions on Chapter 3: Research findings on the journey of social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution

In the discussions within Chapter 3, the researcher found it useful to give meaning to the themes which emerged from the data by linking them to the socio-critical model for explaining, predicting and enhancing student success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:177-193).

From the first three themes, the researcher drew the following conclusions regarding the “student walk” or journey of social work students within UNISA:

- Social work students’ choices to study social work as a career and to study at UNISA as an ODL institution were influenced by their historical, geographical, social-economic and cultural backgrounds, circumstances and personal experiences, and are thus situated agents. For many students, social work is a passion and intentional choice; in other instances, studying social work was influenced by outside factors or people. UNISA has been the first choice for most of the participants, but some had no other alternative. It seems that most students are now happy with their choice of career and place of study, and that a fit exists between the student, the choice of career and the place of study. This fit was, however, not always intentional. To achieve success it is essential that the student “fits” with his/her choice of a career and a place of study (Kumar, 2007:108; Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:177-193). A substantial part of a support programme should, therefore, be to enable students to make an informed choice of their career and university, based on sound self-knowledge.

- Social work students' **study, professional and personal experiences** can be classified according to Max-Neef's taxonomy of fundamental human needs, and related poverties and satisfiers. Most of the poverties or unmet needs experienced in the area of **study needs**, were identified as "understanding needs" which are related to education; e.g., needs concerning career guidance and selection, information about UNISA and the "student walk", registration, study material, a lack of communication with UNISA, a lack of facilities, inaccessible lecturers and inadequate feedback from lecturers as well as a lack of support for students at risk for which UNISA, as institutional agent, is responsible (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:184-189).

Some poverties experienced that relate to the need for "understanding" resides in the "student as agent"; e.g., insufficient housing, insufficient finances to cover study costs, a lack of skills, not knowing where to start with their studies and an inability to manage their workload. However, students do not see this as their responsibility but expect these satisfiers to come from UNISA as an institution. To achieve success, the student needs to have knowledge of the institution, courses and course loads, an understanding of assessment expectations, and knowledge of where, when and how to access guidance from lecturers, tutors and other students (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:186). A support programme should, therefore, include the expectations of and the resources provided by the institution.

- The poverties or unmet needs experienced by social work students in the area of **professional needs**, such as writing reports as required by the organisations, using workshop time effectively, developing presentation skills, understanding culture better and for staff to teach consistently, fell into the categories of subsistence, understanding, protection, participation, identity and transcendence. These poverties were experienced in the contexts of the organisations where students did their practical work, the community and social workers within the profession - which can all be seen as "shaping conditions" (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:184). Once again, the students attributed the poverties either to UNISA as institution or to the shaping conditions. To be able to become a good social worker, the student needs to have knowledge of the various contexts in which social work is practiced and the resources which can be accessed to assist clients (SAQA Registered

Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work. n.d.; Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:186). A support programme should, therefore, facilitate exploration of the broader context of the profession.

- The social work students found it very difficult to identify poverties or unmet needs in the area of **personal needs**. They found it difficult to focus on themselves as the “student as agent” (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:184). They were only aware of unsatisfied identity needs, namely their inability to promote their own emotional well-being and their inability to deal with failure. Social work students were not comfortable to reflect on themselves and lacked self-awareness. In order to achieve success and reach a better throughput rate, change must occur in the “intra-personal” and the “inter-personal” domains of the student. The “intra-personal” domain refers to individual attributes required for successful study and includes, amongst others, positive attitudes and beliefs, self-discipline, motivation and confidence. The “inter-personal” domain refers to social interaction students must master for successful study which includes communication and interpersonal skills, cultural and diversity issues, power relations, assertiveness, critical reflection and self-knowledge derived from interaction (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011).

All of the above require self-awareness or self-knowledge. The above corresponds with Subotzky and Prinsloo’s (2011:187-188) view that success is shaped by “attribution”, “locus of control” and “self-efficacy”. To be successful, students need to be responsible for their own journey, self-reliant and proactive (Kumar, 2007:40). They need to recognise themselves as “agents” and not expect UNISA as an institution to take responsibility for them. Important goals of a support programme need to be to empower students to take ownership of their learning process, and to learn self-reflection and self-development skills to be utilised as part of their lifelong learning.

- Participants have knowledge of a wide variety of resources or satisfiers for their needs which they were already utilising or had utilised and they had suggestions on what they could use to improve their journey as students. These resources include
 - satisfiers in themselves, such as self-knowledge, skills, goals and a positive attitude;

- facilities within UNISA like the library, computers, *myUnisa*, tutor classes, positive input from lecturers, facilitators, supervisors, the Bright Site project from the Department of Social Work, resources provided by the Department: Counselling and Career Development, e.g., career guidance and counselling; and
- support from others such as family members, peers and financial resources.

Students' suggestions for satisfiers showed awareness of different satisfiers needed at various points on the timeline of the student walk; e.g., participants suggested that career expos and more information on social work as a career could assist during the initial phase of enquiry, while exposure to more intervention theories, statutory work, ethics and quality input from supervisors could facilitate success during the tuition and assessment phases. In this regard, Subotzky and Prinsloo (2011:186) refer to the importance that "sufficient mutual knowledge" is acquired and translated into effective action at each point of the student walk. In this way, a closer alignment or fit can be achieved between the students and the institution. To be able to complete their student walk successfully, students need to know about existing satisfiers at the various points on the timeline of their student walk. The institution needs to keep in touch with its students' needs in order to provide satisfiers (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011:186). A support programme should, therefore, facilitate the fit between the students and the institution at each point of their student walk.

7.2.7 Summary of Chapter 4: Research findings on the attributes of a good social worker and a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context.

Themes, sub-themes, categories and sub-categories emerged on the social work students' perspectives on the attributes of a good social worker and suggestions as to how these could be developed in students. Various suggestions were also made and implied by social work students on a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context (cf Chapter 4, Table 4.1). These themes and sub-themes are summarised in the table below:

Table 7.3: A summary of the themes and sub-themes which emerged on the attributes of a good social worker and a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context

Theme	Sub-theme
Theme 4: Social work students' perspectives on the attributes of a good social worker and suggestions as to how these can be developed in students	Sub-theme 4.1: Social work students' perspectives on the attributes of a good social worker (e.g., a sound knowledge base and a variety of appropriate skills)
	Sub-theme 4.2: Social work students' suggestions as to how these attributes can be developed in social work students (e.g., through supervision and by students building on who they are)
Theme 5: Social work students made and implied various suggestions on a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context.	Sub-theme 5.1: Social work students made suggestions on the core elements of a life coaching programme (e.g., the development of self-knowledge and that it should link students to available resources).
	Sub-theme 5.2: Social work students made suggestions on the method of delivery of a life coaching programme (e.g., through personal contact and electronic means)
	Sub-theme 5.3: Social work students made suggestions on the manner of presentation of a life coaching programme (e.g., to consolidate on their experiences of their study journey at the end of each level and it should create a safe space for students).

7.2.8 Conclusions on Chapter 4: Research findings on the attributes of a good social worker and a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context

The following conclusions were made on Themes 4 and 5:

- Students perceived a good social worker as somebody who has a sound theoretical and practical knowledge base, good self-knowledge, effective intervention and administrative skills, an attitude of service and knows that lifelong learning is essential. Social work students' perception of a good social worker is encompassed in Subotzky and Prinsloo's (2011:188) broad definition of what success entails for the student and the institution. Social work students saw success as completing their degree, developing the attributes of a good social worker in order to fit the requirements of employers or personal growth, even if they did not complete their degree. A support programme should, therefore, include students' definition of success and individual goals to achieve the success.
- Social work students had a clear idea of what the core elements, method of delivery and manner of presentation of a life coaching programme as support for social work students within an ODL context should be. They saw it as a resource that the institution could provide which students would be responsible to utilise. Participants provided suggestions on what should be included in this resource; e.g., the attributes of a good social worker, tools to create self-knowledge and how it should be delivered to the students, for instance online, through lecturers, tutors, supervisors, peer students or counsellors. They also made suggestions on the process of life coaching which includes the setting of goals, planning and linking with resources.

These suggestions link with the view Subotzky and Prinsloo (2011:177-193) hold that an institutional resource should be aimed at the transformation of students' identities and attributes to obtain success, and to create effective mutual engagement or "fit" between UNISA as the learning institution and the students during the student walk. It is the responsibility of UNISA as an institution to provide support programmes for its students, addressing the specific needs of

groups of students. However, the students remain the “agents” responsible to fully utilise these programmes.

7.2.9 Summary of Chapter 5: Possible functional elements for a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context

The researcher identified possible functional elements from literature and other support programmes. She noted implied guidelines which could be used in the development and presentation of a support programme for social work students. These elements and guidelines were described in Chapter 5 but many of the possible functional elements were not used in the final life coaching programme. Some elements, although not included as content in the programme, informed the thinking about the content, the method of delivery and the manner of presentation of the support programme or were reflected in the recommendations. Functional elements which have been used or adapted for the life coaching programme, the origin of the elements and the place where they have been used in the life coaching programme are summarised in the table below:

Table 7.4 Functional elements used or adapted in the content of the life coaching programme

ORIGIN OF THE ELEMENT	FUNCTIONAL ELEMENT	PLACE IN THE LIFE COACHING PROGRAMME
SOAR model (University of Bedfordshire); Kumar, 2007	Lifeline exercise	Conversation 4
	Self-audit on planning and managing study and work	Conversation 4
	Self-evaluation on team work	Conversation 5
	Personal development plan (setting and evaluating progress)	Conversations 4, 6 and 8
UNISA Corporate Communication and Marketing, my	Questionnaire: Is the UNISA journey for me?	Conversation 2

Choice@Unisa, 2013		
	Questionnaire: Aspects of my personal circumstances that affect my success at UNISA	Conversation 2
UNISA Corporate Communication and Marketing, my Studies @ Unisa, 2013	Lists of available support resources within the broader UNISA	Conversations 2, 3 and 6
UNISA Corporate Communication and Marketing, my Link @ Unisa, 2013	Information on graduation	Conversation 4
UNISA: Directorate: Counselling and Career Development (DCCD) website	Lists of available resources provided by DCCD within UNISA	Conversation 3
UNISA: Directorate: Counselling and Career Development (DCCD, 2013g)	DRIVER programme	Conversation 4
“psychology@Unisa” (Barnard & Deyzel, 2012)	My support network	Conversations 2 and 7
	Alternative career options	Conversation 2
“My employability skills”: Barnard, Deyzel and Makhanya (2011)	Transferable skills	Conversation 3
	Finding my niche	Conversation 6
	Guidelines on development of a career portfolio, job searching and job interviews	Conversation 7
Life coaching (Rostron, 2009a; Starr, 2011)	EQ Coaching model	Conversation 5
Appreciative coaching (Whitney et al. 2010; Barrett & Fry, 2005)	Four stages of appreciative inquiry adapted to develop The Seven C’s and I model	Conversations 1-8
Positive psychology (O’Hanlon & Bertolino, 2012)	My signature strengths	Conversation 1

Positive psychology (Driver, 2011)	At my best activity	Conversation 1
Life coaching (Holroyd & Field, 2012; Starr, 2011)	360° Feedback	Conversation 5
Life coaching (Strong, 2007)	Value exercise	Conversation 1
Life coaching (New Insights, 2010)	Letter from the future	Conversation 3
Life coaching (Holroyd & Field, 2012)	Wheel of life	Conversation 3
Positive psychology (O'Hanlon & Bertolino, 2012)	Writing ritual	Conversation 6
Successful social work education: a student's guide (Barsky, 2006)	Questionnaire; motivation to study social work	Conversation 2
SAQA Registered Qualification ID 23994 Bachelor of Social Work. n.d.	27 outcomes of BSW	Conversations 4, 6 and 8
SACSPP (n.d.)	The solemn declaration of a social worker	Conversation 8

The exploration of possible functional elements also provided valuable general guidelines on the method of delivery and the manner of presentation (cf. Chapter 5):

- Students need to understand the coaching process and buy into it to ensure motivation.
- Role players in the life coaching programme, such as supervisors, tutors and workshop facilitators have to be prepared for their input by sending SMS's or e-mails.
- After each conversation students need to be given enough time to internalise what they have learned.
- Opportunities for students to provide feedback on their growth and the effectiveness of the coaching process need to be built into the programme. Reflection is needed at various points of the journey.
- Thorough “completion” is important – students need to leave feeling supported.
- When using an online format for a support programme, technical difficulties should be prevented and sorted out.

- An online programme can facilitate access to student support resources by selecting and linking them to specific themes and year levels.
- The websites and available resources within UNISA are constantly changing. Should the life coaching programme be implemented by the Department of Social Work, it will have to be updated on a regular basis.

7.2.10 Conclusions on Chapter 5: Possible functional elements for a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context

The following conclusions were made on the possible functional elements of the life coaching programme:

- No evidence was found of any life coaching model or programme used to support social work students either within South Africa or abroad. However, one article was found, proposing the use of coaching within social work field practice (Perrault & Coleman, 2004:47-64). The focus here was on using coaching principles in educational supervision as part of the practical work of social work students.
- The SOAR model for student support (Kumar, 2007) provided a valuable framework for support of students within higher education, but needed to be adjusted for social work. Many elements of the SOAR programme could be used in the life coaching programme. Life coaching provided a valuable structure for the overall support process and the coaching conversations guiding the contact with the students (Starr, 2011). Coaching questions, models and tools could be used in the support programme to facilitate intra- and interpersonal growth.
- The principles of positive psychology and the appreciative inquiry approach fitted well with the student success model of Subotzky and Prinsloo (2011) since all of them focused on individual “agency” or responsibility, using the same concepts, such as “attribution”, “locus of control” and self-efficacy”. These principles also linked well with the underlying assumptions of life coaching, respecting the unique individual with his/her strengths.

- There are many valuable resources in UNISA which students do not use, either because they are not aware of them or because they choose to spend their time on compulsory activities. To be effective and serve as a link between the social work student and the many resources within UNISA as an ODL institution, a support programme should preferably contain some compulsory elements.
- Other social work departments at residential universities underlined the importance of life skills modules, organised peer involvement between students at different levels, and a strong working relationship between the social work departments and the student support divisions of their respective universities.

7.2.11 Summary of Chapter 6: A self-coaching programme as support for social work students within an ODL context

The goals of the support programme, as presented in Chapter 6, were based on the significance and proposed contribution of the study, as discussed in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.2:

- To enhance student success and throughput
- To facilitate the personal and professional development of students in preparation for the profession of social work
- To empower students to take ownership of their learning process
- To enable social work students to experience their journey or “student walk” through an ODL institution more positively
- To provide an opportunity for students to learn self-reflection and self-development skills to be utilised as part of their lifelong learning
- To contribute to the curriculum development of the Department of Social Work
- To use coaching knowledge and skills to contribute towards the development of social work students.

The self-coaching support programme was developed and structured around seven actions towards growth, namely *clarifying my strengths, connecting to my context, clarifying my vision, completing my plan, committing to action and growth, confirming my direction* and

celebrating completion depicted in the Seven C's and I model presented in Chapter 6 (cf. Figure 6.1).

The self-coaching programme is divided into eight conversations, two conversations per level, based on the seven actions for growth with the following content:

- Conversation 1: *Clarifying my strengths*. Conversation 1 (to be completed at the beginning of level one) assists the students in identifying past positive emotions and achievements, and using these to articulate their strengths.
- Conversation 2: *Connecting to my context*. Conversation 2 (to be completed at the end of level one) is about opportunity awareness, discovering social work as a profession and discovering the resources within UNISA. It enables the students to clarify for themselves whether they fit within an ODL institution and social work as a profession.
- Conversation 3: *Clarifying my vision*. During Conversation 3 (to be completed at the beginning of level two) students create their vision and clarify their academic, personal and professional goals.
- Conversation 4: *Completing my plan*. In Conversation 4 (to be completed at the end of level two) students plan actions to achieve these goals as part of their own personal developmental plan (PDP).
- Conversation 5: *Committing to action and growth*. Conversation 5 (to be completed at the beginning of level three) is about a commitment to change as students focus on personal and interpersonal growth.
- Conversation 6: *Confirming my direction*. In Conversation 6 (to be completed at the end of level three) students confirm their direction by monitoring their progress using their PDP's and by identifying fields in social work where they may work.
- Conversation 7: *Celebrating completion*. During Conversation 7 (to be completed at the beginning of level four) students are introduced to the concept of a career portfolio and start preparing themselves to be employed.
- Conversation 8: *Celebrating completion*. Conversation 8 (to be completed at the end of level four) represents the last stage of the students' study journey. It assists them to look back to assess their journey and own growth as well as forward towards lifelong learning.

The programme contains many activities, stories and references to other resources to facilitate active growth. This programme is designed to be compulsory and integrated into the practical work modules on the various levels. Activities are to be completed independently, but support will be provided by e-tutors on the first and second level, workshop facilitators on level three and supervisors on level four. A programme coordinator will be available online as an e-coach to provide ongoing support to social work students.

7.2.12 Conclusions on Chapter 6: A self-coaching programme as support for social work students within an ODL context

- The self-coaching programme was developed to fill the gap in existing support for social work students. The programme was developed systematically, using the IDD model of Thomas and Rothman (1994), based on the needs of social work students determined qualitatively, while incorporating suggestions and coping strategies by students and functional elements from various fields.
- Feedback from the pilot test obtained from four specialists and ten students was very positive. The participants, both specialists and students, were excited about the programme. They were of the opinion that the programme would reach its goals and could make a significant contribution to the personal, academic and professional development of social work students studying within an ODL context. They also provided meaningful suggestions which were incorporated into the programme.
- The self-coaching programme could not address all the academic, professional and personal needs of the social work students. Some of their needs should be addressed by other means of support in UNISA and the Department of Social Work.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the aforementioned summaries and conclusions of the different chapters, as well as suggestions made by students and specialists, recommendations can be made which are divided into the following categories:

- Recommendations relating to the research methodology employed in this study
- Recommendations relating to student support
- Recommendations relating to future research.

7.3.1 Recommendations relating to the research methodology employed in this study

From her experience of using the IDD model from a qualitative approach, the researcher recommends that new researchers prepare themselves on the following aspects:

- When using the qualitative approach, researchers should take its flexible and emergent nature into account, and expect some confusion during the research process. Titles, research goals and objectives might be adjusted as concepts become more clearly defined as the study progresses.
- When using the IDD model of Rothman and Thomas (1994) in the development of new interventions, it is important that researchers prepare themselves for the long and complex process it entails. They should consider the possibility that the research project might be divided into various phases, depending on the time and money available. It is, therefore, important that the researcher plan and budget carefully before starting the research process. Research activities within the IDD model do not always follow one another in a linear way, but might loop backwards or forwards in a recursive way. Researchers should be aware of this and should not try to “force” activities into a specific order.

7.3.2 Recommendations relating to student support

From the above summaries and conclusions, suggestions made by social work students, Heads of Departments of Social Work at residential universities as well as support specialists, the recommendations relating to student support can be divided into three categories:

- Recommendations on the implementation of the online self-coaching programme
- Recommendations on other student support to be considered by the Department of Social Work of UNISA
- Recommendations on the redevelopment of the curriculum of the Department of Social Work.

Some of the recommendations may be relevant to more than one category.

7.3.2.1 Recommendations on the implementation of the online self-coaching programme

To facilitate the implementation of the support programme, the following recommendations are made:

- The Department of Social Work at UNISA should consider the integration of the online self-coaching programme in the development of the new curriculum.
- If accepted, a specific lecturer should be allocated the task of coordinating and managing student support within the department. This lecturer, who can also be the life coach, should liaise with the academic support coordinator from the Department: Tuition and Facilitation of Learning, and with representatives of other sections within UNISA, such as the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development, the Directorate: Student Social Development and Department: Institutional Statistics and Analysis (DISA). Information on students-at-risk could be provided by DISA and this lecturer could liaise with module lecturers in providing additional support to these students. This lecturer should also try to ensure that the department acts in accordance with changing policies and practices

on student support within the wider UNISA. This would ensure that student support within the Department of Social Work is coordinated with support rendered by the rest of UNISA.

- The self-coaching programme should also be made available in the form of a booklet to ensure access to the programme by all students, including students who do not have access to computer technology.
- The end of a student's study journey should be clearly acknowledged; not only by the graduation ceremony, but also in some way by the Department of Social Work. Students should be assisted to leave UNISA for life outside, feeling "completed" and debriefed. The life coaching programme contributes to the acknowledgement of the completion of the student's journey. In Conversation 8, supervision groups are encouraged to celebrate success by sharing goals reached, dealing with unfinished business, reading the Solemn Declaration of a Social Worker and lighting candles. This can also be done as a virtual celebration on Facebook. The Department of Social Work should officially support and facilitate such efforts.

7.3.2.2 Recommendations on other student support to be considered by the Department of Social Work of UNISA

The Department of Social Work of UNISA should further support its students in the following ways:

- Support of social work students studying through an ODL should commence when they initially indicate their interest in social work. Students who apply for registration for first-level social work modules, can be contacted through SMS and provided with a link to the DVD developed by the Department of Social Work on the social work profession to facilitate an informed choice of social work as a career, and a fit between the student and the profession of social work. After registration, the students could be invited to a Facebook ceremony where they could be officially welcomed and made aware of support available.

- The Department of Social Work at UNISA could use its website effectively with updated information and links to the broader world of social work. A section for job opportunities might even be included.
- The material used in the DVD on the journey of studying Social Work within UNISA developed in 2012, should be transformed into podcasts which could be used on the department's website, and in various social work and auxiliary work modules. A library of visual material on social work could be put together with the assistance of the Division: Sound, Video and Photography.
- Despite the large numbers and the wide geographical distribution of students, the Department of Social Work should ensure that students feel supported when they are doing their practical work at organisations in the community. This could be achieved by making sure organisations where students are placed for their practical work, are clear about the department's expectations, and they are available to mediate between the students and the organisations, where necessary.
- Despite the large number of students, the Department of Social Work should ensure quality supervision by careful selection, training and support of supervisors. The appointment of a smaller number of full-time permanent supervisors in the place of many part-time supervisors would contribute to a stable and experienced corps of supervisors.
- The Department of Social Work should continue with the emphasis it has placed on the importance of ethics in social work by further developing and consistently applying the internal disciplinary procedure when students act unprofessionally.
- The Department of Social Work at UNISA should identify a variety of resources to where students can be referred for counselling, should it be needed. The Directorate: Counselling and Career Development or social workers in practice (preferable alumni students) who are willing to counsel students would greatly help students in need of assistance. All lecturers, facilitators and supervisors should, for instance, be encouraged to refer students who have been exposed to trauma or who

need to work through a personal experience. Once this list of resources has been compiled, it can be incorporated into the life coaching programme.

7.3.2.3 Recommendations on the redevelopment of the curriculum of the Department of Social Work

- With the development of the new curriculum, the following should be considered for inclusion:
 - A module on life skills, as is done at many social work departments at residential universities
 - A module on writing skills, focused specifically on social work
 - A full module on statutory work
 - More theoretical approaches to counselling
 - Study material that is more culturally sensitive
 - Voluntary work by students from the first or second level.
- The large numbers of social work students necessitate the development and implementation of a selection policy. This will not only help to limit numbers to an extent, but also assist students in obtaining a fit between themselves and their choice of social work as a career.
- More attention should be paid to the development of the students' presentation skills. This might call for more creative use of technology as face-to-face contact is expected to become even less with increasing focus on e-learning.

7.3.3 Recommendations relating to further research

The following can be recommended concerning future research:

- In this study, the researcher only implemented Phase 1, Phase 2 as well as Phase 3, Step 2 and Phase 4 of the IDD model. As a next step, the researcher recommends that she continues with the implementation of Phase 6 (Dissemination), specifically Step 3, creating a demand for the intervention, by introducing the programme to the

Head of the Department of Social Work at UNISA and to fellow lecturers for consideration for inclusion in the new curriculum which is in its planning stages. Should they agree to discuss its possibilities, their input and that of other relevant role players within UNISA, such as DCLD and ICT will be incorporated into the self-coaching programme as it is developed in an online format.

- A further recommendation is that Phase 3, Step 1 (Designing an observational system) to determine the effects of the intervention and Phase 5, Step 1 (Evaluation and advanced development) be implemented. To measure students' academic, professional and personal growth their academic records and standardised assessments could be used. To measure personal growth, scales like Hudson's Self-efficacy Scale, the Generalised Expectancy of Success Scale or the Belief in Personal Control Scale could be used. The Department of Social Work of the North-West University has developed an assessment instrument, the SASPER, measuring the growth in students' professional and ethical behaviour from level one to four. The possibility of using this instrument for measuring the outcomes for the BSW degree could be explored.
- It is recommended that research be undertaken on social workers' experience in using the IDD model, including the ethical implications that should be considered.
- Because the ODL context in which social work students study, as well as the support needs of these students are changing continuously, it is recommended that the Department of Social Work of UNISA keeps in touch with the needs of its students. This research could be undertaken by administering an online questionnaire; thus, regularly adjusting support provided to students according to their changing needs.
- Although coaching is not yet a recognised profession, coaching skills and tools could be used meaningfully within social work. It is recommended that further research be undertaken on the use of coaching skills within social work.

7.4 CONCLUSION

This last chapter of the research study provided a summary and conclusion of

- 1) the research problem, research question, goals and objectives of the study;
- 2) the research methodology implemented;
- 3) the research findings;
- 4) possible functional elements of a support programme; and
- 5) a self-coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context.

The chapter was concluded with recommendations relating to the research methodology employed in this study, student support and future research.

Through this research study, the researcher has contributed to the literature on understanding the support needs of social work students studying within an ODL context. She has also filled the gap in existing support programmes for social work students by developing an online self-coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context.

To conclude, I want to write the last paragraphs, like Chapter 2, in the first person to reflect on my own journey as a social work student within UNISA. I, too, spiralled through my seven C's, discovering my own voice, learning about the world of independence and research, creating my own personal and professional vision, planning for every day and long-to-come, believing in my own growth, confirming who I am and want to be and yes, now celebrating completion and starting a new journey.

My dream is for this programme to become a reality and for every student who uses it to discover the power of seeing “differently”, knowing “Impossible = I’m possible.”

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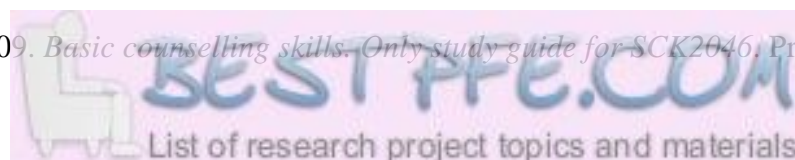
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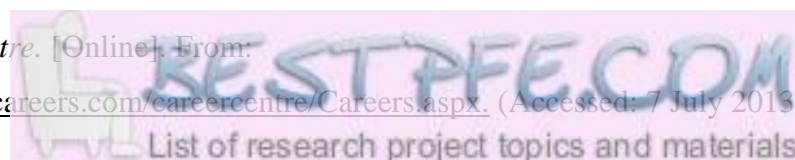
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Annexure A

Prof RMH Moeketsi
Executive Dean: College of Human Sciences

CC: Prof L Cornwell

31 May 2010

Dear Professor

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH USING UNISA'S STUDENTS AS RESEARCH SUBJECTS

1. Objective of this letter

Your permission is hereby requested to involve the social work students studying at UNISA in my research project. Should permission for conducting this research at UNISA be granted, I intend to invite students to a meeting where the following will be discussed and explained:

- Purpose of the study
- Methods of data collection (namely focus groups)
- Practical arrangements regarding data collection
- Voluntary participation, confidentiality and informed consent.

Once the willingness of the participants to participate has been established, arrangements will be made for data collection. This will be done with respect and consideration for the schedules and commitments of the students. I will also conduct the data collection at times and locations which will be convenient for the participants.

Kindly note that the study has been approved by the Research and Ethics Committee (DR&EC) of the Department of Social Work at UNISA.

2. Background of the research project

I am a permanent staff member and junior lecturer employed in the Department of Social Work, UNISA. I am also enrolled for my doctorate at the same university. In fulfilment of the degree, I have undertaken a research project on the following topic:

“A life coaching model for social work students within an ODL context”

This research project originated as a result of the Department of Social Work undertaking research on the experiences and profiles of social work students studying at UNISA. Due to their personal contexts and studying within an open and distance learning (ODL) context, social work students experience many challenges which negatively influence their “student walk” or journey through UNISA as well the successful completion of their studies which adequately prepare them for the social work profession. There seems to be a lack of effective support programmes for social work students studying within an ODL context, based on their identified needs.

The purpose of my research is to develop a life coaching model that will address the support needs of social work students within an ODL context. The life coaching model will be based on the support needs and views of social work students as well as the views of recently graduated and employed social workers who studied through UNISA.

The target populations selected for the study, as well as the inclusion criteria are as follows:

1. All **social work students** registered at UNISA, specifically in Pretoria
 - Social work students registered at UNISA
 - First-, second-, third- and fourth-level social work students
 - Social work students staying in Pretoria while studying
2. All **recently graduated and employed social workers** who studied at UNISA and are currently working in Pretoria.
 - Social workers who studied through UNISA
 - Social workers who completed their studies at the end of 2009 and the beginning of 2010
 - Social workers who are recently employed within the social work profession
 - Social workers who work in Pretoria.

The motivation behind the focus on students, and recently graduated and employed social workers studying at UNISA in Pretoria is the following: UNISA is the only ODL institution in South Africa which trains social work students. First-, second-, third- and fourth-level students must be included, as the needs of students might be different on different levels. The researcher is situated in Pretoria. Due to time and cost factors it will not be possible to conduct research at all the major learning centres of UNISA.

Should you have any questions not sufficiently answered by me as the researcher, you may contact the chairperson of the committee:

Prof A Alpaslan

Tel: 012 429 6739

E-mail: alplash@unisa.ac.za

Your consideration of my request is highly appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact me, should you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely

Petro Botha

Tel: 012 429 6274 / 082 554 7761

E-mail: Bothap@unisa.ac.za

Approval: YES / NO

.....
AC van Dyk
Chair: Social Work

.....
Prof RMH Moeketsi
Executive Dean: College of Human Sciences

Annexure B***Invitation to participate in a research study****Social work students****Research topic****“A life coaching model for social work students within an ODL context”***Researcher:** Petro Botha: MA (Mental Health)**Research promoter:** Dr H Louw: Department of Social Work, UNISA

Dear research participant

I am a social worker employed at the Department of Social Work, UNISA and also a doctorate student at the same university. In fulfilment of the degree, I have to undertake a research project. In view of the fact that you are well-informed about the topic, I hereby approach you with an invitation to participate in this study.

This invitation contains information regarding the study. Please read it, as it will assist you in your decision whether to participate in this study. It is important that you ensure that you fully understand what is involved in the study and that you are satisfied with all aspects thereof before you agree to participate.

The purpose of the study

This research project originated as a result of the Department of Social Work undertaking research on the experiences and profiles of social work students studying at UNISA. Due to their personal contexts and studying within an open and distance learning (ODL) context, social work students experience many challenges which negatively influence their “student walk” or journey through UNISA as well the successful completion of their

studies which adequately prepare them for the social work profession. There seems to be a lack of an effective support programme for social work students studying within an ODL context, based on their identified needs.

The purpose of my research is to develop a life coaching model that addresses the support needs of social work students within an ODL context. The life coaching model is based on the support needs and views of social work students as well as the views of recently graduated and employed social workers who have studied through UNISA.

Criteria for inclusion

You are invited to participate in this study because, as a social work student studying through UNISA, you know your support needs best and are able to assist me in understanding what your experiences and needs entail. You also meet the inclusion criteria for this study, namely that you are a first-, second-, third- or fourth-level social work student enrolled at UNISA and staying in Pretoria while studying.

What will be required of you?

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be required to do the following:

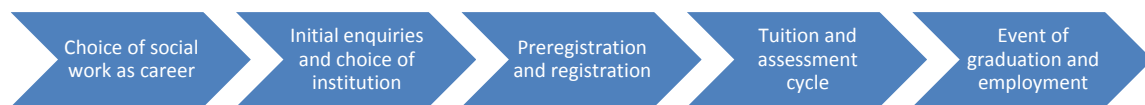
Leave your telephone number on the declaration sheet at the end of this invitation and sign the declaration, indicating that you have read the information and that I may contact you to make arrangements for conducting the research. Please hand this in at the end of our meeting.

I will call the first ten students whose forms I receive to make an appointment with you at a time and place that will be convenient to you. I will keep the other forms if I need to contact a second focus group to obtain data saturation. I will let you know by sms if I will not be able to include you in the study. The following will happen at this meeting:

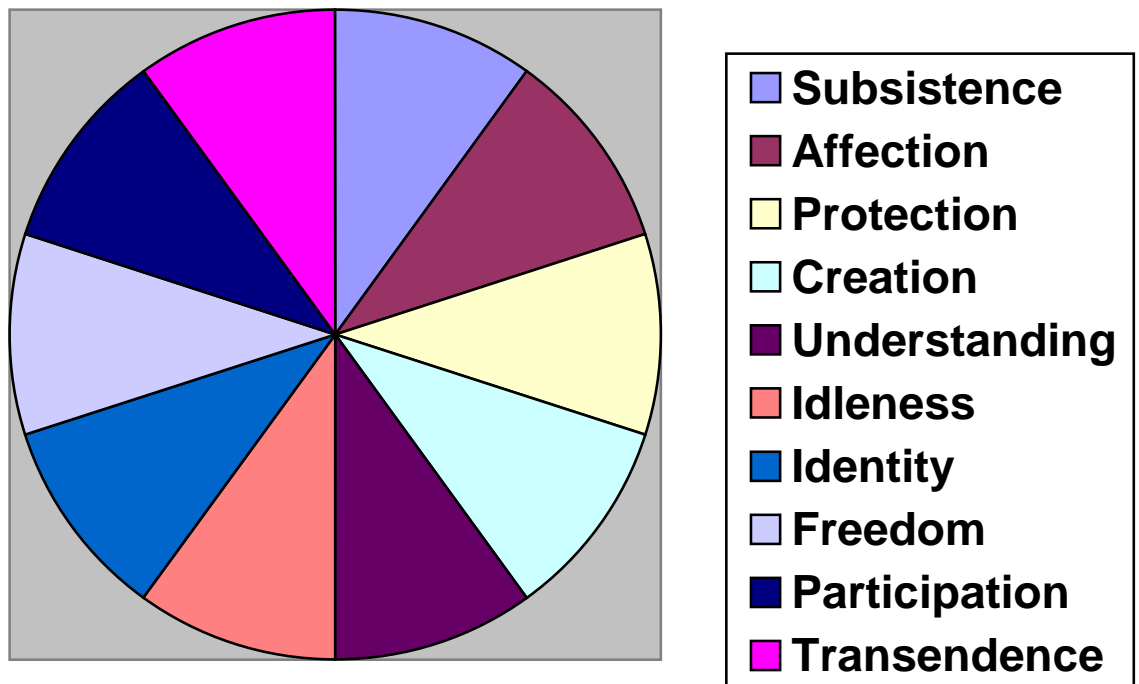
- You will have the opportunity to ask any questions regarding this study.
- You will be requested to sign an informed consent form.
- I will conduct a focus group interview which means that, as a group of students, you discuss the questions directed at you. The interview will take place in a comfortable, safe environment where there will be adhered to the principles of

privacy and confidentiality. The following requests and questions will be directed at you during the focus group meeting:

- *Describe the personal and professional attributes of a good social worker. (Group brainstorms and an assistant draws a mind map.)*
- *What motivated you to study social work?*
- *If you compare yourself with the personal and professional attributes of a good social worker, which attributes do you still need to develop?*
- *This timeline represents the typical student's walk or journey through UNISA as an ODL institution.*



- *Please indicate where on the timeline you are at the moment.*
- *Have you experienced any difficulties during this student walk? Please indicate where and specify.*
- *As a student, what makes you happy, sad, angry, worried and proud?*
- *Max-Neef's theory of fundamental human needs identifies nine fundamental human needs (one added), as indicated in the wheel below:*



According to Max-Neef's approach to poverty, all needs are interrelated. If a person experiences poverty (unfulfilled needs) in any segment, it will to some extent affect the other segments or needs. If a student experiences poverty in any of these segments, it may hamper his/her performance. Max-Neef also referred to the satisfiers of the needs; e.g., income, food and shelter are satisfiers of the need for subsistence.

Please indicate in which of these needs you experience poverty. How does it influence your studies? In which of these needs do you have sufficient satisfiers? What influence does that have on your studies?

- *Which support or resources have you, as a social work student within UNISA, as an ODL institution, accessed in the past? Please refer to resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.*
- *What is your perspective of existing support services within UNISA as an ODL institution?*
- *What support or resources do you, as a social work student studying at UNISA, as an ODL institution, require to facilitate your “student walk” or journey? Please refer to resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA. Indicate on the provided timeline where you need this support.*

- *What support or resources do you, as a social work student within UNISA as an ODL institution, require to successfully prepare yourself for the social work profession? Please refer to resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.*
- *What support or resources do you, as a social work student within UNISA as an ODL institution, require to grow on a personal level? Please refer to resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.*
- *Referring back to the wheel and your answer on Max-Neef's fundamental human needs and poverties, which satisfiers to the poverties you have identified, can you suggest?*
- *Life coaching can be described as a process of facilitating self-awareness, setting goals, and facilitating personal and professional growth and development. With this definition in mind, which core elements should be included in a life coaching model aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context?*
- *How should a life coaching model aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context be implemented?*

You will be asked to complete a form with the following biographical information:

- *Are you male or female?*
- *How old are you?*
- *Are you married?*
- *Do you have children? How many?*
- *Do you have a family to take care of?*
- *Are you working? If so, full-time or part-time?*
- *Where do you stay when you are studying?*
- *Where do you stay when you are not studying?*
- *When did you complete your school career?*
- *How long have you been studying?*
- *Have you completed any other studies? If so, please specify.*
- *Have your parents or guardians studied?*
- *Who supports or assists you financially?*

Be assured that your opinion and views will be respected and appreciated, and that it will make a valuable contribution to the research study. It is estimated that this meeting will last approximately two hours.

Your rights as a participant in this study

Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time, without needing to give a reason for your decision. Your decision to participate or not will not impact on your marks or relationship with your lecturers in any way.

Possible effects of the study on you as participant

During the interview you may share some information on an experience or need that may result in emotional discomfort for you. Should I conclude that the information you have shared has the potential of an emotional reaction from you, I am obliged to refer you to a counsellor for debriefing or counselling, should you agree thereto. Arrangements in this regard have been made with relevant professional practitioners at UNISA.

The potential benefits that may come of this study

By participating in this research study, you contribute towards a better understanding of the support needs and perspectives of social work students within an ODL context. This will enable me to develop a model of life coaching to address the support needs of social workers within an ODL context and to make recommendations to the Department of Social Work and UNISA about issues shared which may not be the focus of my study. By participating in this study, you raise awareness about your needs as social work student. You also contribute to fulfilling some of these needs by giving suggestions about what should be included in such a support programme and how it should be implemented.

Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity in the study

With your permission, the focus group that I will conduct with you and fellow students will be recorded. All the information obtained during the course of the study will be strictly confidential. The recorded interviews, which will be transcribed, will be coded to disguise any identifying information. The voice recordings will be stored in a safe place and only I will have access to them. The transcripts of the focus group interview, without any identifying information, will be made available to my research promoters, and an

independent coder with the only purpose of assisting and guiding me with the research endeavour. Digital recordings and transcripts will be kept in a safe place for three years after which it will be destroyed. It will be contracted with focus group members that information shared in the group should be kept confidential.

Release of findings

Should you require feedback regarding the outcome of the research study, you are welcome to contact me and I will provide you with a written report.

Ethical approval of this study

This study has been approved by the Research and Ethics Committee (DR&EC) of the Department of Social Work at UNISA. Should you have any questions not sufficiently answered by me as the researcher, you may contact the chairperson of the committee:

Prof A Alpaslan

Tel: 012 429 6739

E-mail: alpash@unisa.ac.za

If after you have consulted with me and the Research and Ethics Committee in the Department of Social Work at UNISA, and our answers have not satisfied you, you may direct your concerns or queries to:

The Chairperson

Human Ethics Committee

College of Human Sciences

P.O. Box 392

UNISA

0003

Contact details

Please do not hesitate to contact me, should you require any additional information regarding this research study:

Petro Botha

Tel: 012 429 6274 / 082 554 7761

E-mail: Bothap@unisa.ac.za

A final word

Your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated.

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you are kindly requested to sign the attached declaration form and hand it back to me at the end of this meeting.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I have read the contents of the invitation to participate in a research study.

I am willing to participate in this research study and hereby give the researcher permission to contact me in order to arrange a meeting with me for the purpose of conducting the research.

Signature:

Telephone number:

Date:

Annexure C

Invitation to participate in a research study
Recently graduated and employed social workers

Research topic

“A life coaching model for social work students within an ODL context”

Researcher: Petro Botha: MA (Mental Health)

Research promoter: Dr H Louw: Department of Social Work, UNISA

Dear research participant

I am a social worker employed at the Department of Social Work, UNISA and also a doctorate student at the same university. In fulfilment of the degree, I have to undertake a research project. In view of the fact that you are well-informed about the topic, I hereby approach you with an invitation to participate in this study.

This invitation contains information regarding the study. Please read it, as it will assist you in your decision whether to participate in this study. It is important that you ensure that you fully understand what is involved in the study and that you are satisfied with all aspects of it, before you agree to participate.

The purpose of the study

This research project originated as a result of the Department of Social Work undertaking research on the experiences and profiles of social work students studying at UNISA. Due to their personal contexts and studying within an open and distance learning (ODL) context, social work students experience many challenges which negatively influence their “student walk” or journey through UNISA as well the successful completion of their studies which adequately prepare them for the social work profession. There seems to be a

lack of an effective support programme for social work students studying within an ODL context, based on their identified needs.

The purpose of my research is to develop a model of life coaching that addresses the support needs of social work students within an ODL context. The life coaching model is based on the support needs and views of social work students as well as the views of recently graduated and employed social workers who have studied through UNISA.

Criteria for inclusion

You are invited to participate in this study because you have studied social work through UNISA, and therefore know the support needs of social work students studying within an ODL context. You are also in a privileged position to look back on your student life and can add a different view now that you are working within the profession. You are able to compare the demands of a social work career with the knowledge and skills, and in particular, the support you received while studying at UNISA.

You also meet the inclusion criteria for this study, namely that you are a social worker who has studied through UNISA, completed your studies in 2009 or the beginning of 2010, been employed within the social work profession recently and work in Pretoria.

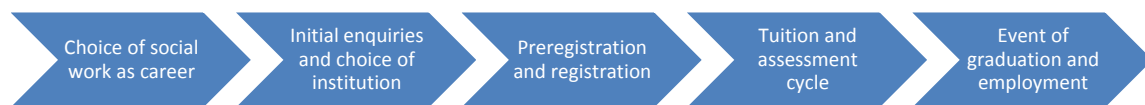
What will be required of you?

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be required to sign the attached declaration sheet at the end of this invitation in which you indicate that you have read the information and that I may contact you to make arrangements for conducting the research. Please e-mail or fax (012 429 7392) it back to me.

I will call you to make an appointment at a time and place that will be convenient to you. During our meeting the following will happen:

- You will have the opportunity to ask any questions regarding this study.
- You will be requested to sign an informed consent form.
- I will conduct a face-to-face semi-structured interview with you. The interview will take place in a comfortable, safe environment where there will be adhered to the principles of privacy and confidentiality. The following requests and questions will be directed at you during the interview:

- *What motivated you to study social work?*
- *As a social worker, how does the profession fulfil your expectations?*
- *Describe the personal and professional attributes of a good social worker. (You can draw a mind map.)*
- *In which areas did your training lack in preparing you adequately for being a social worker in practice?*
- *How long did it take you to complete your studies?*
- *This timeline represents the typical student's walk or journey through UNISA as an ODL institution.*

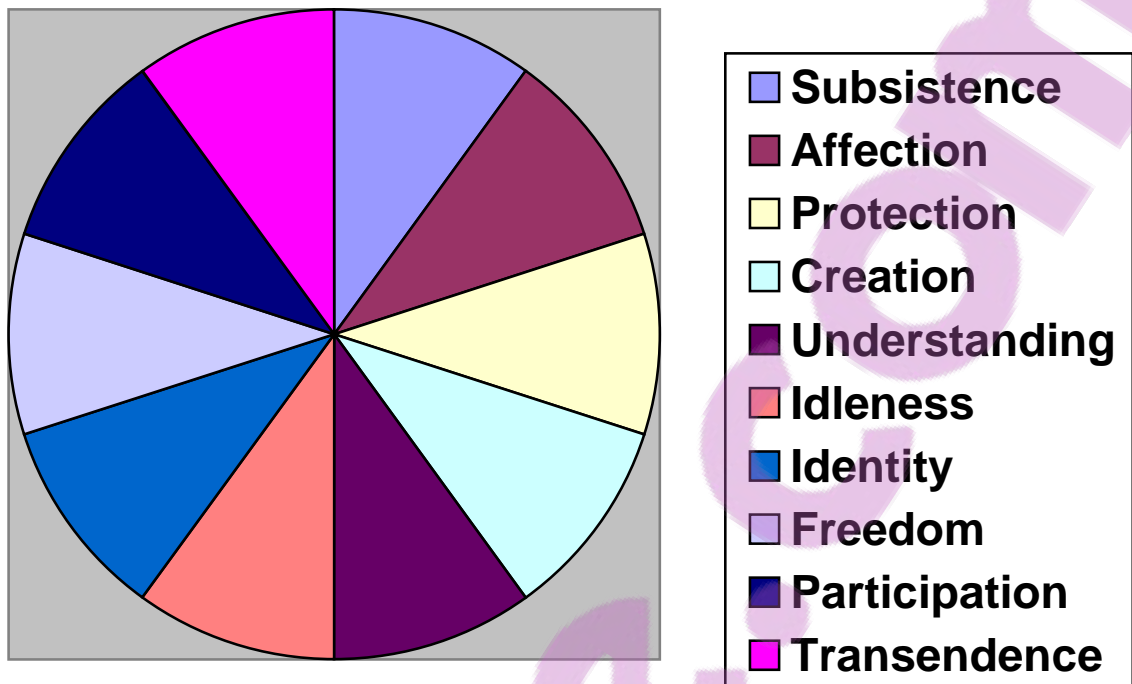


Please describe your student walk through UNISA, indicating difficulties experienced and support or resources utilised on the way.

- *Max-Neef's theory of fundamental human needs identifies nine fundamental human needs (one added), as indicated in the wheel below.*

According to Max-Neef's approach to poverty, all needs are interrelated. If a person experiences poverty (unfulfilled needs) in any segment, it will to some extent affect the other segments or needs. If a student experiences poverty in any of these segments, it may hamper his/her performance. Max-Neef also referred to the satisfiers of the needs; e.g., income, food and shelter are satisfiers of the need for subsistence.

Please indicate in which of these needs did you experience poverty when you studied through UNISA as an ODL institution. How did it influence your studies? In which of these needs did you have sufficient satisfiers? What influence did that have on your studies?



-
- Which support or resources did you, as student within UNISA as an ODL institution, access while studying? Please refer to resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.
 - What is your view on existing support services within UNISA as an ODL institution?
 - What support or resources, in your view, do social work students studying at UNISA as an ODL institution require to facilitate their “student walk” or journey? Please refer to resources within the student, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA. Indicate on the provided timeline where you needed this support.
 - What support or resources, in your view, do social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution require to successfully prepare themselves for the social work profession? Please refer to resources within the student, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.
 - What support or resources, in your view, do social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution require to grow on a personal level? Please refer to resources within the student, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.

- *Referring back to the wheel and your answer on Max-Neef's fundamental human needs and poverties, which satisfiers to the poverties you have identified, can you suggest?*
- *Life coaching can be described as a process of facilitating self-awareness, setting goals, and facilitating personal and professional growth and development. With this definition in mind, which core elements should be included in a life coaching model aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context?*
- *How should a life coaching model aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context be implemented?*

You will be asked to complete a form with the following biographical information:

- *Are you male or female?*
- *How old are you?*
- *When did you complete your studies?*
- *When did you start working?*
- *Where are you working?*
- *When did you complete your school career?*
- *How long did you study before completing the social work degree?*
- *Have you completed any other studies? If so, please specify.*
- *Anything else you would like to share?*

Be assured that your opinion and views will be respected and appreciated, and that it will make a valuable contribution to the research study. It is estimated that this interview will last approximately 90 minutes.

Your rights as a participant in this study

Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time without needing to give a reason for your decision.

Possible effects of the study on you as participant

During the interview you may share some information on an experience or need that may result in emotional discomfort to you. Should I conclude that the information you have

shared has the potential of an emotional reaction from you, I am obliged to refer you to a counsellor for debriefing or counselling, should you agree thereto.

The potential benefits that may come of this study

By participating in this research study, you will contribute towards a better understanding of the support needs and views of social work students within an ODL context. Your views as an ex-student now employed within the profession will add great value to the study. This will enable me to develop a model of life coaching to address the support needs of social workers within an ODL context, and to make recommendations to the Department of Social Work and UNISA about issues shared which may not be the focus of my study. By participating in this study you will be raising awareness about the needs of social work students within an ODL context. By giving suggestions about what should be included in such a support programme and how it should be implemented, you will contribute to fulfilling some of these needs for students still studying or who will study social work at UNISA in the future.

Ensuring confidentiality in the study

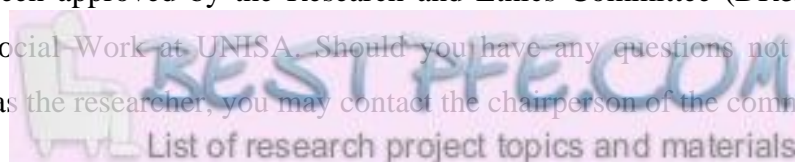
With your permission, the interview that I will conduct with you will be recorded. All the information obtained during the course of the study will be strictly confidential. The recorded interviews, which will be transcribed, will be coded to disguise any identifying information. The voice recording will be stored in a safe place and only I will have access to it. The transcript of the interview, without any identifying information, will be made available to my research promoters and an independent coder with the only purpose of assisting and guiding me with the research endeavour. The digital recording and transcript will be kept in a safe place for three years after which it will be destroyed.

Release of findings

Should you require feedback regarding the outcome of the research study, you are welcome to contact me and I will provide you with a written report.

Ethical approval of this study

This study has been approved by the Research and Ethics Committee (DR&EC) of the Department of Social Work at UNISA. Should you have any questions not sufficiently answered by me as the researcher, you may contact the chairperson of the committee:



Prof A Alpaslan

Tel: 012 429 6739

E-mail: alpash@unisa.ac.za

If, after you have consulted with me and the Research and Ethics Committee in the Department of Social Work at UNISA, our answers have not satisfied you, you may direct your concerns or queries to:

The Chairperson

Human Ethics Committee

College of Human Sciences

P.O. Box 392

UNISA

0003

Contact details

Please do not hesitate to contact me, should you require any additional information regarding this research study:

Petro Botha

Tel: 012 429 6274 / 082 554 7761

E-mail: Bothap@unisa.ac.za

A final word

Your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated. Should you decide to participate in this research study, you are kindly requested to sign the attached declaration form and e-mail or fax (012 429 7392) it back to me.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I have read the contents of the invitation to participate in a research study.

I am willing to participate in this research study and hereby give the researcher permission to contact me in order to arrange a meeting with me for the purpose of conducting the research.

Signature:

Telephone number:

Date:

Informed Consent***Social work students***

“A life coaching model for social work students within an ODL context”

Reference number: _____

Principal researcher:

Petro Botha

P.O. Box 1634

Garsfontein

0060

Tel: 012 429 6274 / 082 554 7761

E-mail: Bothap@unisa.ac.za

Declaration by participant

I hereby confirm the following:

- I have been informed of the nature and purpose of this research study.
- No pressure was put on me to consent to participate in this study. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason for my decision.
- The method of data collection, which is a focus group interview, has been explained to me. The questions to be asked (interview guide) have been explained to me.
- I give my permission for the focus group interview to be recorded.
- I understand that all information obtained in the research study will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.
- I understand that only the researcher, her promoters, the independent coder and editor will have access to the data collected, and that my identity will not be revealed in any discussion, description or publication.

- I am aware of the following risks associated with the study:

- I identify the following benefits that may come from this study as a result of my participation:

- I understand all the information that was explained to me.

I hereby consent to voluntarily participate in this research study.

Participant's signature

Date

Declaration by the researcher

I, Petro Botha, hereby confirm the following:

- I am the principal researcher of this project.
- I have explained the above-mentioned information to the participant.
- I have given him/her the opportunity to ask questions regarding the research study.

Researcher's signature

Date

Informed Consent

Recently graduated and employed social workers

“A life coaching model for social work students within an ODL context”

Reference number: _____

Principal researcher: Petro Botha
 P.O. Box 1634
 Garsfontein
 0060
 Tel: 012 429 6274 / 082 554 7761
 E-mail: Bothap@unisa.ac.za

Declaration by participant

I hereby confirm the following:

- I have been informed of the nature and purpose of this research study.
- No pressure was put on me to consent to participate in this study. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason for my decision.
- The method of data collection, which is a face-to-face semi-structured interview, has been explained to me. The questions to be asked (interview guide) have been explained to me.
- I give my permission for the interview to be recorded.
- I understand that all information obtained in the research study will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.
- I understand that only the researcher, her promoters, the independent coder and editor will have access to the data collected, and that my identity will not be revealed in any discussion, description or publication.

- I am aware of the following risks associated with the study:

- I identify the following benefits that may come from this study as a result of my participation:

- I understand all the information that was explained to me.

I hereby consent to voluntarily participate in this research study.

Participant's signature

Date

Declaration by the researcher

I, Petro Botha, hereby confirm the following:

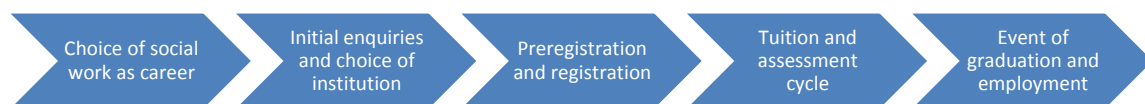
- I am the principal researcher of this project.
- I have explained the above-mentioned information to the participant.
- I have given him/her the opportunity to ask questions regarding the research study.

Researcher's signature

Date

Interview guide: focus group interview with social work students

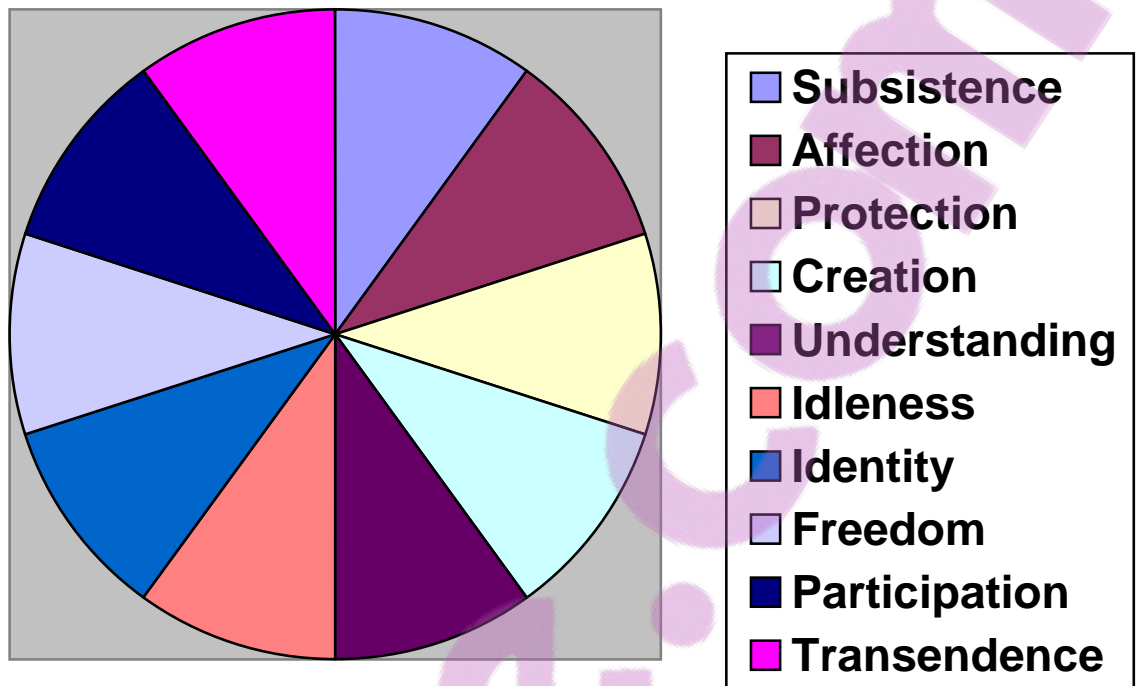
- *Describe the personal and professional attributes of a good social worker. (Group brainstorms and an assistant draws a mind map.)*
- *What motivated you to study social work?*
- *If you compare yourself with the personal and professional attributes of a good social worker, which attributes do you still have to develop?*
- *This timeline represents the typical student's walk or journey through UNISA as an ODL institution.*



- *Please indicate where on the time line you are at the moment.*
- *Have you experienced any difficulties during this student walk? Please indicate where and specify.*
- *As a student, what makes you happy, sad, angry, worried, hopeful and proud?*
- *Max-Neef's theory of fundamental human needs identifies nine fundamental human needs (one added), as indicated in the wheel below.*

According to Max-Neef's approach to poverty, all needs are interrelated. If a person experiences poverty (unfulfilled needs) in any segment, it will to some extent affect the other segments or needs. If a student experiences poverty in any of these segments, it may hamper his/her performance. Max-Neef also referred to the satisfiers of the needs; e.g., income, food and shelter are satisfiers of the need for subsistence. (Group discussion to clarify.)

Please indicate in which of these needs do you experience poverty. How does it influence your studies? In which of these needs do you have sufficient satisfiers? What influence does that have on your studies?

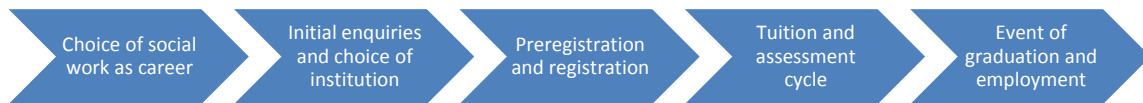


- Which support or resources have you, as a social work student within UNISA as an ODL institution, accessed in the past? Please refer to resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.
- What is your view on existing support services within UNISA as an ODL institution?
- What support or resources do you, as a social work student studying at UNISA as an ODL institution, require to facilitate your “student walk” or journey? Please refer to resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA. Indicate on the provided timeline where you require this support.
- What support or resources do you, as a social work student within UNISA as an ODL institution, require to successfully prepare yourself for the social work profession? Please refer to resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.
- What support or resources do you, as a social work student within UNISA as an ODL institution, require to grow on a personal level? Please refer to resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.

- *Referring back to the wheel and your answer on Max Neef's fundamental human needs and poverties, which satisfiers to the poverties you have identified, can you suggest?*
- *Life coaching can be described as a process of facilitating self-awareness, setting goals, and facilitating personal and professional growth and development. With this definition in mind, which core elements should be included in a life coaching model aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context?*
- *How should a life coaching model aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context be implemented?*

Interview guide: face-to-face semi-structured interview with recently graduated and employed social workers

- *What motivated you to study social work?*
- *As a social worker, how does the profession fulfil your expectations?*
- *Describe the personal and professional attributes of a good social worker. (You can draw a mind map.)*
- *In which areas did your training lack in preparing you adequately for being a social worker in practice?*
- *How long did it take you to complete your studies?*
- *This timeline represents the typical student's walk or journey through UNISA as an ODL institution.*



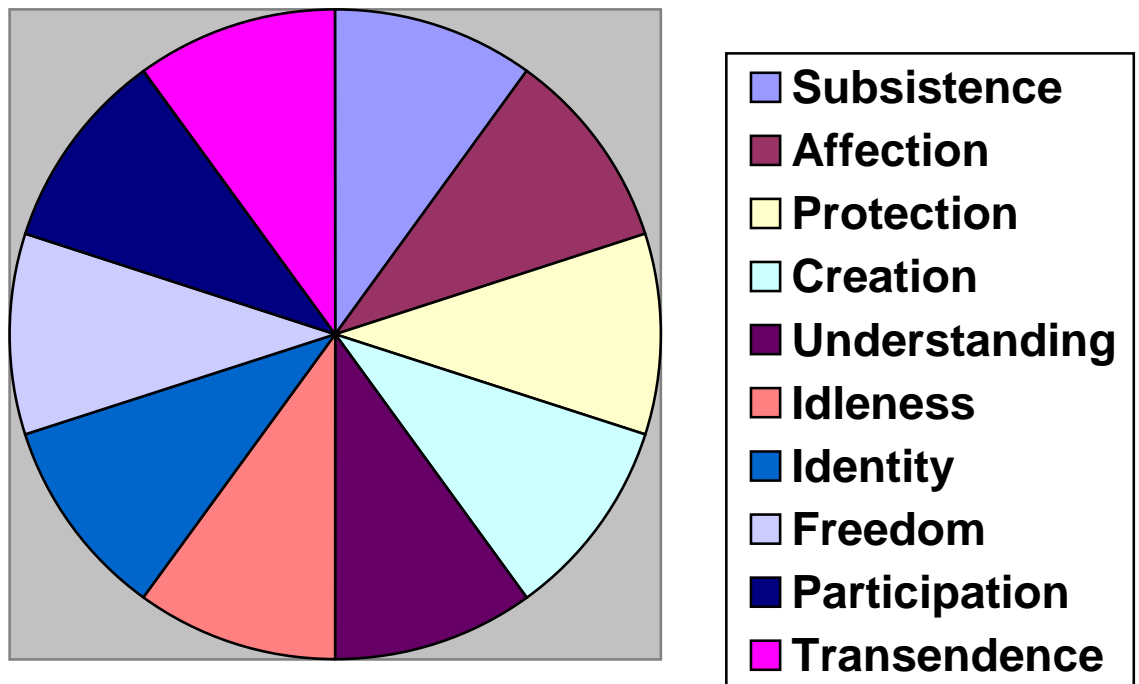
Please describe your student walk through UNISA, indicating difficulties experienced and support or resources utilised on the way.

- *Max-Neef's theory of fundamental human needs identifies nine fundamental human needs (one added), as indicated in the wheel below.*

According to Max-Neef's approach to poverty, all needs are interrelated. If a person experiences poverty (unfulfilled needs) in any segment, it will to some extent affect the other segments or needs. If a student experiences poverty in any of these segments, it may hamper his/her performance. Max-Neef also referred to the satisfiers of the needs; e.g., income, food and shelter are satisfiers of the need for subsistence.

Please indicate in which of these needs did you, when studying through UNISA as an ODL institution, experience poverty. How did it influence your studies? In which of these needs did you have sufficient satisfiers? What influence did that have on your studies?





- ---
- *Which support or resources did you as student within UNISA as an ODL institution access while studying? Please refer to resources in yourself, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.*
- *What is your view on existing support services within UNISA as an ODL institution?*
- *What support or resources, in your view, do social work students studying at UNISA as an ODL institution require to facilitate their “student walk” or journey? Please refer to resources within the student, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA. Indicate on the provided timeline where you needed this support.*
- *What support or resources, in your view, do social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution require to successfully prepare themselves for the social work profession? Please refer to resources within the student, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.*
- *What support or resources, in your view, do social work students within UNISA as an ODL institution require to grow on a personal level? Please refer to resources within the student, other people, the Department of Social Work and UNISA.*

- *Referring back to the wheel and your answer on Max-Neef's fundamental human needs and poverties, which satisfiers to the poverties you have identified, can you suggest?*
- *Life coaching can be described as a process of facilitating self-awareness, setting goals, and facilitating personal and professional growth and development. With this definition in mind, which core elements should be included in a life coaching model aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context?*
- *How should a life coaching model aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context be implemented?*

Biographical questions: Student social workers

Please complete the following questions and provide more details where appropriate:

- *How old are you?*

- *Are you married?*

- *Do you have children? How many?*

- *Do you have a family to take care of?*

- *Are you working? If so, full-time or part-time?*

- *Where do you stay when you are studying?*

- *Where do you stay when you are not studying?*

- *How long have you been studying?*

- *Have you completed any other studies? If so, please specify.*

- *Have your parents or guardians studied?*

- *Who supports or assists you financially?*

- *Anything else you would like to share?*

Annexure I***Biographical questions: Recently graduated and employed social workers***

Please complete the following questions and provide more details where appropriate:

- *Are you male or female?*

- *How old are you?*

- *When did you complete your studies?*

- *When did you start working?*

- *Where are you working?*

- *How long did you study before completing the social work degree?*

- *Have you completed any other studies? If so, please specify.*

- *Anything else you would like to share?*

***Invitation to persons involved in rendering support to students to participate
in a research study***

Research topic

“A life coaching model for social work students within an ODL context”

Researcher: Petro Botha: MA (Mental Health)

Research promoter: Dr H Louw: Department of Social Work, UNISA

Dear research participant

I am a social work lecturer employed at the Department of Social Work, UNISA and also a doctoral student at the same university. In fulfilment of the degree, I have to undertake a research project. In view of the fact that you are well-informed about the topic, I hereby approach you with an invitation to participate in this study.

This invitation contains information regarding the study. Please read it, as it will assist you in your decision whether to participate in this study. It is important that you ensure that you fully understand what is involved in the study and that you are satisfied with all aspects thereof before you agree to participate.

The purpose of the study

This research project originated as a result of the Department of Social Work undertaking research on the experiences and profiles of social work students studying at UNISA. Due to their personal contexts and studying within an open and distance learning (ODL) context, social work students experience many challenges which negatively influence their “student walk” or journey through UNISA as well the successful completion of their studies to adequately prepare them for the social work profession. There seems to be a lack

of an effective support programme for social work students studying within an ODL context, based on their identified needs.

The purpose of my research is to develop a model of life coaching that addresses the support needs of social work students within an ODL context. The life coaching model is based on the support needs and views of social work students as well as the views of recently graduated and employed social workers who studied through UNISA.

Criteria for inclusion

You are invited to participate in this study because you are involved in rendering support services to students within a tertiary institution.

What will be required of you?

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be required to sign the attached declaration sheet at the end of this invitation, indicating that you have read the information and that I may use the information from our discussion for the purpose of my research.

During our meeting the following themes will be discussed:

- *The structure of support services within your tertiary institution and/or Department*
- *Policies or guidelines influencing the support services rendered*
- *The type of support programmes rendered by your institution and/or Department*
- *Evidence of success of life coaching/coaching/mentoring programmes rendered*
- *Suggestions regarding the core elements which should be included in a life coaching model aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context*
- *Suggestions on how a life coaching model aimed at addressing the needs of social work students within an ODL context could be implemented.*

Be assured that your opinion and views will be respected and appreciated, and that it will make a valuable contribution to the research study. It is estimated that this interview will exceed 30 minutes.

Your rights as a participant in this study

Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time without needing to give a reason for your decision. I will have to refer to you as a source of information with details of our interview. With your permission, the interview that I will conduct with you will be recorded. The digital recording will be kept in a safe place for three years after which it will be destroyed.

Release of findings

Should you require feedback regarding the outcome of the research study, you are welcome to contact me and I will provide you with a written report.

Ethical approval of this study

This study has been approved by the Research and Ethics Committee (DR&EC) of the Department of Social Work at UNISA. Should you have any questions not sufficiently answered by me as the researcher, you may contact the chairperson of the committee:

Prof A Alpaslan

Tel: 012 429 6739

E-mail: alpash@unisa.ac.za

If, after you have consulted with me and the Research and Ethics Committee in the Department of Social Work at UNISA, our answers have not satisfied you, you may direct your concerns or queries to:

The Chairperson

Human Ethics Committee

College of Human Sciences

P.O. Box 392

UNISA

0003

Contact details

Please do not hesitate to contact me, should you require any additional information regarding this research study:

Petro Botha

Tel: 012 429 6274 / 082 554 7761

E-mail: Bothap@unisa.ac.za

A final word

Your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated. Should you decide to participate in this research study, you are kindly requested to sign the attached declaration form.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I have read the contents of the invitation to participate in a research study.

I am willing to participate in this research study and hereby give the researcher permission to use the information I shared with her for the purpose of conducting the research.

Signature:

Telephone number:

Date:

Annexure K***Letter of invitation to specialists: pilot study***

For attention: _____

RE: Research project on a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context

I am a social work lecturer employed at the Department of Social Work, UNISA and also a doctorate student at the same university. In fulfilment of the degree, I have undertaken a research project titled “A life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context”.

The purpose of the study

Due to their personal contexts, and studying within an open and distance learning (ODL) context, social work students experience many challenges which negatively influence their “student walk” or journey through UNISA as well the successful completion of their studies which adequately prepare them for the social work profession. There seems to be a lack of effective support programmes for social work students studying within an ODL context, based on their identified needs.

The purpose of my research was to develop a life coaching programme that would address the support needs of social work students within an ODL context. The life coaching programme, in the form of an online self-coaching programme, was based on the support needs and views of social work students as well as the views of recently graduated and employed social workers who had studied through UNISA.

The draft implementation guidelines are also attached to provide you with a broader view of how the programme may be implemented.



Criteria for inclusion

You are invited to participate in a pilot study to obtain feedback on the developed programme. I have requested social work students from level 1 to 4, as well as specialists in the field of social work, student support, ODL and life coaching to give input to the draft programme. For the students, please note that your input is very important as you will be the ultimate users. As students, you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way by participating in the pilot study.

Required input

You will be provided with an electronic copy of the support programme which may be developed into an online version. Please note that the online version will include photos, video clips as well as direct links to some references which are not reflected in the electronic copy. Please read through the programme and answer the following questions in as much detail as you can:

1. What in the programme works well?
2. Why does it work well?
3. What in the programme does not work well?
4. Why does it not work well?
5. Any suggestions of how the programme can be improved.

I will appreciate your feedback by **15 August 2013**. Please e-mail your feedback to Bothap@unisa.ac.za.

I realise that you are very busy and I feel honoured that you are taking the time to contribute to this programme. Please call me if you have any further questions.

Kind regards

Petro Botha

(DPhil student: UNISA)

1 August 2013

Letter of invitation to students: pilot study

For attention: _____

RE: Research project on the development of a life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context

I am a social work lecturer employed at the Department of Social Work, UNISA and also a doctorate student at the same university. In fulfilment of the degree, I have undertaken a research project titled “A life coaching programme for social work students within an ODL context”.

The purpose of the study

Due to their personal contexts and studying within an open and distance learning (ODL) context, social work students experience many challenges which negatively influence their “student walk” or journey through UNISA as well the successful completion of their studies which adequately prepare them for the social work profession. There seems to be a lack of effective support programmes for social work students studying within an ODL context, based on their identified needs.

The purpose of my research was to develop a life coaching programme that would address the support needs of social work students within an ODL context. The life coaching programme, in the form of an online self-coaching programme, was based on the support needs and views of social work students as well as the views of recently graduated and employed social workers who studied through UNISA.

The draft implementation guidelines are attached to provide you with a broader view of how the programme may be implemented.

Criteria for inclusion

You are invited to participate in a pilot study to obtain feedback on the developed programme. I have requested social work students from level 1 to 4 as well as specialists in the field of social work, student support, ODL and life coaching to give input to the draft programme. For the students, please note that your input is very important, as you will be the ultimate users. As students, you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way by participating in the pilot study.

Required input

You will be provided with an electronic copy of the support programme which may be developed into an online version. Please note that the online version will include photos, video clips as well as direct links to some references which are not reflected on the electronic version. All students will be provided with the whole programme. Please read through the whole programme to understand the goals and the context of the programme. You will only be requested to work through two conversations as follows:

First-level students (if you have at least one social work module on level 1):

Conversation 1 and 2

Second-level students (if you have at least one social work module on level 2):

Conversation 3 and 4

Third-level students (if you have at least one social work module on level 3):

Conversation 5 and 6

Fourth-level students (if you have at least one social work module on level 4):

Conversation 7 and 8.

If you feel inspired to work through more conversations, please do so - your feedback will be appreciated.

Please work through all the activities in the two conversations allocated to you and then complete the attached questionnaire. You do not need to do the assignment, but estimate how long it would have taken you and whether it would have been meaningful.

I will appreciate your feedback by **15 August 2013**. Please e-mail your feedback to Bothap@unisa.ac.za.

I realise that you are very busy, and I feel honoured that you are taking the time to contribute to this programme. Please call me at 082 554 7761 if you have any further questions.

Kind regards

Petro Botha

(DPhil student: UNISA)

1 August 2013

***Feedback questionnaire: Life coaching programme for social work students
within an ODL context***

Please complete the following questions in as much detail as you can. Circle the applicable option where choices are provided.

1. I am a student on the following level:

1	I have at least one social work module on level 1
2	I have at least one social work module on level 2
3	I have at least one social work module on level 3
4	I have at least one social work module on level 4

2. I have completed the following conversations:

1	Conversation 1 and 2
2	Conversation 3 and 4
3	Conversation 5 and 6
4	Conversation 7 and 8

3. Please indicate how long it took you to complete each conversation. Include the estimation of how long the assignment would have taken you. Only refer to the conversations you have completed.

Conversation	Hours	Minutes
Conversation 1		
Conversation 2		
Conversation 3		
Conversation 4		
Conversation 5		
Conversation 6		
Conversation 7		
Conversation 8		

4. Do you think the programme will attain its goals?

Yes	No
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5. Please motivate your answer in Question 4.

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6. Were the instructions for the activities in the conversations clear?

Yes	No
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7. If you have indicated “no”, please specify which instructions have been unclear and how they can be improved.

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8. Were the activities meaningful?

Yes	No
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9. Please motivate your answer in Question 8.

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10. Do you think that students who have enrolled for social work as an elective in another qualification can also benefit from this programme?

Yes	No
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11. Please motivate your answer in Question 10.

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12. Any further suggestions

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Thank you for your valuable time and input!