PART TWO

WORK AND WORKERS

Introduction

Engaging with the particularities of consultors and their situations is fundamental to the kind of consultancy work advocated in this book. By the very nature of things, this involves working with and to the idiosyncratic ways in which practitioners approach their church and community work and to the particulars of the churches, activities, communities, work, worship and organizations with which they are engaged. It also involves careful attention to their overall understanding of the nature and forms of the work and the attributes required of workers. It follows, that work-views, and the mental pictures they contain, play critical and often hidden parts in determining what consultors do and contain clues to the ways in which they can develop their work and themselves as practitioners. This is especially true of the following.

1. The consultor's work-view of the actualities of his/her situation and the work-views of those with whom they are engaged.

2. The consultor's mental picture or map of the nature of church and community work.

3. The consultor's mental picture of how the work should be done and the attributes required of workers.

4. The consultant's mental picture of the nature of church and community work.

5. The consultant's mental picture of how the work should be done and the attributes required of workers.

Starting points for consultations can be aspects of 1, 2 or 3. Briefing papers, such as those described in Appendix I, provide information about the consultor's work-view and mental pictures (1, 2 and 3). Aspects of the consultant's mental picture (4 and 5) come to mind automatically and responsively as they engage with the consultor's mental pictures (1 to 3) and inform the consultancy processes. Whether they are well or badly formed, mental pictures 2 to 5 are key players in the interchanges between consultors and consultants. They are basic reference points whether or not consultors and consultants are *au fait* with their own or each other's or are consciously referring to them .

Ideally, as I argued in the Introduction, clarity about the work situation needs to be matched by clarity about work-views: the clearer consultants and consultors are about their own and each other's mental pictures of the nature of the work and the attributes required of workers, the more efficient and effective consultations are likely to be.

Whilst practitioners in many different Christian organizations use and value the consultancy services described in this book, I restrict myself to the Christian Church

at work for several reasons: the Church is the major organizational player amongst those who make critical contributions to the Christian enterprise; other organizations complement its work, generally by specializing in one aspect of Christian mission such as the well-being and development of disadvantaged people; what is said about the work of the Church and its workers is, in part, relevant to the work of other organizations; my vocational base is the Church.

In this Part I venture with some trepidation to sketch out my own mental pictures of the nature of church and community work involved in creating, maintaining, developing and deploying churches as effective missiological faith communities and instruments for the common good. This work is done by lay, religious and ordained, religious workers in private and public. Privately, they do vast amounts of thinking, studying, researching, planning, programming and praying about what needs to be done to build up and service the Christian communities they serve, to prepare for meetings and events and to run organizations to enable adults and children to pursue many different interests and activities. All this is both a consequence of and a prelude to engaging with people through casual and planned face to face contacts in all kinds of formal and informal church work and community work settings, meetings and encounters. When this work is done well, those involved become an effective work-force functioning as the Church, the body of Christ.The gifts of the spirit are freely and graciously used and people make their particular contributions. (cf I Corinthians 12). To achieve this, a lot of highly skilled and dedicated work is required. Chapter 6 explores the nature of this work and Chapter 7 describes the attributes required of those who do it. These pictures are basic aspects of my work-view (cf Element four in Chapter Two). They indicate what I bring to consultations both as a consultant and a consultor. They also give a general overall idea of the subject matter to which the consultancy processes described in Part One have to be applied. And, importantly for the purposes of this book, they could stimulate and help both consultants and consultors to clarify their own mental pictures.

Mental pictures of the work have two principal aspects: one is of the forms it takes and the other is of its essential nature. The first profiles the outward shapes it takes. The second describes the attributes and properties common to all forms of that work in any and every context. The forms of work are open to view, widely known and variously classified. Critical characteristics of the nature of the work, rooted as they are in the theology and praxis of the work and the vocational commitments of those engaged in it, are not as accessible.

The attempt to draw out general and sustainable points about the nature of the Church's work has been daunting and difficult because of the vastness, variety and complexity of that work and the danger of being superficial or obscure. It has been painful and profitable because it has shown me how I could have performed better as a consultor and consultant. That is indicative of the importance of studying the work itself. I see it as an exercise in profiling or modelling features which I find illuminate consultancy processes and not as a classification or taxonomy of church work which is a task far beyond me and the scope of this book.

In chapter seven the focus changes from my mental picture of the nature of church and community work to my picture of the attributes required of those engaged in it.

The sequence of the chapters underlines the importance of using the nature of the work to help to establish the attributes workers and work-forces need to have. Drawing out the attributes required of workers in this way is not meant to infer that workers are definitively formed by the work. Reciprocal formative processes are at work between workers and their work. Workers make their own personal mark upon the work and the work helps to shape them. Whatever the processes of formation might be, it is very important that the essential attributes are personalised, collectivised and become part of the work culture of the practitioners, people, churches and organizations.

Missiological and vocational confusion and deviation can recur, for instance, when activities and programmes are based simply on needs or on the gifts, skills and aptitudes of the available work-force without taking into proper account the essential nature of church and community work. This is not to say that what is done in this way is not laudable. Invariably it is. And that makes it more difficult to see that it is off course and to raise critical questions about it.

Teasing out the competencies required from somewhat idealistic descriptions of the nature of the work could appear to be a counsel of perfection ignoring widely experienced problems caused by shortage of workers. Those struggling to find people to do jobs and coping with workers who are ill-equipped for tasks they undertake could find this approach an irritant. I empathise with them. Much of my ministry has been spent struggling and juggling with situations vacant which were difficult, if not impossible, to fill and in facing the question, "What part of the work that we should be doing can we do with the workers we have?" These realities of every day life can seem a long way from working to ideals rather than messy actualities. In fact, the approach I am adopting helps us to face these problems rather than avoid them and to address them more profoundly by considering them in relation to the nature of the work and the competencies required. This helps churches and practitioners:

- to recruit, train and build up the best possible work-force that can be obtained in any situation, even the most unpromising, and to decide how it should be deployed;

- to do what they must and can do in given situations towards the Christian project, no more and no less;

- to work at the Christian project with proper respect to the limits of the capacity and competence of their work-force;

- to define and seek any additional training and resources they need to maintain and develop their work.
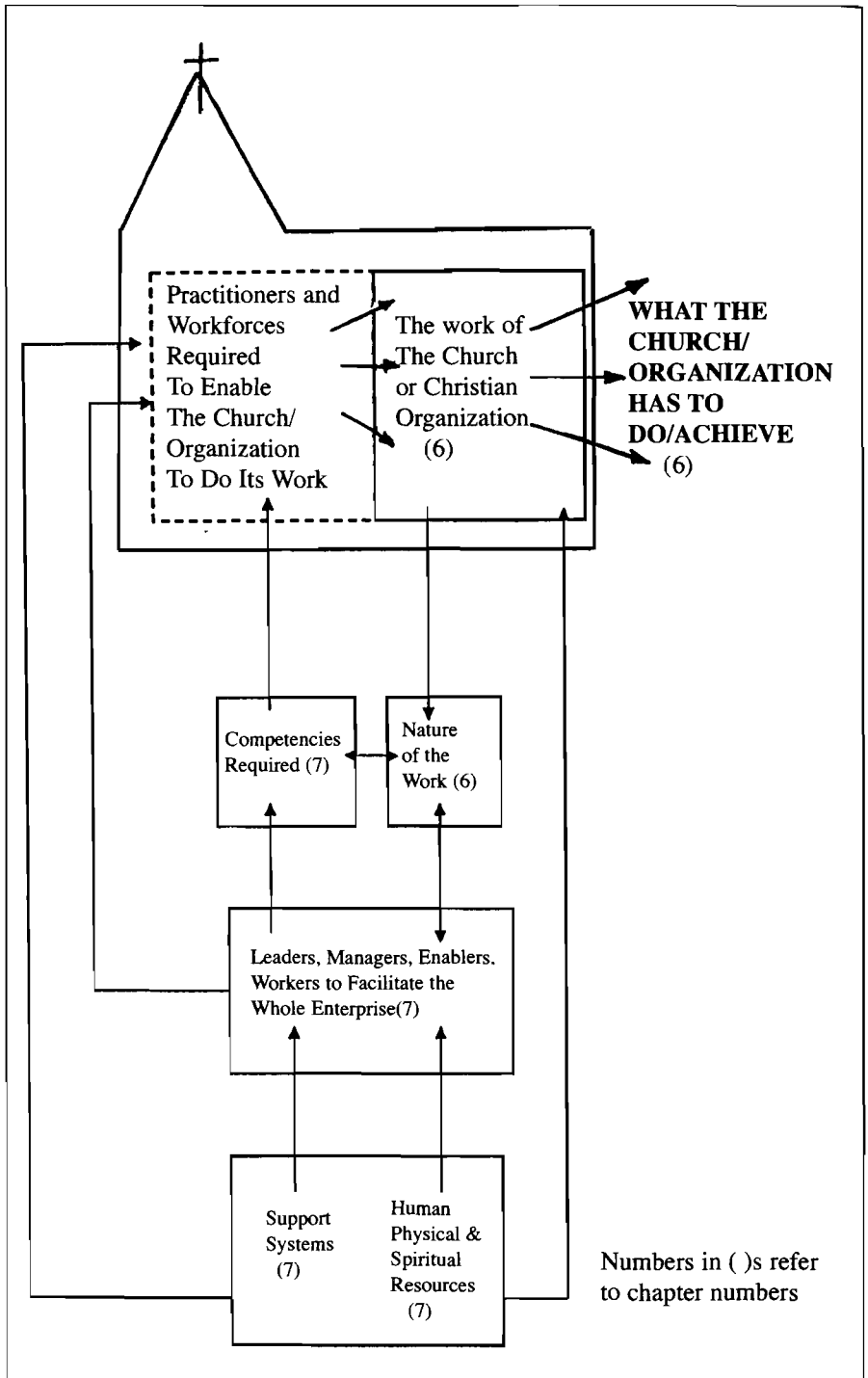
These things can be achieved whenever the vital reference points, nature of the "work" and attributes of "workers" are added to those of purpose and belief in designing and evaluating work programmes. Used in these ways, considering the ideal encourages rather than discourages people. It helps them to deal more adequately with the actual and the inevitable gaps between what is and what could be. This conclusion is based on experience of building up well-equipped work forces in unlikely situations. It is an example of theory helping practice.

Mental pictures of the nature of the work and the attributes required of workers, therefore, represent foundational subject matter not only for consultants and consultors but also for all those engaged in analysis and design of church and community work and in appraisal, assessment, evaluation and church review programmes.

What follows are some of the reasons why it is advisable for consultants and consultors to pay attention to both of these kinds of mental pictures.

- They contain coded information which, consciously or unconsciously and for better or worse, influence the character and qualities of the work done, the workers who do it and the people who share in it. Thus, in various ways, they shape the Church (the body of Christ) and the workers and people (members of the body of Christ).

- They are vital data bases.

- When they are in good order, creative energy flows.

- They help people to work systematically and systemically by differentiating parts of the work-views.

- They facilitate consultations about fundamentals which hold the keys to holistic development of work and workers.

- They can be used to promote creative interaction between the actual and the ideal.

- They provide overall work pictures in which to set the subject matter of consultations. (Apart from carefully prepared position papers and situation analyses, descriptions of the subject matter brought to consultancy sessions do not generally give a balanced view of the consultor's workaday world. Distortions occur because consultations tend to revolve around extraordinary opportunities and problems rather than the day to day ordinariness consultors normally experience. Indeed, frequently consultors are concerned to correct the impression that might be formed by concentrating on a problem. They say things such as: "It is not like this all the time". "A lot of good things are happening". "This is the downside of a very successful and effective church". Extracting sufficient information to work on the issues realistically during consultancy sessions is difficult enough without having to ensure it is portraying the whole accurately!)

A diagram illustrating the relationship between various aspects of work-worker systems formed in my mind as I wrote this Part. It is presented overleaf. It is an overview of this Part. Incidentally, once this pattern formed in my mind it suggested what was, for me, a quite different outline for situation analysis position papers, see Appendix I Outline Two. I was delighted to find it worked well in consultancy sessions not least because it demonstrated the usefulness of Part Two for consultancy work!

Practitioners and
Workforces
Required
To Enable
The Church/
Organization
To Do Its Work

The work of
The Church
or Christian
Organization
(6)

**WHAT THE
CHURCH/
ORGANIZATION
HAS TO
DO/ACHIEVE**
(6)

Competencies
Required (7)

Nature
of the
Work (6)

Leaders, Managers, Enablers.
Workers to Facilitate the
Whole Enterprise(7)

Support
Systems
(7)

Human
Physical &
Spiritual
Resources
(7)

Numbers in ( )s refer
to chapter numbers

A Diagrammatic Overview of Part Two: A Work/Worker Support System