CHAPTER TWO

THE STUDY
Rationale

Youth, youth work and youth worker have been of great concern to many in the last three decades. The investigator has been actively associated with youth, at national and international levels (more specifically at the Asia region), as a trainer since 1970. The topic, therefore, transcends the academic precinct and is intimately related to his professional realm. This cross-cultural study of the Personality, Values and Altruistic behaviour of youth workers will extend the frontiers of information in this field and in the process validate or negate certain well-held notions and views about youth workers and their functioning. Professionally it will enhance the understanding of those involved in youth work, training and management.

Aim of the Study

Since there has hardly been any study reported in the areas of youth workers' personality, values and altruistic behaviour, the present study aims at two distinct targets:

i) To find out the different psychological characteristics of youth workers working at different levels, in various organizations in the countries covered by the study. This will help in formulating a theoretical understanding of the behaviour of youth workers within the parameters of this investigation.

ii) To identify cultural differences, if any, among the youth workers belonging to different countries.

Scope of the Study

As mentioned earlier, youth workers are really the king-pin in the whole set-up of youth work. They are not only the carriers of youth programmes and activities but also sometimes the initiators of action on behalf of their organizations. They are not only entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring the effective delivery of the
programmes and services to youth, but are also expected to consistently interact with the beneficiary-groups and maintain liaison with them to elicit their optimum participation and involvement in youth activities. Thus the process through which the delivery takes place is equally important and youth workers are central to this operation. They not only interact with youth in terms of their professional skills and knowledge but their whole personality is involved in the transaction. In fact, there is a continuous interplay between the skills and knowledge of a youth worker, on the one hand, and his or her personality traits and characteristics, on the other, resulting in his or her actions or behaviour. It may, therefore, be premised that the element of personality is far more crucial factor in youth work than in other similar professions. Of course, youth worker is the key participant in the total system. The study of his or her personality, therefore, assumes significance.

In the youth worker-youth relationship, there is a regular give and take, both at professional and personal levels. It may, therefore, be useful to get data on the values of youth workers. It will not only provide the parameters of their actions but also assist in discussing the underlying motives which guide such acts and behaviour. Further, this study may be significant as a youth worker will, wittingly or unwittingly, transmit his or her values to youth with whom he or she comes into contact. If these values are conducive to the growth and development of youth and compatible with the norms of youth work, the whole process may be strengthened, otherwise the outcome of this exchange may not be harmonious and lead to aberrations.

When youth work emphasizes all round development of youth, it may be deemed as a helping process, in which the youth worker is the nurturer and benefactor. This is true even if the youth worker's constituency is normal youth (and not the problem youth or 'youth at risk'). The young people seek succour; want him or her to assist them in solving their problems; request for help in the realization of their aspirations; and expect the youth worker to be supportive of their actions and behaviour. The helping process can thrive if the youth worker has an empathetic
understanding of the needs and problems of the client group (youth) and has positive dispositions towards youth. Above all, the youth worker must have faith in this helping process and also in the potential of his or her beneficiaries.

Cross-cultural perspective has been included in the study because it will give an opportunity for comparison of the data. It will also help in integrating the information about youth workers in the region, thus providing a comprehensive picture which can be of use to regional and international youth agencies. Further, the direct involvement of the investigator in the training of youth workers of this region made it possible to procure data. The collection of data was facilitated because of his frequent travels to the countries covered by the study. It will be interesting to discover some similarities and dissimilarities among youth workers in different countries, and interpret them in the context of the local youth work scenario. It will also be worthwhile to find out whether the respondents, as a distinct professional group, share some common characteristics and traits, transcending national boundaries.

The Hypotheses

On the basis of survey of research literature and the theoretical models of the concepts being used, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

- Youth worker is expected to score
  i) higher on Neuroticism in comparison to the normal adults.
  ii) higher on Extraversion in comparison to the normal adults.
  iii) lower on Psychoticism in comparison to the normal adults.
  iv) higher on Social Desirability in comparison to normal adults.
  v) lower on Theoretical Values in comparison to the normal adults.
  vi) lower on Economic Values in comparison to the normal adults.
  vii) higher on Aesthetic Values than the normal adults.
  viii) higher on Social Values than the normal adults.
  ix) lower on Political Values than the normal adults.
x) higher on Religious Values than the normal adults.
xi) higher on Altruistic behaviour than the normal adults.

In addition, the results are expected to show definite differences among the following groups:
i) Male vs female.
ii) Youth workers belonging to government agencies (GOs) and non-governmental agencies (NGOs).
iii) Youth workers from different countries.

Limitations of the Study

The investigation has the advantage as well as the handicap of being the first of this kind with this set of variables. The very choice of the psychological factors being studied, the standard tests being employed and the theoretical framework being used gives a good degree of definiteness to the findings. It may, however, be stated that the number of subjects included in the study from each country as well as in the aggregate is not large enough though valid to the extent to draw specific conclusions. Another limitation could be in terms of the cautious applicability of such a study in selection and training of youth workers. However, it could be stated with confidence that in cross-cultural study of this type, the outcome leads to distinct conclusions in terms of extension of understanding of the minds of the youth workers and a basis for future studies in this area. Another limitation may be that the variables are studied in qualitative terms and not in relation to their performance in the field.

Its usefulness

It is hoped that the study will provide some clues to the kind of people entering youth work, thus enabling the investigator to identify inconsistencies and incongruencies, if any, in terms of the requirements of the job. The data will provide better understanding of the youth workers, their personality, psychological dispositions and traits and other related characteristics. This will facilitate the construction of a
profile of a youth worker. The findings of the study will become highly useful for those who are interested in selecting the right type of youth workers as well as giving them suitable training so that they develop appropriate and rightful altruistic attitude leading to greater helpfulness in their approach and thereby making them more effective in understanding and developing youth.