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**EDITORIAL**

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The hype around South Africa's elections in May has come and gone. But we have new Ministers appointed to certain portfolios while others have been retained by President Zuma. The Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities was closed, but a new Ministry of Women, located in the Presidency, was established. It is still early days to see what will emerge with respect to gender issues under the helm of Minister Susan Shabangu. The Ministry of Social Development retains Ms Bathabile Dlamini as Minister. The Committee for the review of the Implementation of the White Paper for Social Welfare continues to do its work under the chair of Prof Vivienne Taylor. This work is key to establishing what has been achieved, what the challenges and gaps are, and ultimately, what the recommendations will be for the social welfare sector. The demand for welfare services is all-encompassing, as will be seen below.

The country has experienced much labour unrest in the past few months. Clearly workers are unhappy about wages and conditions of service in the workplace. First, we had workers in the platinum mines on strike for five months. Many of the mine workers' families were starving and NGOs such as 'Gift of the Givers' and faith-based organisations such as the Methodist Church provided food and clothes to needy families in the mining sector. Now the metal and engineering sector has been on strike for over a month. The National Union of Metal Workers of SA (NUMSA) is awaiting feedback from its 220 000 workers as to whether they will accept the latest wage offer. Even though we have not had statistics yet for the second quarter from Statistics South Africa (StatsSA), there is talk of the possibility of an economic recession. We have concerns about escalating violence toward women and children. In mid-July, we had a kidnapping of a child in Bronkhorstspruit, Gauteng Province. Fortunately, he was returned to his mother after five days. The recent carjacking and murder of a four-year-old boy from Reiger Park, Boksburg, in Gauteng Province, received nation-wide and international coverage in the media. The community has rallied behind this family with support and prayers. All of these issues represent the structural violence which is currently prevalent in South Africa.

The articles in this issue of the journal represent some of the above-mentioned issues faced by marginalised sectors of the South African population. The demands on welfare personnel are enormous, as is evident from the range of topics discussed in these articles.

The issue of authentic partnerships in the informal settlement of Bhambayi in KwaZulu-Natal is explored in a qualitative study by *Raniga, Simpson and Mthembu*. The study revealed that there were intra-organisational challenges, cross-boundary and inter-organisational relations, and political influences as obstacles to the development of authentic partnerships. The authors suggest that open communication, clarity of roles and mutual trust between service providers are vital.

The article by *Weyers and Herbst* provides research into the contents and effects of a short accredited course on socio-economic development which was designed for project leaders of the Student Rag Community Service (SRCS) at North-West University in Potchefstroom, North-West Province. The methodology included the use of knowledge, attitudes and behaviour (KAB) scales, and the Facilitation Assessment Scale (FAS). The results revealed that the course had a significant effect on the participants' knowledge, and a medium to large effect on their attitudes and behaviour.

The purpose of *George's* article is to explore the contribution of coping strategies across race and how they influence suicide ideation in different race groups. Data were gathered by utilising the Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire for Adolescents, and the COPE Questionnaire from a random sample of 600 learners in the Northern Cape Province. The results revealed that black participants reported higher use of dysfunctional coping strategies in comparison to other race groups, while the coping subscales for white participants explained the highest variance for suicide ideation.

*Van den Berg, Tancred and Louw's* article explores the perceptions of adolescents at risk of suicide. This study was conducted in the Western Cape Province on 214 adolescents who had a high suicide risk. The Suicide Ideation Questionnaire was utilised. The findings suggested that there were risk factors such as, inter alia, substance abuse, negative emotional experiences, and a lack of self-esteem, problem-solving ability and hope for the future.

The aim of this article by *Fourie and Van der Merwe* is to explore the views of professionals in the field of child sexual abuse on family play therapy. The qualitative study, utilising focus groups, revealed four themes. This included, amongst others, professionals' views of inadequate knowledge and skills to engage in family play therapy, and expanding on a family play therapy framework given suggestions that gestalt therapy theory could be of value.

*Gxubane's* article focuses on restorative justice practice within the context of diversion and highlights practice issues using the restorative justice approach with youth sex offenders. The author believes there may be some reservations about the appropriateness of applying this approach to youth sex offenders. The article draws on the findings of the author's doctoral study, which explored this area of social work practice.

The experiences of social work students studying at an Open Distance Learning (ODL) institution are investigated by *Schenck, Alpaslan and Angelopulo*. The survey was administered to 10 000 students at the University of South Africa (Unisa). The study revealed the importance of interacting and communicating with students. According to the survey, the course content provided knowledge and skills about social work, and in addition, facilitated life-changing experiences and the development of the person.

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