



✉ 2729
PRETORIA
0001 SOUTH AFRICA/SUID-AFRIKA

☎ 26.1981

1992-02-27

The Chairman
Working Group No 1
KODESA
World Trade Centre
P O Box 307
ISANDO
1600

Dear Sir

With reference to the letter and request for input by the President of PASA, Dr Louis Olivier, I would like to inform you that this committee was instructed to explore the possibility of input further with you.

Therefore we would like to ask you to grant members of this committee an interview during which we would like to explain to you the way that we perceive our role and to react towards your specific needs and strategy. In clarification of our standpoint of view, I include a source document, entitled "Psychology and the Process of Change in South Africa.

I am looking forward hearing from you,

Regards

Prof J van Graan
CHAIRMAN

PASA LIAISON COMMITTEE: MACRO LEVEL

PSYCHOLOGISTS AND THE PROCESS OF CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

December 1991

INTRODUCTION

Psychology comprises the study of human behavior as well as the provision of inputs to engender functional and productive human behavior. To realise this function, the profession is involved with the management of individual problems and development, as well as with the interaction between the individual, groups, environments and organizations. Today it is generally accepted that psychologists should also be directed towards the larger systems in society of which the individual forms an integral part, in order to provide the most effective input regarding individual behavior and quality of life.

The current tempo and extent of social, political and economic change in South Africa, has a powerful impact on the stability of the general population, which if not managed effectively, can result in an escalation of individual problems and organizational disruption. These consequences have the potential to seriously harm the country and may eventually threaten the development of a successful democratic dispensation. While attempts are currently undertaken to keep the population informed on political and related developments, it appears as if little is being done to facilitate and productively manage those emotions generated by change and which are strong motivators of behavior. The psychological profession has, by means of the Psychological Association of South Africa (PASA), committed itself to the establishment of a dispensation in which the quality of life and humanity of all South Africans are optimized. The profession has also committed itself to the maintenance and extension of professional independence, while it directs itself exclusively to the welfare and needs of the human being in a changing context. These commitments compels the profession to widen its vision and involvement to the socio-political sphere, which has profound impacts on the expectations, emotions and reactions of human beings. The socio-political future of South Africa has become such a part of people's daily existence, that its continuous interaction with behavior requires intensive evaluation and management.

HUMAN REACTION TO CHANGE

Any form of change implies a movement from a familiar situation, whether comfortable or uncomfortable, to an unfamiliar situation. This "unfamiliarity" immediately causes doubt and uncertainty, which are the direct result of particular perceptions and expectations. Two basic categories of perceptions and expectations about change exist, namely change which is regarded as a "loss" and change which is regarded as a "gain". Change is regarded as a "loss" when it is deemed to require certain sacrifices, which could result in losing position, stature, possessions etc. It is regarded as a "gain" when it is seen as the ultimate and immediate solution to all existing problems, while at the same time leading to the acquiring of position, material entities, power etc. Both these perceptions easily turn irrational and unrealistic, leading to destructive behavior patterns such as frustration, aggression and depression, all of which presently manifests in South African society.

The management of change on an interdisciplinary level has become a necessity, which if ignored could eventually lead to a breakdown in the process of change. Co-operation between communication specialists, behavioral consultants (psychologists), politicians and community representatives for example, should be the core of this interdisciplinary approach. Although a considerable number of political opinions may be involved, the eventual goal - optimizing the quality of life and functioning of all - should at all times be the overriding consideration in such efforts. Unconditional acceptance of all involved, is the non-negotiable departure point for any involvement of this nature.

PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS

The following areas in the process of change, in which psychologists could provide valuable input, are envisaged:

- Management of change
 - » the degree of change possible
 - » methods of introduction
 - » management of resistance
 - » timing of action steps
 - » group facilitation
 - » monitoring effects of action steps
 - » training client representatives
- Assessment of the social climate
 - » determining assessment criteria

- » implementing and developing assessment procedures
- » determining interpretation criteria
- » drawing conclusions from information
- » training of client representatives
- Contributions to social responsibility and upliftment programs
- Developing future scenarios regarding human behavior
- Negotiation
 - » training
 - » observation and interpretation
 - » group/relationship facilitation
- Conflict management
 - » promoting interaction between parties
 - » facilitating certain outcomes
 - » reflective and interpretive behavior
 - » establishment of alternative values, proposals, resources etc.
- Communication support and extension
- Relationship brokering
 - » bringing parties (antagonists) together
 - » value-trading workshops

PRACTICAL INVOLVEMENT AT PRESENT

Psychologists may presently provide meaningful contributions in current processes and issues. These are:

- Involvement with CODESA as facilitators or observers, providing process comment
- Providing consultative support to communication actions and relationship building on a national level
- Conflict management on a community level through PASA as a mediatory body
- Socio-politico-behavioral comments in the media
- Development of a foundation aimed at managing collective behavior reactions to change
- A continuous source of facilitators for discussions, meetings and relationship building
- Establishing reaction teams to manage political overreaction and trauma eg. Ventersdorp and Thokoza

CONCLUSION

The psychological profession, by means of its representative body, PASA, aims to apply its specialist skills on a wider scale than was previously the case, in order to contribute to the establishment of a just society. These inputs will however only succeed if (a) it occurs in consultation with the main actors of socio-political systems; (b) is administered on an independent basis and (c) meets the precondition of interdisciplinary co-operation. The multi-cultural composition, infrastructure and so-called "grassroots"-involvement of the profession on a national scale, makes it an useful and in many cases an indispensable role player in the process of change.