

7.7.13 Staff development processes

7.7.13.1 Supervision (question 3.5.1)

The majority of the members of the executive management (50%) mentioned that supervision always took place within their sections and 17% said supervision never take place. Some participants (33%) did not respond to the question. Administrators of Universities have a responsibility to assist in leadership development (Uehling, 1984:104) and this includes identification of potential leaders, placement in appropriate situations and constructive evaluation.

In the researcher's opinion, all these activities can take place when there is adequate supervision of junior staff members.

7.7.13.2 Performance appraisal (question 3.5.2)

Most of the respondents (50%) reported that performance appraisal never took place in their sections. However, other respondents (17%) were uncertain while 33% did not respond to the question. The researcher is of the view that performance appraisal has as one of its purposes as ensuring the vertical mobility and personal growth of staff members within the organization. It is indeed a response to the need for professional and personal growth of staff members, and Uehling (1984:102) noted that professional and personal growth is sought by both academic and administrative staff equally.

7.7.13.3 Disciplinary hearings (question 3.5.3)

Most of the members of the executive management (33%) reported that disciplinary hearings never took place at their place of employment and 17% indicated that these always took place. Some respondents (17%) reported that they were uncertain about the existence of disciplinary hearings whilst 33% did not respond to the question.

The fact that there are disciplinary hearings despite their frequency is indicative of the existence of personal and systemic problems that need to be dealt with.

7.7.13.4 Labour disputes (question 3.5.4)

The majority of the respondents (50%) reported that there were always labour disputes on campus while 17% denied this. Some respondents (33%) did not respond to the question. Labour disputes and disciplinary hearings may arise as a result of personal problems associated with finances, substance abuse and stress. A needs assessment for an EAP includes many dimensions of the organisation including the characteristics of the workforce, communication and decision making practises, record keeping systems, grievance and appeals procedures, disciplinary methods, management and labour relations, and the physical and financial resources of the organisation (Berman et al 1991:23).

7.7.14 Employee Behaviour and problems

Members of the executive management were asked on their observations about employee problems and behaviour in general and the following are their responses.

7.7.14.1 Stress (question 4.1.1)

Most members of the executive management (66%) reported that they always came across employees who experience stress; 17% denied this and the other 17% did not respond to the question.

Most respondents thus agree that the majority of employees at the University experience stress. The important thing is what the University does about this problem. The United Nations International Labour Organization calls work stress the disease of the modern workplace (Semenuk, 1996:20).

7.7.14.2 Financial problems (question 4.1.2)

Most respondents (50%) reported that they always came across employees who always experienced financial problems and 33% said they were uncertain about this. Some respondents (17%) decided to reserve their opinions by not answering the question. Financial problems undermine the need for an “improved quality of life” expected by anyone that is employed by the University (Uehling, 1984:103).

Financial counselling is also the core technology of Employee Assistance Programmes. Provision of this service on campus will result in the reduction of the problems that are experienced in this regard.

7.7.14.3 Alcohol related problems (question 4.1.3)

The responses were divided equally between those (33%) that said they always came across employees that always experienced alcohol related problems and those (33%) that said they never come across such employees. Some respondents (17%) expressed uncertainty and the same number (17%) did not respond to the question.

The number of instances where members of the executive came across employees with personal problems is cause for concern. Sullivan (1992:20) warns that when the manager of a work group is alcoholic, employees under him may experience tardiness, absenteeism, poor productivity and increased health care claims and costs.

7.7.14.4 Drug related problems (question 4.1.4)

A considerable number of respondents (34%) reported that they had never come across employees who were experiencing drug related problems at work and 33% said they were uncertain about the existence of this problem.

The other 33% did not respond to the question. The Business Times (2001:01), however, reports that substance abuse is a frequent reason for employees approaching EAP counsellors .

7.7.14.5 Marital problems (question 4.1.5)

There was a division as far as this variable was concerned. Thirty-four percent (34%) of the respondents claimed they had never come across employees who were experience marital problems and an equal number (34%) reported that they always came across employees who. Almost the same number (32%) did not respond to the question.

7.7.14.6 Health related problems (question 4.1.6)

The majority of the respondents (50%) reported that they had never come across employees that experiencing health related problems while 33% indicated that they had always come across employees who were experiencing health related problems. A minority (17%) did not respond to the question.

The reason why most of the respondents did not come across employees that were experiencing health related problems may be that health is a sensitive issue at work and most people prefer to keep such problems to themselves. In a needs assessment for a city municipality EAP, Berman et al (1991:23) mention that a significant number of employees reported physical and mental strains that were perceived to adversely affect their physical and mental health.

7.7.14.7 Absenteeism (question 4.1.7)

Most of the members of the executive management (50%) reported that they were uncertain about the existence of problems of absenteeism and 17% reported that they had never come across employees that had a problem with absenteeism whilst the other 17% reported that they always come across employees with such problems. A lesser number (16%) of employees did not respond to the question.

The Business Times (2001:01) reports that substance abuse is a frequent reason for employees approaching EAP counsellors. In the UK, up to 14 million days (3%to5%) of absenteeism-are lost each year as a result of “inappropriate” drinking, with problem drinkers taking two to eight times as much sick leave as other employees.

7.7.14.8 Slowness/Tardiness (question 4.1.8)

The majority of members of the executive management (50%) reported that they always came across employees who were tardy whilst (33%) said they never and 17% did not respond to the question.

Tardiness is responsible for reduced levels of productivity and performance and there could be a number of reasons for this. Tardiness can be corrected through training, and counselling if the employee is experiencing personal problems.

Apart from that, tardiness is listed among the less serious offences by the University (see page 98). Offences which fall in this category are those of a less serious nature, where informal disciplinary action is normally applied before formal disciplinary action, for example a written warning, demotion or dismissal, is taken.

7.7.15 Employee behaviour and problems (4.2)

Members of the executive management were requested to record their observations about specific categories of University employees and the following are their findings:

Table 25: Employee behaviour and problems -Observations by members of the executive management

ACADEMIC						ADMINISTRATION				DEAN					
Problem behaviour	Always	Sometimes	Never	No response	Total	Always	Sometimes	Never	No response	Total	Always	Sometimes	Never	No response	Total
stress	-	83%	-	13%	100	-	83%	-	17%	100%	50%	17%	-	33%	100%
financial	-	50%	-	50%	100	17%	33%	-	50%	100%	50%	-	17%	33%	100%
alcohol	-	50%	-	50%	100%	-	50%	-	50%	100%	-	50%	-	50%	100%
drugs	-	-	-	-	100%	-	-	-	-	100%	-	-	-	-	100%
marital	-	-	-	-	100%	-	50%	-	50%	100%	-	67%	-	33%	100%
health	-	77%	-	33%	100%	-	50%	-	50%	100%	-	50%	-	50%	100%
absenteeism	-	50%	-	50%	100	-	50%	-	50%	100	17%	50%	-	33%	100
tardiness	-	-	-	-	100%	17%	50%	-	33%	100%	33%	34%	-	33%	100%

Members of the executive management scarcely observed problematic behaviour amongst employees of the University of the North. The reason for this could be that these respondents have very limited interaction with members of the University workforce.

Incidents of financial problems and tardiness were, however, recorded amongst staff members in the administrative section of the University. That these problems exist is cause for concern and the University may want to place an Employee Assistance Programme at the disposal of those employees who experience problems. Sullivan and Poverny (1992:7), in a study on EAP service utilization among University academics and administration staff, note that more administrative staff reported that they sometimes worried about work when they were at home.

The findings also record stress, financial problems, absenteeism and tardiness among deans. This state of affairs suggests that there will be more consumers of EAP services at the University of the North should a service point be established.

Most respondents decided not to respond to the question on absenteeism of administrative staff. The explanation to the division in sentiment may be attributed to the fact that executive management are not in a direct overseeing position of administrative staff and would therefore not be familiar with patterns of absenteeism in this area, hence majority did not respond to the question. The other reason could be that executive management are administrative staff and saying that administration staff are always absent would be like the proverbial shooting oneself in the foot.

In a study of job stress and stress claims among the ten big Universities in the USA, the three most frequent categories of job related concerns were:

- interpersonal difficulty with a supervisor;
- absenteeism; and
- interpersonal difficulty with a co-worker (Semenuk, 1996:20).

7.7.16 Communication patterns

Table 26: Weekly communication patterns- Observations by members of the executive management

Dean/ deputy vice chancellor	Head of department (academic)	Head of department (non-academic)
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Kind of communication	Always	Uncertain	Never	No response	Total	Always	Uncertain	Never	No response	Total	Always	Sometimes	Never	No response	Total
face to face	50%	17%	-	33%	100%	50%	17%	-	33%	100%	67%	-	17%	16%	100%
telephone	50%	-	17%	33%	100%	34%	33%	-	33%	100%	67%	-	17%	16%	100%
memo	50%	17%	-	33%	100%	-	50%	17%	33%	100%	34%	33%	17%	16%	100%
circular	17%	50%	-	33%	100%	17%	50%	-	33%	100%	34%	33%	17%	16%	100%
fax	50%	-	17%	33%	100%	-	17%	50%	33%	100%	33%	17%	33%	17%	100%
e-mail	17%	33%	17%	33%	100%	-	17%	50%	33%	100%	17%	33%	33%	17%	100%
meetings	67%	-	-	33%	100%	67%	-	17%	16%	100%	67%	17%	-	16%	100%

Table 26 indicates that there is a frequent communication between members of the executive management and the vice-chancellors as well as the deans. All means of communication are popular and used frequently except circulars and e-mail which are used to a lesser extent. The findings also communicate the fact that meetings are very popular in the governance structure of the University. This kind of scenario suggests that this kind of face to face meetings can be used to educate members of the University governance structures about the need to address employee problems and further educate them on the significance of an EAP at a University campus.

A consistent number of members of the executive did not respond to the questions and this , a fact which the researcher ascribed to a lack of at the experience of the University.

7.7.19 Employee Services

7.7.19.1 Mandatory referral - On/off campus facility (question 6.1)

There was a split decision as far as this question was concerned. Half the respondents (50%) said they would refer deans and heads of sections to an off-campus facility whereas the other group (50%) preferred an on-site facility. Regardless of the outcome of this response, it is encouraging to learn that management will use and support an EAP on campus. Whether the University establishes an on-site, contractual or consultancy EAP model will of course depend on factors such as costs, staff and other logistics.

7.7.19.2 Self-referral- On/off campus facility (question 6.2)

The same finding that was obtained in the previous question was obtained here. Half the respondents (50%) said they would use an on-campus facility when they experienced personal problems and the other half (50%) said they preferred an off-campus facility. In a needs assessment for a University based EAP, Roberts-DeGennaro (1989:16) found that 97% of the respondents indicated that they would encourage a troubled employee to use a University-based EAP. The percentage breakdown by position was as follows: dean or academic administrator (100%), manager (100%), supervisor (100%), other (100%), department chair/ director (97%), teaching assistant (97%) and faculty (95%).

7.7.20 Would you like more information on the following aspects (question 6.3)

7.7.20.1 Management of personal problems (question 6.3.1)

Half of the members of the executive management (50%) reported that they would not benefit from more information on how to manage personal problems while (50%) said they would benefit from such information.

There is a prevalent myth that an advanced academic degree automatically confers upon the holder an ability to effectively manage all areas of his or her life. That myth, as it applies to academia, makes it difficult for persons in that field to open up and to share their vulnerabilities and problems (Grosch et al 1996:35).

Most educated people believe that they do not need assistance with their personal problems. That is why half of members of the executive management maintained that they did not think they would benefit from information on how to handle their personal problems.

7.7.20.2 Marital problems (question 6.3.2)

The majority of members of the executive management (67%) said they would not benefit from more information on how to manage marital problems whereas 33% said they will benefit from such information. In a study by Grosch et al (1996: 51) it was found that a University based EAPs reported a greater percentage of clients who sought assistance for marriage problems as well as career related problems.

7.7.20.3 Retirement (question 6.3.3)

Fifty (50%) of the respondents maintained that they would benefit from more information on retirement while the same number (50%) said they would not benefit from such information. This response is significant in that it confirms that employees need information on what to do once they exit the University. Counselling sessions can actually be organized from an EAP office.

7.7.20.4 Downsizing (question 6.3.4)

Majority of respondents (83%) reported that they will benefit from more information on downsizing and the other 17% said they will not benefit from such information.

The University management is currently involved in the downsizing of the institution and the researcher can insinuate that they do not know how to handle employees' personal reactions to mass lay-offs as envisaged for the University of the North. An EAP would therefore be an ideal vehicle to deal with this.

7.7.20.5 How the University deals with employees who experience personal problems

A variety of responses were yielded from this question ranging from members of the executive management who said that they did not have any idea how the University deals with such employees. Some respondents reported that such employees required counselling but who and how this should be done was kept unclear. Other responses were that there was no system on campus to deal with such employees. Probably the latter is the most genuine response because indeed such a facility does not exist on campus.

In a needs assessment for a University based EAP, Roberts-DeGennaro (1989:15) found that 80% of the respondents suggested that the University did not have adequate policies or procedures to reach and help employees whose personal and family problems interfered with their work.

7.8 Workers on campus

7.8.1 Focus group 1

7.8.1.1 Background to focus groups

A needs assessment should incorporate several methods of data gathering rather than depending on a single method alone (Berman, Sulsky, Pargament, Balzer and Kausch 1991:21; Rubin and Babbie 1997:573). That is why the researcher, over and above the questionnaire that was distributed among the literate members of the University community, also used focus group interviews to establish the feelings of the non-literate employees of the University.

7.8.1.2 Procedures for establishing focus groups

Focus groups were structured by identifying leaders such as foremen and supervisors among the non literate employees of the University. These persons were asked to identify and invite to group meetings colleagues and friends who would be interested in discussing psycho-social services to employees of the University.

In a focus group, a small group of people (some recommend 12-15; others recommend no more than 8) are brought together in a room to engage in a guided discussion of a specified topic. When used for a needs assessment, the discussants may be key informants, referral sources, service consumers, or community residents. They will be selected for the focus group on the basis of their relevancy to the topic being discussed (Rubin and Babbie 1997:573).

Typically, focus group participants are chosen without using probability sampling methods since purposive sampling or reliance on available subjects is much more common. It is also common to convene more than one focus group as relying on only one group is considered too risky, since any one group may be atypical (Rubin and Babbie, 1997:573).

7.8.1.3

Findings

7.8.1.3.1

Demographic details

Table 27: Demographic characteristics of the first focus group

Respondents	Sex	Age	Marital status	Children	Years employed by University	Standard passed	Trade union membership
A	f	45	widow	4	19	standard 6	yes
B	f	45	widow	7	17	standard 1	yes
C	f	54	married	5	19	standard 6	yes
D	f	59	married	9	21	standard 6	yes
E	f	55	widow	5	19	standard 6	yes
F	f	51	married	8	19	standard 5	yes
G	f	58	married	9	21	standard 3	yes

Unlike in the previous samples, the workers at the University of the North had been employed for a period of 19-21 years. This means that they understand the institution quite well. The majority in the sample had passed standard 6 and had more than 4 children.

This finding also contrasts with the findings from the previous samples which means that the unskilled workers at the University are a group *sui generis*. They were all members of trade unions and Grosch et al (1996:52) found that EAPs that had some degree of union involvement reported a slightly higher percentage of peer referrals and a slightly higher

penetration rate than EAPs that were solely management sponsored, although none of these differences were statistically significant.

7.8.1.3.2 Existence of personal problems

The workers' main problem was that their children wanted to go to school and they could get jobs after completing their studies. They also informed the researcher that problems are political at work. Their explanation was as follows:

- **scope of work** - some employees had smaller and some have bigger areas to work on;
- **unnecessary transfers** - the workers were moved from one area of work to another. People who were not performing should be given training instead of moving employees from one station to another. The workers mentioned that when these transfers occurred they complained to their supervisor. If a response was not satisfactory, they sought guidance from their trade union
- When issues were not properly handled, they reported the matter to the Labour Relations Section.
- The workers also needed a creche facility on campus instead of running around in the mornings. They regarded this as an extremely important facility for all.
- The workers also expressed the need for an adult education facility. They said the majority of them could not understand circulars that were issued by the University to the entire community. It was also difficult for them to understand the University policy as this was written in a language unknown to them.
- The workers also indicated that problems of absenteeism, alcoholism and drug abuse were handled by their supervisor who

documented them and submitted to the Human Resources Department on campus.

One member of the group had this to say during the meeting: “I have a child who is different from others, he is a slow learner, he feels discriminated, he is frustrated, and he feels isolated when other children go to school”. This does confirm that workers indeed experience personal problems of such a magnitude that they interfere with productivity.

7.8.1.3.3 EAP OFFICE (would you make use of it?)

The workers were asked whether the establishment of a service point on campus would be supported and their response was in the affirmative. They would also be prepared to pay something only if the service was good. They reported that they would be willing to bring their personal problems to this office and that such a service point would be convenient if it was to be located on campus.

7.8.1.3.4 Location (where should the office be located?)

The responses were that the EAP office should be located;

- at a place where there would be less traffic of students;
- where there would be only a few staff members and employees;
- the dining halls which are under utilised. They are ideal for such a service.
- the EAP office should not be located at the Administration;

The responses of the workers somehow confirmed the ideal location of employee assistance service points, especially that anonymity and confidentiality should be ensured.

7.8.1.3.5 External/Internal model

Myers (1984:69) defines the concept model in EAP as “the structure that an organisation uses to plan, implement and serve the needs of the troubled employees”. There are two types of service models, namely internal and external models. The workers in the first focus group had the following to say about the model of EAP that has to be adopted by the University:

- the service should be provided internally;
- if the staff members do not deliver they can be held accountable;
- it will be easy to make appointments and for self-referral;
- it will create jobs for redundant staff that are facing retrenchment and redeployment;
- the University does not have money to employ outsiders;
and
- external people will take other people’s jobs.

University of the North’s unskilled staff are very opinionated and from their discussions in the group, the researcher gathered the impression that they definitely have the interest of the University at heart.

7.8.1.3.6 Availability of the service

Availability of this service will be extremely helpful particularly for those who drink excessively. One member actually said “the problem of excessive drinking is more pronounced among male workers. Some of them drink during working hours. This is a serious problem for the trade union as well”. Nehawu is forever discouraging people from abusing alcohol.

This finding seems to confirm McDonald and Dooley’s (1990:97-105) observation that union involvement in the establishment of an EAP results in greater acceptance of the programme since employees feel an increased sense of ownership, and the perception of the EAP as being more rehabilitative and less punitive.

7.8.1.3.7 Alcohol abuse

The workers mentioned that some people become aggressive when they are told about alcohol abuse. “People will hate you”, was one comment from the group members. It was reported that alcohol abuse was a big problem amongst male workers. If the service to help workers deal with alcohol problems were to be initiated, this would be of assistance to Nehawu, because the latter was forever advising workers on the dangers of substance abuse. A number of people had lost their jobs because of alcohol use on duty. They were tested and found to be drunk.

This finding suggest that the University EAP should have a strong alcohol focus particularly among workers. The other alternative would be to conduct alcohol awareness programmes for the University community even before the establishment of an EAP service point.

7.8.1.3.8 Dismissal

The members had the following to say about an incident of drinking at work which subsequently led to dismissal:

- there was a man in 1997 who was working as a driver;
- he was called and was warned several times about his drinking problem;
- he was called and counseled about his drinking patterns.
- entries were made in the day book and he was made to sign;
- all offences were recorded;
- this was done four times;
- he was warned but he continued drinking because he regarded it as “nice”;
- he was caught and forced to blow into the breathalyser;
- he was found to be drunk and driving a University car; and
- the next thing I found him outside campus asking for money.

Drinking at work, though a less serious offence in terms of University policy, can be a dismissable action (see page 92). Over and above that drinking problems fall within the core technologies of Employee Assistance Programme (Roman and Blum, 1995:3-8; 17-22). The researcher also suggests that the University consider re-classification of this offence because it is indeed serious. Workers who drink at work run the risk of making impaired judgements which can result in serious accidents which will cost the University community dearly.

7.8.1.3.9 Needs

Workers were asked to mention all the needs that they had, and the following lines capture what was said:

- more knowledge on retirement;
- retrenchments;
- benefits;
- personal problems, problems children experience and finances;
- the difference between retirement, retrenchment package-differences as far as the finances are concerned;
- what happens to your children when you die on duty, will the employer take care of them;
- after retirement “we have to wait too long for an old age pension, how can we expedite receipt of our old age pension”;
- “we take a long time to receive our old age pension, some of us die before we get our old age pension”;
- “give us feedback on your research”;
- “we want to know whether the University will respond positively to your research”;
- “we need feedback whether management is stable or unstable”

It does seem from the findings that the needs expressed by the University workers are similar to those mentioned by other employees.

The significant part, however, is that these needs which include benefits, retirement, finances as well as other personal problems can be addressed comprehensively by an Employee Assistance Programme.

7.8.1.3.10 Do you get permission to get out to address our problems

The workers were also asked whether they were given permission to address personal problems when these were serious. The response was positive. This positive attitude by the University as an employer signals that an EAP will be supported once it is started. This attitude is consistent with the University philosophy which states: "The University believes that its employees are of primary importance in achieving its overall mission objectives.

The University is, therefore, prepared to devote adequate time and resources to ensure that employees are developed to their full potential, used effectively and adequately rewarded for their contributions towards meeting these objectives.

It is expected that employees will, on their own part, carry out their responsibilities conscientiously and enthusiastically and thereby contribute towards the achievement of the objectives of the University and towards maintaining a favourable image of the University amongst employees, clients and the general public" (Personnel Policy and Procedures, 1996:1).

The University policy is quite favourable to the initiation of progressive programmes such as an EAP on campus. This would go a long way in fulfilling the University's social responsibility obligations.

7.8.13.11 General comments

In conclusion, members of the group were asked to make any comment and this is what was said by one of the participants. “The problem on campus is that good initiatives are never finalised. Maybe the problem is this unstable management. We have a new team of managers almost every three months and every manager does not build on initiatives started by the predecessor”.

7.8.2 Second Group - Findings

The second focus group was convened on the advice of Rubin and Babbie (1997:573) that “it is also common to convene more than one focus group; relying on only one group is generally considered too risky, since any one particular group may be atypical”.

7.8.2.1 Demographic profile of the group

Table 28: Demographic characteristics of the second focus group

Respondents	Sex	Age	Marital status	Children	Years employed by University	Standard passed	Trade union membership
A	m	49	married	5	4	standard 8	no
B	m	51	married	7	14	standard 4	yes
C	m	47	married	4	4	standard 6	yes
D	m	36	married	2	12	standard 5	yes
E	m	42	married	3	12	standard 3	yes
F	f	59	married	7	15	standard 6	yes
G	f	48	married	7	30	standard 8	yes

The second group was slightly more educated than the first consisting mainly of men. But the demographic patterns were pretty similar except for gender and level of education.

7.8.2.2 **Do you need a place where you can share your personal problems ?**

The members of the group were asked the question above and their responses were poignant:

- “We definitely need a place like that”;
- “there are many problems that we experience as workers”
- “we make complaints but it does seem we are not getting anywhere”;
- “there is no feedback”;
- “we need a uniform”;
- “every section of the helping staff has a uniform”;
- “we as drivers do not have a uniform”; and
- “ we have made complaints in the past four years and nothing is happening”;

Some of the responses of the workers can not be dealt with within the context of an EAP, but again the researcher discerned a lot of support for the EAP. The focus groups also provided an environment where the workers could vent their frustrations and actually educated them about the fact that their problems are not necessarily insurmountable.

7.8.2.3 **Did you complain to the union about a uniform**

Some of the problems that employees do not belong to the scope of EAP, but the researcher listened to the members uninterruptedly and gave vital information where necessary. The following lines capture the essence of the discussion during the meeting::

- “we have discussed and nothing is happening”;
- “nothing is happening.”;

- “we drive lecturers to the Giyani Teaching Centre and we were not paid”;
- “lecturers are getting paid”;
- “Giyani Teaching Centre is closed now, and we have not received our monies”;
- “we need that money because we are working hard”;

These findings reveal that University workers have genuine problems and seemingly their trade unions are not representing them well in addressing these. Some of the issues fall within the realm of Labour Relations, but workers cannot distinguish the nature of the problem and where it is supposed to be handled. This is in spite of their literacy level.

7.8.2.4 Our wages arrive late in the bank

Workers generally complained about the fact that they got their money too late to go to the bank whereupon the researcher commented and asked the following question: “Did you inform your union about this?” The response from the workers was that they did complain to the union on several occasions, but the situation hardly improved. Most of the problems raised by this group should actually be directed to management or the union. The following complaints were expressed:

- “when the month ends on a Friday, we do not get our money until Monday”;
- “we experience the same problem”;
- “our pay-slips come a week after month end”;
- “it means we should not budget”;
- “we do not work for money”;

- “we work to accumulate more days so that we can have a day off”;
- “our problems are too many on this campus”;
- “I do not believe that the problem of uniforms has been taken to the union”;
- “our leaders are short changing us”; and
- “we have a lot of problems we do not know what to do?”

The researcher’s impression about these problems in particular is that workers, over and above systemic problems that they complained about, also experience cash flow problems. It means, by the end of the month, their bank accounts are already empty and their functioning is seriously impaired when their pay cheques are not deposited into the bank on time. This also confirms that workers can benefit from an Employee Assistance Programme because the latter has as one of its core-technologies, financial planning.

7.8.2.5 When did this problem of money occur?

The response to the question was that the problem had been going on for almost a year. This was said to be a general problem at the University. The researcher challenged group members in that he did not experience the same problem. His explanation was that perhaps this state of affairs was bank specific.

Other University employees received their salaries before the actual pay day. The problem could probably be with a specific bank.

The researcher expressed utter dismay at these allegations made by the worker, because as an employee of the University, he had never experienced this kind of problem.

7.8.2.6 Redundancy

On the question of redundancy, the workers said: “We are employed as drivers, but some lecturers want to drive themselves. The University claims that they are concerned about cutting costs, yet their colleagues in the same department would come in and want to be driven. Where is cost cutting? These people want to make us redundant.”

“Lecturers are earning as academics, why do they want to drive themselves. They are taking our work. Why do they do this: What do people in Finance say?” These questions do prove that the drivers on campus indeed have genuine fears and anxieties, and EAPs reduce staff uncertainty and boost staff morale (Cannon, 1996: 18-19). These, however, need to be addressed by the University management or trade union. The best an Employee Assistance Programme can achieve under these circumstances is to provide employees with information that they can use to their benefit.

This aspect concerns the ease with which the employees can make use of the EAP. Access is usually constrained by encumbering procedures and choosing a remote EAP site location. Where the EAP is located will determine its effectiveness to its potential users. Terblanche (1988:132) concurred with this observation when he said that the Programme and its personnel should be physically located in a way that it is visible and accessible, but with due regard to the requirements for confidentiality. Members of this focus group had the following to say about the location of the EAP office . “It must be located within the administration building.”. All members of the group were unanimous on this one about this.

The researcher is of the opinion that the location of an EAP office will seriously compromise confidentiality and access of the Programme. A very neutral location is therefore suggested.

7.8.2.8**External/ internal model**

The findings from this group contrast the first group in that members of the second focus group had the following to say about the location of the office:

- it must be externally based because there are lot of unscrupulous people on campus;
- it must be a programme established and run by people from campus and the group was divided on this aspect.

There was some convergence of ideas as to who should run the service. Just like the first group, this group strongly advocated that employees of the University should run the programme, although there was no unanimity on the issue.

7.8.2.9 Personal Problems

The researcher asked the members what people who had problems were doing about these problems. The members said: “Such problems we do have, we keep them to ourselves. We have problems with our wives because we are working and at the end of the month I go home empty handed, that is a cause of problems in the family. We keep these problems to ourselves What can we do?”

“The University is doing nothing about these problems. There are a lot of problems and they are personal and we are also not so free to talk about them in a meeting such as this. Every time I have a personal problem I am referred to Administration, and the latter has different sections which have nothing to do with our personal problems.

It would be very helpful if a specific service point was available so that we can take them to the office”. “We are suffering, the University takes more care of its cars than ourselves”.

“They fit in tracking devices in University vehicles, they insure them than ourselves”

“We transport people to funerals with University cars, but we are not allowed to use these cars for our relatives” funerals”

“We even collect non University employees with these cars, but we can’t use them”.

“When I return from Johannesburg, I pass my home and travel another 10 km to deliver the car even if it is midnight staff members use University cars for personal use”.

The nature of the personal problems expressed by members of the focus group need the attention of the University management, trade unions as well as the Employee Assistance Programme. Some of these problems can be sorted out by improving communication between the University management and the workers. One noticed that some of these problems are as a result of inadequate information on the part of the workers.

7.8.2.10 Will you be prepared to pay for the service ?

When asked whether employees would be prepared to pay for the service, their response was as follows:

“Sometimes you have to pay for a poor quality service which is not good. That person must be paid by the University. He will be employed to help us. We do not have to pay for the service.”

The issue of service payment is a thorny one that needs an agreement between management, the unions and the workers. However, what could be done is that the University could subsidise the service and deduct workers’ contribution in the same way it does with health benefits or medical aid schemes.

7.8.2.11 Do you know anyone who has been fired because of personal problems?

The members of the group were asked whether they were aware of colleagues who were dismissed on the basis of personal problems. Their response was: "Personal problems of staff are kept in a register. There are people who have been fired because of drinking problems".

An Employee Assistance Programme once established will give employees who are to be fired a second chance. Some persons get dismissed from work because of problems beyond their control.

7.8.2.12 Were these people given a warning/ have these people been referred first for assistance?

The members of the group responded in this way: "People who drink are reprimanded in our presence but when they are fired we never come to know of it as they are given confidential letters. You will meet this person off campus saying that he has been fired".

The guidelines for EAP suggest that use of the service by an employee is no substitute for disciplinary action. In spite of this, the researcher maintains that employees who have drinking problems should be assisted to overcome their addiction, be given a chance before they can be dismissed. Such is a contribution that can be made by an EAP.

8.2.13 Are these people not referred for counseling when personal problems are observed?

The participants in the group had the following to say about an employee who manifests personal problems that ultimately lead to his or her dismissal:

- “the manager observes and records any incident from the employee;
- these incidents are taken to the Human Resources Division;
- they accumulate, and a person continues drinking; and
- ultimately he will be called to administration, and that will be his last day on campus”.

The above explanation seems to be in line with the “principle of progressive disciplinary actions as contained within the University policy (see page 96). Members of the group were also asked what the role of the Labour Relations Division on campus is on these kinds of cases. The respondents answered in this way:

- “Labour relations on campus are looking on issues such as these;
- but they do not address the issues adequately;
- people are fired for drinking at work, after several warnings”.
- “sometimes people with drinking problems are referred to doctors for physical examination”

- after this the Human Resources would call and tell you that your main problem is alcohol;
- “You’d be advised to stop drinking”.

The responses from the workers genuinely call for an Employee Assistance Programme. Problems of substance abuse have been recorded. An EAP has as one of its technologies dealing with workers who experience substance abuse.

7.8.2.14 **Retrenchment/ Retirement**

The researcher started by explaining the two processes to the group and tried to distinguish between them;

- “we are informed about our benefits a few months before we terminate our service;
- during our work, we are not informed;
- when you are about to retire you will be sent a letter;
- then you will be called by the Human Resource Division to be informed about your benefits;
- when the day of retirement is around, you find that all your benefits have not been taken care of , you have to come always to campus to look for your money and that costs you money and time, by the time your benefits arrive, you have lost half of your benefits;
- all I want is to be given everything on the day I terminate my services;
- I must get all my benefits, like blue card, pension and my leave gratuity on the same day and off I go”.

As far as the benefits and their processing was concerned, the manager of the section made this input:

- “most of the workers are ignorant about their benefits and entitlements;
- they should know that as a worker, you need to make your own plans and preparations above those of your employer;
- pensions are not processed on campus and that is the reason why there are delayed payments;
- by the time your pension is been worked out, you should be surviving on your leave gratuity, so what it means is that people; should treat their leave days with a lot of respect;
- they should not just encash them for fun, they should remember rainy days;
- people should not absent themselves unnecessarily from work because that affects your benefits in a negative way;
- people need to make preparations;
- our Human Resources must educate the workers;
- workers must be educated on these”.

7.8.2.15 Would workers benefit from this kind of information ?

The workers were asked whether they would benefit from more information on marital , financial as well as personal problems. They were further asked whether they would benefit from more information on retirement and retrenchment. The following are the responses:

- “these workshops and information sessions are important;
- workers are taking things for granted”.

7.8.2.16

Any general question

When the members were asked to make any comment, each one of them had something to say. The following observations were made:

- “the University is supposed to pay for our children, but we are expected to pay in advance and the University will refund”;
- “it would seem this problem is experienced by black people only”;
- “the queues at administration are only black”;
- “whites are not in the queues for education benefits”;
- “the unions need to address this issue”;
- “black people are asked a lot of funny questions”;
- “whites are not asked anything, the University simply pays”;
- they do not have sound interpersonal relationships and
- they must treat us equally”.

The responses here indicate that there are a large number of problems among the University workers. The EAP cannot handle all these concerns and problems single-handedly. A partnership needs to be struck between management, the unions and the workers to deal with these problems.

Apart from that, University workers are quite suspicious probably because they operate on inadequate knowledge and information.

Will your union support this programme?

- “yes we are members of a union and we support this”;
- “I do not know what the leadership of the union will agree”;
- “some of the issues raised by Mr Sithole are supposed to be driven by the union”; and
- “the union should not only be concerned with disputes between employees and employer”.

This last sentiment seems to reflect Googins and Godfrey’s (1987:119) viewpoint that “unions have the ability to implement self-development programmes for their troubled members, because they are well staffed and have a constituency”.

There is support of the programme by workers who are also members of a union as well. This seems to augur well for the establishment of an EAP in that “union involvement in the establishment of an EAP results in greater acceptance of the programme since employees feel an increased sense of ownership, and the perception of the EAP as being more rehabilitative and less punitive (McDonald and Dooley, 1990:97-105).

7.8.2.18 Do you get time off to address your personal problems?

The response to this question was in the affirmative and this shows that the University is ready in terms of policy and attitude to develop an Employee Assistance Programme.

7.9 Conclusion

Whereas this chapter presented, analysed and interpreted the findings from the empirical study, the next chapter will focus on the summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations.