Chapter 8

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

Employee Assistance Programmes are common place within the world of business and industry in South Africa, same cannot be said about these services within schools, technikons and Universities despite a host of research that points to a myriad of personal problems experienced by people who regard the institutions of learning as places of employment as well.

The purpose of this study, which in no way claims to be pioneer work, was to scratch the same surface that was investigated by Roman (1984:13-17; Moagi, 1994:17 and Molebatis,1997) about the existence of personal problems among educators and the support services arm of learning institutions.

8.2 Outline of the thesis

The thesis has been structured in this way:

8.2.1 Chapter 1

The thesis has been structured in such a way that the first chapter is a general orientation to the study and an introduction to the study that is punctuated by the purpose of the study, motivation and the explication of the research problem. Also included within this chapter are issues of methodology such as the population, samples and sampling procedures as well as the data collection instruments of the study. Limitations of the study are highlighted in this chapter.

8.2.2 Chapter 2

The focus of this chapter whose title "Higher Education in South Africa: The state of the art" is on the various fundamental changes that are sweeping through the higher education sector in South Africa. Current literature reveals salient features of the educational policy that are fundamentally divergent to the situation prior to 1994. This chapter was included to establish the extent to which change affect individuals and groups either in a positive and negative way. Of special importance for this study of course is what do institutions of higher learning do when employees experience personal problems that impact negatively on productivity as a result of these changes.

8.2.2.1 Summary of the findings from literature

The following are salient features of higher education in South Africa:

- Higher education in South Africa recently underwent drastic and fundamental change. The extent to which this change affects people and the direction and effectiveness of the changes implemented have not been quantified and measured. Some of the negative aspects of this change is that new problems are emerging in that institutions are restructuring and this means downsizing and the host of negative emotions that accompany job loss.

One should also not lose sight of the fact that the changes that are brought about are meant for the better. Some of the reasons things are happening as they do is that resources have to be used sparingly and some scarce resource have to be shared equitably amongst the stakeholders.

- The functions of a University are teaching, research and community service. These are noble goals. Fact of the matter is can these ideals

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be attained by physically and emotionally exhausted personnel. Regardless of the rhetoric that is bandied about in other circles, society still needs Universities to produce highly qualified human resources for the country.

- The new national policy on education has been in operation since 1996 while the Higher Education Act has been governing higher education since 1997 and Higher Education Act has established the Council on Higher Education which has among its sub committees the Quality Assurance Committee.

- Quality assurance has to be promoted within higher education especially in South Africa the need to address quality through quality assurance is a pressing issue. In a rapidly changing society, characterised by the growth in the numbers of high-risk students and severe cuts in state subsidies, the impoverishment of universities in terms of their teaching and research tasks has become a reality. In order to manage higher education in a more rational way, and to achieve new purposes, governments in many countries have set up national quality assurance systems in which universities have been compelled to demonstrate their accountability to external stakeholders

- A new constitution for the country has been in effect since 1996. The principles enshrined in the Higher Education Act mirror the basic tenets and values of the South African constitution. For example, the new policy discourages any kind of discrimination and upholds access to institutions of higher learning.

- There is a National Qualifications Framework in University education. It sets boundaries- a set of principles and guidelines which provide a vision, a philosophical base and an organisational structure- for construction, in this case, of a qualification system. Detailed development and implementation is carried out within these boundaries.

In short, the NQF is the set of principles and guidelines by which records of learner's achievements are registered to enable national recognition of acquired skills and knowledge, thereby ensuring an integrated system that encourages life-long learning (The National Qualifications Framework: An Overview undated)

- Employment equity is in place to implement affirmative action. A designated employer must conduct an analysis of employment policies, practices, procedures, and the working environment so as to identify employment barriers that adversely affect members of designated groups. The analysis must also include the development of a workforce profile to determine to what extent designated groups are under-represented in the workplace.

- University education is largely funded by the state. Economic trends are not the only factors that affect higher education financing. As a result of lean budgets, state policy makers have been forced to make difficult spending decisions and, in the process, clear policy choices. In South Africa the situation is slightly different. South African government's spending on education has been increasing since 1994. For example, government spending in the 1999/ 2000 on education

was R 47.8 billion and in the 2000/2001 is R50.7 billion. In the arena of Higher education, there is a massive pumping in of finances to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme. It has seen a growth of 13% from R390 million to R443,5 million. Since 1994 almost R1,7 billion has been allocated to students.

- Students' enrolment at historically black institutions is dropping.

- Universities are places of employment and therefore need to comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

8.2.2.2 Conclusions

Education in South Africa is undergoing rapid change. Employees in educational institutions are affected by these changes. The effect may bring about the emergence of personal problems which may seriously undermine productivity.

8.2.2.3 Recommendation

Now that Universities are regarded as places of employment, it would only be logical for them to be regarded as such for all intents and purposes. Changes will continue to be there and they will continue to yield a mixture and myriad of reactions. Universities need to find a mechanism to harness these reactions in a way that ensures the smooth functioning of employees and the organization as a whole.

8.3 Chapter 3

8.3.1 Summary

The focus of this chapter has been on a University as an employing organization. An explication of the University's key functions of teaching, research and community service has been made. The highlight of this chapter is on the character of the University and typical nature of its structure that impacts negatively on its employees, particularly the academic staff. An attempt has been made to sketch the difficulties that assail academics in particular from the mid-life stage.

The characteristics of academics were also highlighted, particularly those that predispose academic staff to personal problems.

8.3.2 Conclusion

A University is a learning institution as well as a place of employment. It is susceptible to all the vicissitudes of industrial life such as bureaucracy and labour disputes. It is an industry concerned mainly with the development of highly skilled human resources for the country. Employees that carry out these functions are not immune from personal problems and University management needs to recognise this.

8.3.3 Recommendation

On the basis of the findings from literature, it is recommended that more research be conducted in the area of personal problems that are experienced by academics in South Africa. A bulk of literature in this area is from overseas and even this concentrates almost entirely on problems of academics. Very little information is available about other employees of the University such as administrators and support services staff.

8.4   Chapter 4

8.4.1   Summary

A detailed exposition of the University of the North as an employer is provided. The physical location of the University, the geography of the campus, governance structures as well as faculties are described while the different committees as well as their functions are outlined.

The important focus of this chapter is on the staff composition of the University. Various staffing trends within academia, management and support services have been highlighted. Student enrollment at the main campus as well as at satellite campuses has been indicated from 1960-1999.

Another salient feature of this chapter is the University policy which is contained in the document called Personnel Policies and Procedures. In this chapter the philosophy of the policy, industrial relations, appointment conditions, leave conditions, and disciplinary procedures for employees are outlined.

The other finding is that notwithstanding the provisions of the Employment Equity Act, -there were more white senior professors than blacks;

- of the 32 professors, thirteen were African and 14 white and one is of Indian descent;
- of these professors, only two were women and
- out of 73 senior lecturers, only 8 were women;

8.4.2 Conclusion

The University of the North exists as a legal persona and has a policy, norms, values and principles that govern its operations. Governing structures are also in place. It is indeed an organization that employs thousands of individuals who are susceptible to the University 's labour relations. The only weakness that was identified by the researcher is that the organization did not have any policy on dealing with employees that experience personal problems. The other challenge that faces the University is the racial and gender discrimination of the past.

8.4.3 Recommendation

On the basis of the findings and the conclusion reached, the University:

- needs to adopt a policy regarding employees' personal problems;
- has to redress the historical racial and gender discrimination in its employment and promotion areas. This means people that have been historically disadvantaged need to be reflected in areas of power. These are women and disabled people of African descent.

8.5 Chapter 5

The emphasis in this chapter is the nature of Employee Assistance Programmes. The chapter details the services provided by EAP in industries. Different models of EAPs are provided as well as marketing of the programme after implementation.

8.6   Chapter 6

8.6.1   Summary

The focus in this chapter is on the role of an Employee Assistance Programme in the University. EAPs started in industries and that is the reason why a section on the role of such services in the world of business and commerce is outlined.

The crux of this chapter is on the core technology of an Employee Assistance Programme. In this section focus is on what EAPs can achieve and do for the Universities such as:

- identification of employees who experience personal problems;
- identification of employees' behavioural problems based on job performance issues;
- the provision of expert consultation to supervisors, managers, and union stewards on how;
- to take the appropriate steps in utilizing employee assistance policy and procedures;
- the availability and appropriate use of constructive confrontation;
- micro linkages with counseling, treatment, and other community resources are developed;
- the creation of macro linkages between the work organization and counseling, treatment and other community resources; and
- the centrality of the employee's alcohol problems as the programme focus with the most significant promise for producing recovery and genuine cost savings for the organization in terms of future performance and reduced benefit usage.

There are also reasons why Universities should feel motivated to adopt EAPs. Some of those reasons are the following:

- the belief that EAPs will improve productivity, and in the long run, be cost-effective (Balgopal and Stollak, 1992:112; Bingaman, 1998:16- 17);

- employers believe that intervention is good business and exemplifies corporate social responsibility (Balgopal and Stollak, 1992:112;

- they reduce staff uncertainty and boost staff morale (Cannon,1996: 18-19);

- they reduce interpersonal conflict (Remington, 1996:22-25);

- they encourage emotional literacy (Katsekas,1998:22-23); and

- they reduce anger at the workplace (Puig,1996:30 -31).

8.6.2 Conclusion

Universities in South Africa in general and the University of the North in particular, have not taken Employees Assistance Programmes earnestly even if these are popular in industries. The successes and achievements as well as the advantages of establishing EAPs have been well documented in overseas literature.

8.6.3 Recommendation

On the basis of the findings, the researcher recommends that awareness campaigns need to be undertaken in various campuses and in particular the University of the North to educate employees and management about the effect of personal problems on productivity. Perhaps at the beginning of such campaigns, the use of community resources can be highlighted.

8.7   Chapter 7

8.7.1   Summary

Chapter 7 is the presentation, analysis and interpretation of empirical findings. Six samples were given a questionnaire to complete. The following is a summary of the findings per sample:

8.7.1.1 Academic staff

Some of the major findings emanating from this sample are that:

- academic staff was comfortable with some of the changes taking place in education such as the accreditation of programmes;
- respondents were generally happy with the quality promotion function of the Council on Higher Education;
- a significant number of participants were not entirely comfortable with the task team report on higher education;
- less than half of the respondents were comfortable with the National Qualifications Framework;
- most were uncomfortable with the conditions of service of employees as found in the Higher Education Act;
- most were comfortable with the Employment Equity Act;
- the majority were unclear about the mission, vision and goals of the University;
- promotion criteria as well as conditions of employment were also not clear to the academic staff;
- staff development exercises such as performance appraisal, supervision, coaching and mentoring never took place at the University;
- most academics did agree that bringing about change on campus would be difficult;

- the majority of academics had a problem of dual allegiance;
- the majority of academics communicated quite frequently with one another;
- the same cannot be said about communication between academic staff as well as support services staff and administrative staff;
- face to face as well as telephone communication were the most popular means of communication;
- less than fifty percent of the sample reported that academic staff always experienced stress and financial problems;
- the majority of the respondents indicated that administrative staff never experienced the personal problems such as absenteeism and alcoholism;
- a great number of the respondents also reported that support services staff never experienced personal problems;
- most respondents said they would refer a colleague with a personal problem to an on-site facility;
- the majority said they would benefit from more information on how to handle personal problems, marital problems, financial as well as other related problems;
- they also mentioned that staff members could benefit significantly from information on financial planning, retirement, downsizing and retrenchment.

8.7.1.2   Conclusion

Academic staff was generally content with the changes taking place in higher education. Dissatisfaction was however expressed in the lack of staff development programmes for staff members in this area. They have mentioned that they would benefit from more information on how to manage personal problems, retirement and downsizing related issues.

8.7.1.3   **Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings, staff development programmes for academic staff at the University of the North were recommended.

8.8   **Heads of departments**

8.8.1.   **Summary**

The following is a summary of findings from the sample:

- headship was a male dominated position at Unin;
- most heads of departments were comfortable with changes taking place in higher education such as modularisation of courses, accreditation of programmes and quality control;
- most heads of departments reported that they were not comfortable with the task team report on shape and size of higher education;
- more respondents were not in favour of conditions of employment of academics as contained in the Higher Education Act;
- most respondents reported that they were clear about the vision, mission and goals of the University;
- responses about staff development programmes such as supervision were not there whereas heads also reported that they were not certain about exercises such as coaching and mentoring;
- the problem of dual allegiance was highly pronounced among heads of departments;
- heads of departments always communicated on a weekly basis with academic, administrative and support services staff;
- the preferred means of communication is face to face and telephonic;

- most respondents were uncertain about stress and financial problems experienced by academic staff;

- there were, however, certain academic staff who did not experience problems such as alcoholism, drug abuse and marital disputes;

- the same findings were obtained from administrative and support services staff;

- most respondents indicated that they would prefer referring a colleague with a problem to an on-site facility and that;

- they would prefer using an off-site facility if they had referred themselves;

- respondents also reported that their colleagues would benefit a great deal from more information on management of personal and marital problems, retirement and downsizing as well as financial management;

- respondents also reported that they believe that they can benefit from more information on management of personal problems, retirement and downsizing;

- most heads of departments were not sure about how to handle colleagues who experienced personal problems.

8..2 Conclusion

Heads of departments were generally in agreement with the changes taking place in higher education and believed that bringing about innovative change on the campus would be a difficult task. They mostly agreed that there was no staff development programmes and processes in the University and believed that they could benefit from more information on dealing with personal and marital problems as well as from more information on retirement and downsizing. Should there be a facility on campus, heads of departments reported that they would feel free to refer people to such services whereas they would prefer an off site facility. The only set-back was that heads of departments are not sure how to deal with personal problems at this stage.

8.8.3 Recommendations

On the basis of the above findings the researcher would urge the University management to take advantage of the heads of departments' positive attitude to change and establish a center to deal with the personal problems of the employees.

Such a center will enjoy support since heads of departments indicated that they will be prepared to refer people to such a service point. Because heads of departments do not know how to deal with employees who experience personal problems, it would be advisable for the University to initiate educational awareness campaigns and training programmes that will culminate in the University policy on Employee Assistance Programmes.

8.9 Deans of faculties

8.9.1 Summary

The following trends were discerned from the deans' sample:

- just like headship, deanship was a male dominated position on campus;
- most deans, just like academic staff and heads of departments, reported that they were aware and comfortable with the changes taking place in higher education;
- unlike the academic and heads of departments' samples, the deans were divided as far as the task team report on higher education was concerned;
- just like the heads of departments (and unlike academic staff) most deans were clear about the University's vision, mission and goals;
- most deans just like the heads of departments as well as academic staff maintain that staff development never took place in the University;
- the problem of dual allegiance was more pronounced among deans just as it was reported among heads of departments and academic staff;

- communication was frequent among deans and academic staff as well as administrative staff but less so with support services staff;
- the most popular means of communication between deans and other colleagues is face to face and telephonic;
- most deans reported that academic staff experienced stress and financial problems;
- administration staff sometimes experienced financial problems;
- the respondents also reported that the majority of support services staff experienced marital as well as health related problems;
- just like heads of departments, the majority of deans reported that they would prefer referring colleagues to an on-site facility whilst they would voluntarily use an off-site facility;
- all respondents reported that their colleagues would benefit from more information on dealing with personal problems, retirement as well as downsizing;
- all deans also reported that they would personally benefit from more information on managing personal problems, retirement and downsizing;
- the majority of the respondents intimated that there was no facility on campus to deal with personal problems of employees.

8.9.2 Conclusion

The deans have observed through their interaction with academic staff that the latter experienced stress as well as financial problems. There may be a relationship between stress and financial problems or the stress may be as a result of the working environment. Health problems as well as marital problems were also observed among the support services as well as the administrative staff. It was fairly easy to make such observations because communication between deans and other members of the working staff were most of the time personal or per telephone. Every one who participated in this study did agree that he would benefit from more information on managing personal problems, retirement and downsizing.

8.9..3 Recommendations

For the simple reason that the majority of the respondents noted the existence of personal problems among a significant number of the University employees and that the University had no policy and strategy to deal with these mean that the time is opportune for something concrete to be done about this.

The observations were made outside and beyond other face to face encounters such as supervision and mentoring. If these processes were unfolding on campus, much would have been reported about these problems. It is about time that the University management invests in its employees through provision of counseling services.

8.10   Administrative staff

8.10.1 Summary

The following is a summary of the findings from the administrative staff:

- most staff members reported that they were comfortable with changes in higher education;
- this is the only sample that was positive about the task team report on shape and size of higher education in South Africa;
- half and slightly more than half of the respondents reported that they were comfortable and clear about the University vision, mission and goals;
- the respondents also reported that they were not clear about promotion criteria on campus;
- staff development did seem to be taking place within the administrative section of the University;

- weekly communication between administration staff and other workers was reported to be frequent and face to face;
- administration staff reported that they scarcely observed personal problems among themselves, within the academic sector as well as the support services sector;
- members of the academic staff also reported that their colleagues in various sections could benefit from more information on how to manage personal, marital, retirement and downsizing related problems;
- respondents too reported that they would personally benefit from more information on how to manage personal, marital, retirement, and downsizing related problems;

8.10.2 Conclusion

The sample from the administrative staff differed from the rest in more than one way even though some similarities were discerned. This was the only sample where staff development processes unfolded. This was also the only sample that was positive about the task team report on shape and size of higher education. Respondents in this sample did not observe personal problems of themselves and their colleagues to the same extent as the other respondents in the other samples. In this regard it differs from the rest of the samples.

However, the respondents are agreed that they thought their colleagues as well as themselves could benefit from more information on how to deal with personal as well as work related problems.

8.10.3 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings the researcher recommends that the University should consider establishing an EAP service that serves all the employees of the University.

8.11 Executive management
8.11.1 Summary

The following summary reflects the views of the decision makers at the University of the North. Here follows the summary:

- at the time of the investigation executive management of the University was exclusively male;
- qualifications of members of this team are from bachelors to doctoral degrees;
- none of the executive members had more than twelve months in office;
- most members of the executive management were familiar and comfortable with changes taking place in higher education;
- respondents reported that they were clear about the goals and mission of the University;
- half the respondents reported that they were not clear about the promotion criteria on campus;
- all the respondents reported that bringing change on campus would be difficult;
- members of the executive management were experiencing problems of dual allegiance as well;
- the respondents indicated that staff development programmes did take place and also that there were labour disputes;

- the respondents reported that they always came across employees who were always stressed and experiencing financial problems;
- face to face communication with colleagues was regular;
- half of the respondents reported that they would use an on-site facility whenever they experienced personal problems while the other half reported that they prefer an off-site facility;
- most of the respondents said that they would benefit from information on retirement and downsizing;
- management agreed that there was no system in place to deal with the personal problems of employees.

8.11.2 Conclusion

It can thus be concluded that executive management was aware of the existence of personal as well as labour problems on campus. They were also aware that information supplied to the workforce on aspects such as retirement and downsizing was inadequate. The respondents also agreed that there was no system of dealing with the personal problems of employees.

8.11.3 Recommendations

All findings and facts from this study point to a dire need of the University to establish a service point to deal with the problems that employees of the University experience. Only management can provide the necessary concrete support that is so desired to bring about meaningful innovation in this area

8.12 Service workers on campus

8.12.1 Summary

The voice of the illiterate working class was also heard through focus groups in this study. The following are some of the salient facts that were obtained in the study:

- workers agreed that they did experience problems such as alcohol abuse, marital problems as well as financial problems and they did not have an avenue to channel their personal concerns;
- workers promised to support the EAP office should it be established on campus;
- they preferred an on-site facility;
- they also mentioned that such an office would be of great assistance to the trade unions as the latter were always educating and discouraging workers from abusing substances;
- the workers expressed the need for more knowledge in areas such as retirement, retrenchment, adult education, benefits and estate planning.

8.12.2 Conclusion

It does appear that personal problems cut across the entire University workforce and that they are more pronounced among the unskilled employees. The problems that are experienced by this group of people are exacerbated by their lack of literacy and numeracy skills.

8.12.3   Recommendations

The need for an Employee Assistance service was more pronounced in this sector than anywhere else. Based on this, the investigator urges the University management to place the issue of introducing an EAP on its priority list.

8.13   Areas for further research

This study revealed that further research is necessary in the following areas:

- All the respondents were unhappy with their conditions of employment. An investigation in this area will shed knowledge on the causes, issues and the reasons for this unhappiness;
- There were some respondents in the study who were not comfortable with the Employment Equity Act. It would be helpful to identify these respondents' source of dissatisfaction with the Act and what could be done to modify the circumstances that make the Employment Equity Act an object of discontent.
- Alcohol abuse has been reported among University workers. Further research should focus on what makes this group more vulnerable to alcohol abuse and what the costs of this problem are to the University in terms of loss of hours and tardiness.
- The majority of the respondents from academic to administrative staff were not familiar with the criteria for promotion. An investigation is essential into why are things as they are. The University Policy is also silent about these.

—   Staff development processes such as supervision, coaching, mentoring and performance appraisal range from inadequate to non-existent. Research is needed to find out how these processes that are widely used in the industries to be adapted to an academic institution.

—   The findings of this study also revealed that workers turnover at the University of the North is lesser than that among the skilled employees such as academics and administrative staff. The studies need to indicate why workers are more stable than the other groups on campus.

8.13   Conclusion

The contribution by this study to the entire employee assistance field is that a University as a place of employment also requires an Employee Assistance Programme because "it is a place where personal troubles and problems can induce productivity loss (Yamatani et al, 1999:108). It has also shown that the processes of quality assurance, equity and accreditation of programmes may be hollow if academics' performance cannot be measured.

The study has also shown that developing an initiative for the University is one thing, and putting the initiative in operation is yet another challenging task due to the decision-making patterns within the University and the fact that implementation of programmes is more a political move than academic. Programmes are also subjected to the rigorous scrutiny by administrators because of budget cuts and privatisation.

8.14   Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations:

–   that the University of the North consider establishing an Employee Assistance Programme that operates on a contractual basis; and

–   that a committee consisting of management, unions, staff associations and other significant members of the University community be set up to spearhead the process;

8.15   Closing Statement

This study highlighted some of the drastic changes taking place within higher education to date. The rationale for investigating these changes was to establish whether they have any impact on the personal and working life of the University employees. The findings do, however, indicate that in general University employees are favourably disposed to changes taking place in higher education.

Various samples were investigated and analysed to find out amongst others their communication patterns. The purpose for this was to establish whether employees of the University communicated regularly on a face to face basis to a point where they are in a position to observe the existence of personal problems. In all the samples that were analyzed it was found that the communication patterns of University employees were positive.

The other cardinal issue that was looked at is whether employees of the University were experiencing personal problems and whether such problems necessitated the establishment of a service point. The response has undeniably revealed that the University employees that were experiencing personal problems that warranted the establishment of an a service point.

When members of the University community were asked whether, should the service be made available, they would support it, the answer was yes. A range of issues that have to be addressed by this service were also outlined.

Employees of the University community were asked, from executive management to the workers, whether they were aware of any service that is available to deal with employee's personal problems. The answer from all the samples that were analysed was a resounding no. However employees reported that they would definitely benefit from such a service.

The message to the University authorities is therefore loud and clear. Employee Assistance Programme should be established as soon as possible.

8.16 Chapter 9

In this chapter, an implementation strategy for an EAP at the University of the North is presented.