Perceptions and needs of tutors regarding a support system in the Education and Youth Services Ltd in the United Kingdom

by

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SUMMARY

Perceptions and needs of tutors regarding a support system in Education and Youth Services Ltd. in the United Kingdom.

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Education and Youth Services Ltd. (E.Y.S.) is a private training organisation in the United Kingdom which aims to engage challenging, disengaged young people into further education, training, or the open labour market. The employees on the frontline of this battle are the tutors.

The purpose of this study was to explore the current support system of E.Y.S., as well as the tutors' real needs, experiences, problems, and perceptions regarding a support system, in order to enable E.Y.S. to support their employees more effectively.

The objectives for this study were:

- To conceptualise tutorship and support systems in a work situation, from a theoretical frame of reference.
- To determine the nature of the current support system available to the tutors in E.Y.S.

- To investigate the needs and perceptions of tutors regarding the current support system and requirements for an effective support system.
- To make recommendations regarding a more effective support system for the tutors of E.Y.S., based on the results of the investigation.

The researcher used a qualitative research approach within an applied research strategy. Data were collected by using focus group interviews. This approach lent itself well to exploring the perceptions, needs, and struggles of the tutors of E.Y.S. and provided the researcher with a pattern of data, to explore the overall needs of the tutors, to enable the researcher to have a holistic view of the phenomena, and to explore how best to meet the needs of the individual tutors and of the organisation as a whole.

The most important empirical results and conclusions that the researcher was able to make, based on the empirical study, can be summarised as follows:

- E.Y.S. has a unique and flexible, *learner-focused culture.* It offers an alternative learning style and experiences outside of the formal learning structure. This unique approach is successful, as already mentioned, but it does place a tremendous amount of stress on the tutors, and they constantly deal with the learners' learning problems, social and personal problems, and daily copes with, and manages, potential violence towards them.
- The responses from the tutors indicated that the current support system is not sufficient, does not meet their needs, and is almost non-existent. They requested a company structure which will enable them to have sufficient supervision, advice, goal setting, and guidelines to perform their jobs more efficiently.
- The tutors reported feeling under-qualified to do their jobs effectively. They felt vulnerable and near burn-out.

KEY CONCEPTS

Education in the United Kingdom

Young people

Tutor

Tutorship

Support System

Training

Education

Disengage

Perceptions

Needs

OPSOMMING

Die persepsies en behoeftes van die opleiers (tutors) van *Education and Youth Services Ltd.* (E.Y.S.) in verband met 'n ondersteuningstelsel in die werkplek.

Deur

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Education and Youth Services Ltd. (E.Y.S.) is 'n privaat ontwikkelingsorganisasie in die Verenigde Koninkryk, wat ten doel het om moeilike en nie-betrokke jongmense te motiveer om weer terug te keer na die onderwys, opleiding of die werksplek. Die werknemers wat in die voorste loopgraaf in die stryd staan, is die opleiers (tutors).

Die doel van die studie was om die bestaande steunstelsel in E.Y.S. te ondersoek, asook om die opleiers (tutors) se behoeftes, ervaringe, probleme en opinies oor die steunstelsel te ondersoek. Sodoende word E.Y.S gehelp om hulle werknemers meer suksesvol te ondersteun.

Die doelwitte van die studie was:

- Om opleierskap (tutorskap) en steunstelsels in die werksituasie vanuit 'n teoretiese verwysingsraam te konseptualiseer.
- Om E.Y.S. se bestaande steunstelsel te ondersoek.
- Om die behoeftes en persepsies van die opleiers (tutors) in verband met die bestaande, asook 'n toekomstige steunstelsel, te ondersoek.

- Om gebaseer op die resultate van die ondersoek, gevolgtrekkings en aanbevelings in verband met 'n meer effektiewe steunstelsel vir die opleiers (tutors) van E.Y.S. te maak.

Die navorser het 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering binne 'n toegepaste navorsingsstrategie gebruik. Inligting is aan die hand van fokusgroeponderhoude ingesamel. Hierdie benadering het die persepsies, behoeftes en struikelblokke van die opleiers (tutors) van E.Y.S. ondersoek, en het 'n inligtingspatroon aan die navorser verskaf om die algemene behoeftes van die opleiers (tutors) te ondersoek, om 'n holistiese siening ten opsigte van die fenomeen te verkry en om te eksploreer hoe die behoeftes van die tutors spesifiek en die organisasie oor die algemeen die beste bevredig kan word.

Die belangrikste empiriese resultate en gevolgtrekkings, gebaseer op die empiriese studie, is soos volg:

- E.Y.S. het 'n unieke en buigbare, leerling-gefokuste kultuur, en bied 'n alternatiewe leerstyl, asook ervaringe buite die formele leerstruktuur. Hierdie unieke benadering is suksesvol, maar dit plaas 'n enorme hoeveelheid stres op die opleiers (tutors) aangesien hulle voortdurend die leerlinge se leerprobleme, sosiale- en persoonlike probleme moet hanteer asook die feit dat hulle daagliks geweld moet hanteer..
- Uit die response van die opleiers (tutors) was dit duidelik dat die huidige ondersteuningstelsel nie voldoende is nie, nie in hulle behoeftes voorsien nie, en feitlik glad nie bestaan nie. Hulle het 'n organisasiestruktuur aangevra wat vir hulle effektiewe supervisie, advies, doelwitstelling en riglyne sal verskaf wat hulle in staat sal stel om hul werk meer effektief te verrig.
- Die opleiers (tutors) het aangedui dat hulle ondergekwalifiseerd voel om hulle werk effektief te kan verrig en dat hulle kwesbaar en naby uitbranding voel.

KERN KONSEPTE

Opvoeding in die Verenigde Koninkryk

Jong mense

Opleier

Ondersteuningsisteem

Opleiding

Opvoeding

Ontwrigte

Persepsies

Behoeftes

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1   INTRODUCTION

In order to contextualise the study, it is important to give a brief background explanation of education system in the United Kingdom (henceforth: U.K.). The *Green Paper 14-19: Extending opportunities, raising standards* (2003:5), (henceforth: The Green Paper) provides the following guidelines, vision, and aim of the Government of the U.K. for education and training for young people between the ages of 14 to 19 years old in the UK:

> Half a century ago, at the time of the 1944 Education Act, it was clear that the nation needed to develop better vocational and technical education to meet the needs of a rapidly changing post-war society. It did not happen. During the last sixty years, the pace of social and economic change has increased dramatically, and successive attempts have been made to improve vocational education and to raise its standing in society. In practice, most of these changes were piecemeal and enjoyed limited or no more than short-term success, while a long tradition of apprenticeship training was allowed to go into decline. There is no economic basis for undervaluing vocational education and qualifications. Yet precisely this is England's post-war legacy. We need now to rectify the traditional neglect of vocational education as a route to success and to encourage many more young people to stay on in learning after age 16. We must also continue to break down the divide between education and training, and to emphasise that all pathways contribute to employability and responsible citizenship.

The vision:

> To improve economic competitiveness and promote social justice
> we need to develop the skills and talents of young people across
> the full range of abilities. It is not only a matter of raising levels
> of achievement and skills; it is also about the development of the
> whole person. Young people must be prepared for an adult life
> in which they are involved as active, responsible citizens. For
> young people themselves, the price of disengagement from
> learning now is often a serious problem and persistent failure for
> the rest of their lives. Low motivation, truancy, behaviour
> problems, and exclusion damage our communities and burden
> our economy.

The aim:

Our aim is that the 14–19 phase of education and training in England should:

- raise the levels of achievement of all young people in both general and vocational qualifications and increase participation in post-16 education and training, including higher education;
- meet the needs and aspirations of all young people, so that they are motivated to make a commitment to lifelong learning and to become socially responsible citizens and workers;
- broaden the skills acquired by all young people to improve their employability, bridge the skills gap identified by employers, and overcome social exclusion;
- be delivered through flexible, integrated, and innovative networks of collaborative providers committed to achieving ambitious new goals for all young people in the 14–19 phase of their lives and their education.

- The 14–19 phase must become more responsive to those with special educational needs; to those from a range of ethnic backgrounds; to those from low-income families; and to those in danger of social exclusion.

In this regard, Estelle Morris, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, made the following comment in the Green paper (2003:2):

> In the 20th century, the education system was too often a one-size-fits-all structure. It neither demanded nor provided excellent standards in education for everyone. Nor did the education system adequately target the needs of the individual pupil.
>
> In the 21st century, to be prosperous, the economy will depend heavily on the creativity and skills of its people. In a knowledge economy it is vital that we tap the potential of every one of our citizens.
>
> So what young people need from our education system is changing rapidly. We must build a flexible system around the needs and aspirations of individual pupils.
>
> The 14-19 phase builds on this transition towards greater flexibility, and by modernising the curriculum, puts the needs of the individual learner at the heart of the education system.
>
> Our aim is clear – keeping young people in education and training at 16, academic excellence, high-quality vocational routes and increased participation in higher education. This will build the foundations for lifelong learning among future generations. It will be a system in which all are valued and all can have confidence. W**e must promote education with character**. Academic achievement is essential, but education must also be a basis for citizenship and inclusion.

It is important that young people learn to know right from wrong; get along with their fellow students; work in teams; make a contribution to the school or college as a community; and develop positive attitudes to life and work. This is important, not only for their own personal development, but also because employers increasingly emphasise not just academic qualifications, but skills and attitudes such as enterprise, innovation, teamwork, creativity, and flexibility.

The Green paper (2003:4) continued to promote live long learning through more innovative and motivational learning:

If young people are to continue in learning after the age of 16, they must be able to follow courses that meet their aspirations and match their abilities. It is not a matter of fitting students into a rigid and inflexible educational system, but of offering greater choice within education and training in the 14–19 phase. It means devising equally-valued pathways, both general and vocational, which allow young people to switch pathways in the light of their emerging needs and aspirations.

The researcher is able to conclude from these guidelines in the Green Paper (2003:5) that the government is acknowledging the fact that young people's needs are very varied and sometimes highly specialised and so will be met only through a diverse but co-ordinated system of education and training.

The researcher is able to take the guidelines from the Green Paper (2003), as mentioned above, as well as the fact that young people between the ages of 14 and 19 years struggle with the development of their personal and social identities. The researcher conclude that, during this period of their lives, young people need good education and training opportunities and support to guide them and to take best advantage of the available opportunities.

In order to guide and support the young people as suggested in the Green Paper (2003:5), the government has put in place the Learning and Skills Council (henceforth: LSC).

According to the LSC's website (2004)(www.lsc.gov.uk), the LSC is responsible for all publicly-funded post -16 education and training in England, other than higher education. For the year 2002-03, the LSC has a budget of £7.3 billion, to support:

- further education
- school sixth forms
- work-based learning for young people
- workforce development

The LSC is a national organisation, with 47 Local Councils based throughout England. The Local Councils plan and fund services to meet local needs. The mission and vision of the LSC can be found on their website, www.lsc.gov.uk, namely:

The mission:
"To raise participation and attainment through high-quality education and training this puts learners first."

The vision:
"By 2010, young people and adults in England will have knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world."

The LSC therefore has the responsibility to ensure that the young people receive the appropriate support and learning opportunities. Collaborative partnership between schools, colleges, and training providers is essential. The LSC has the responsibility to encourage these partnerships and to contract-out some of the learning opportunities to private learning centres in order to meet an individual learner's needs. One of these alternative learning providers in the U.K. is a private company called Education and Youth Services Ltd. (henceforth: E.Y.S.)

E.Y.S. is a National Training Provider, which covers the whole of the U.K. E.Y.S. has 27 learning centres (for young people between ages 14 and 24) across the U.K. The company has the following mission statement, which can be found in the E.Y.S. Office Manual (2003:6), namely:

To empower young people, whatever their abilities to maximise their potential, through:
- Learning
- Leading
- Challenging
- Inclusion

This organisation has a unique and flexible, learner-focussed culture, offers an alternative learning style and experiences outside the formal learning structure. According to the E.Y.S. Office Manual (2003), the organisation has very unique objectives to reach their goals and to provide these learner-focussed programmes, namely:

- To provide and to develop strategies and programme to promote education, training, leisure, play, cultural, sporting, advisory, mentoring, careers, health, welfare, and to support services to children and to young people.
- To provide advisory services and act as consultants and project managers to those who wish to provide and to develop strategies, projects and programmes.
- To provide consultancy services and advice on community safety, crime, prevention, and reduction measures, and in particular measures to reduce the incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour of young people. This will prevent young people from adopting a criminal or anti-social lifestyle and combating social exclusion.

E.Y.S. has to meet these standards and others, as shown in the Office Manual (2003:21):

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (henceforth: ALI) inspects all the training and education we provide, and we have to comply with the quality assurance standards set out in the ALI Common Inspection Framework. Other accreditations and requirements to adhere to is the *Edexel* (Basic Skills) qualification and the *ASDAN* accreditation for the 2e2 scheme, as well as *Investors in People* Standards.

The young people that E.Y.S. works with are described as challenging, disengaged teenagers; challenging and disengaged because they have been failed by the mainstream education system.

Wheldall and Watkins (2004: 65) described why the challenging, disengaged young people are being failed by the education system and why they then present with anti-social behaviour:

Disaffection and subsequent alienation from school may lead some students into a potential for a generic decline into petty crime/delinquency. The problem appears to begin early, as a result of initial academic failure in learning basic literature skills, and are then exacerbated by the increasing demands made by a largely text-based curriculum predicated upon mastery of the very skills in which they are most deficient.

The result of this disengagement is that the young people are described as challenging and disengaged. The young people struggle with learning difficulties, emotional difficulties, violent behaviour, being bullied at school, and very low self-esteem, mental health problems, lack of motivation, and unplanned pregnancies.

The aim of E.Y.S. is to address all these difficulties experienced by each individual learner, by providing a much more flexible and comprehensive learning- and developmental approach and curriculum. Also, to assist each learner in his/her development and to enable, motivate and support young people into a sustainable progression. Unfortunately, most of these young people are struggling to re-engage into a learning environment.

Kupermintz (2003:294) concluded from research that was conducted with some disaffected young people during his study, that a young person's behaviour is influenced by a wide range of aspects. He mentioned personal propensities, resources (both cognitive and non-cognitive), physical and mental maturation, home environment, cultural heritage, institutional and informal community resources. The researcher would support these results and could confirm from own professional experience that the young people attending the E.Y.S. learning centres are almost all struggling with some of the issues mentioned.

Taking this background information into consideration, it seems as if the young peoples' motivation is extremely low, although the U.K. also has an excellent benefit system that supports the un-employed people and keeps them safe and healthy. The researcher feels, however, that this benefit system is also creating a huge social problem for the country. Whilst accepting that some people are in genuine need of such benefits, the system is attractive enough to discourage some people from work, especially those who lack qualifications and/or experience and may have to work that little bit harder to make ends meet. This is compared to remaining on benefits, not having to work at all, and having all bills paid by the benefit system. The government is trying to deal with the gap between what low-paid workers can earn and what those who have more qualifications and experience can earn. They are doing this by introducing tax credits. This is to ensure that when a person goes to work he/she is not just better off psychologically, but financially as well. As a consequence of the system, some young people refuse to go to school, college, or work, because their parents are not working and sit at home, and they all survive without employment or qualifications.

E.Y.S. has created a unique and successful training approach in an attempt to overcome this challenge to re-engage people into a learning programme, and to decrease the unemployment rate. The result is attractive, flexible and needs-based, tailor-made programmes. These programmes include a sports course, parenting course, driving course, and a D.J.-course. If a young person is passionate about, for example, music, specifically DRUM and BASE music, (this is a very popular street music), E.Y.S. has employed some of the best D.J.s in the U.K. to offer Music Technology and Mixing lessons to the young people for free as part of their course.

This approach assures that the organisation moves away from formal learning, and enhances the learning process in the interest of each young person. The young person is taught by his/her role model. This creates instant respect for the tutor, which gives the tutor some control over the learning process.

All the comprehensive programmes are planned and presented by a group of tutors. Each tutor is responsible for approximately fifteen learners. Each tutor has the responsibility to not only teach a curriculum, but also to provide emotional support, physical assistance in finding accommodation, and dealing with the Benefits Agencies, Social Services, other Colleges, and the Police- and Probation Services. They have to earn the learners' respect, but also have to be friendly and approachable for the learners to trust them. The tutors have to plan lessons and activities for every day and have to deal with violent, aggressive, and unmotivated behaviour. This is a very challenging job, and the E.Y.S. Office Manual (2003:6) supports the thought that the tutor role is very important for the success of these programmes. The E.Y.S. Office Manual (2003:6) stated it clearly: "All staff at every level has an important part to play in the company. The success of all the business depends on the quality of the service we provide, and that quality depends on each member of staff doing their best."

The fact that the tutors have a very important role to play is a positive acknowledgement from the directors of E.Y.S., but it also brings with it a very big responsibility to contribute to the success of the business. The researcher found the appraisal subjects in the E.Y.S. Office Manual (2003:22) interesting and supporting of the theory that the tutor's role is very complicated. According to the E.Y.S. Office Manual (2003:23), the appraisal subjects are the following:

- Attitude and teamwork
- Communication skills
- Client care and marketing
- Personal appearance
- Teaching skills
- Job knowledge

- Information technology
- Flexibility
- Decision-making ability
- Quality approach and accuracy
- Motivation
- Resilience
- Timekeeping and reliability
- Analytical skills

In elaborating the appraisal subjects, the tutor's job description as described in the Office Manual (2003:25) is as follows:

- Support the planning and development of Life Skills programme courses on site.
- Support the delivery of Life Skills Programmes.
- Establish contact with, listen to, advise, counsel, support, and advocate on behalf of young people on the programmes.
- Contribute to the planning, development and delivery of work programmes in projects that provide education.
- Understand individual young people's needs, knowledge, and skills so that appropriate educational opportunities can be made available.
- Monitor and evaluate courses proactively, to ensure that the highest standards are maintained.
- Attend staff meetings.
- Contribute to the development of curriculum plans.
- Ensure equal opportunities.
- Support senior management.
- Take part in appropriate training opportunities.

The appraisal subjects, as well the job description, provide the reader with an understanding of the complexity of the tutor's role, and of how much flexibility is

required from the tutors to fulfil all these criteria, especially if they are not appropriately and effectively supported.

The reason why the researcher is of the opinion that the tutors have to be effectively supported in their challenging jobs is accurately described by Holden (2000:1): "Any ideal leader is concerned with two main issues: people and results. One should realise that the hard side of business bottom line results (profit) is achieved only through the soft, people-orientated issues such as leadership, commitment, culture, and empowerment."

Middleton, Ziderman, and Van Adams (1993:1) support the importance of staff support by describing productivity and flexibility as depending on factors such as the level of capital investment, the technology of production, and the quality of a firms' management. They continue with the following statement: "The skills of reading and writing, calculation, and problem-solving developed directly or indirectly by general and academic secondary education are fundamental to productivity in all forms and at all levels of employment."

The researcher therefore is of the opinion that the tutors can benefit tremendously from a Tutor Network Support group, a group formulated especially for the tutors, and run and chaired by the tutors. Such a group could provide the tutors with a safe environment in which they could discuss concerns and good and bad practises, and can alleviate some stress.

Thompson (2003:188) supports this train of thought by saying: "Studies have indicated that performance levels in brainstorming groups are strongly affected by exposure to information about the performance of others." He further suggests that the general philosophy behind these group sessions is that it generates and stimulates a large number of high quality ideas.

The researcher interprets Thompson's comments on group studies, namely that by sharing good and bad practices, creative ideas and approaches, tutors can use these group sessions as a benchmark for their own practices, and it can also double-up as a motivational tool. These groups will also enable staff to adhere to the request from

the directors of the company, as found in the E.Y.S. Office manual (2003:6): "Achieving successful outcomes demand giving our best service every day and by demonstrating our efficiency, effectiveness, the quality of our work, our skill and our ability to demonstrate to each trainee that we care about them and their future." It is the researcher's opinion that the exploration of the wishes, feelings, needs and experiences of these tutors would lead to the conclusion that the tutors are in need of some more training, supervision, and support.

The researcher's motivation for this study is for the short-term benefit of establishing the needs of the employees as well as of the organisation, presenting the findings which could contribute the decision-making process of the directors, and for the long-term benefit to enhance a more motivated and productive workforce. The directors of E.Y.S. support this idea in the E.Y.S. office manual (2003:30) by stating: "To provide the initiative and support for all staff to ensure that they are in possession of the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to perform their jobs to the highest possible standard, to develop and to maximise their potential."

1.2. PROBLEM FORMULATION

The problem that E.Y.S. seems to be experiencing is lack of effective support by the organisation to enable employees to perform their jobs to the highest possible standard and to develop and to maximise their potential. Thompson (2003: 204) states that training programmes are very useful, and reports that a meta-analysis of the effects of various interventions on worker productivity found that: "interventions designed to enhance productivity through learning, including training programmes, had strong positive effects overall."

Lack of support, training, and education opportunities can result in a high turnover of staff, employing unsuitable employees into positions, re-structuring, and dismissing of staff. A high absence rate due to stress and other emotional and personal problems is visible within E.Y.S. The result is the development of expensive retraining and replacing of staff.

The high turnover, as well as mental and physical absenteeism of the E.Y.S. staff ultimately has a direct impact on the learners of E.Y.S., who are vulnerable young people who need consistency, support, and an opportunity to build a trusting relationship with someone who could support them in their personal and social development, as well as in their last attempt to reintegrate into the mainstream education system, and in making a success of their lives.

Vulliamy and Webb (2003:77) support the researcher's thought that the learners at E.Y.S. need consistency, support, and understanding. Their study provided each student with counselling and with one-to-one mentoring support. Each student's learning and general behaviour improved. The study also concludes that the additional counselling skills and general understanding of the psycho-social factors causing the challenging behaviour enabled the support workers to be more effective in supporting the young people and in understanding their challenging behaviour (Vulliamy & Webb, 2003: 78).

It is crucial, therefore, that the staff at E.Y.S. receive some training to understand the difficulties with which the young people struggle, to provide appropriate support, and to recognise danger signs when a young person should be referred for further counselling, as well as training in physical restraint procedures and child protection issues.

The lack of education, training and support for the tutors of E.Y.S. not only results in the under-utilization of staff and a lower quality of service to the learners, but also in stress and in feeling under-skilled for the task of, for example, tutoring. This also results in the mental and social illnesses statistics as mentioned by Carroll (1996:2):

- 90 million working days are lost each year as a result of mental illness, and one in five of the working population suffers from some form of mental illness.
- More than half the employees felt that emotional/personal problems and stress were to blame for absence from work.
- Approximately 20 percent of any workforce is affected by personal problems that impact on its performance.

The researcher supports the view that the tutors at E.Y.S. have a very stressful working environment. The learners that the tutors have to support daily can be extremely challenging, resulting in violent physical and mental abuse towards the tutors. Adding to this work pressure are the expectations regarding lesson planning, individual learning plans for each learner, and reports on respective learners and their progression, the general development of the centre, and their own learning qualifications. It is the researcher's point of view that these tutors could benefit from some support system to avoid high absenteeism rates and related stress illnesses.

Fineman (2003:137) supports the theory that stress in the workplace needs to be addressed and that stress in the workplace is not just a fashion statement of an area which will automatically disappear; it is a serious concern which should be addressed: "Stress is the second biggest cause of work-related illness. There are early warning signs you can look for, and there are things that managers can do to reduce the effects. Stress is a subject that is hard to avoid. Wherever you turn, there is a multiplicity of guides on the nature of stress. Stress is a fact of our busy modern lives."

Evans (1996:7) described employment in any human services by stating that: "The work, while satisfying, can be emotionally draining. Understaffing and inadequate work environment may add to the pressure.   Turnover is reported to be high, especially among workers without academic preparation for this field."

The researcher would like to conclude this section with the thought from Evans (1996:7) and the fact that it is crucial for employees in the human services, specifically related to the tutors of E.Y.S., to receive as much support and training as possible to prevent burnout or breakdown.   The researcher therefore conducted an exploratory study to establish the boundaries of the current support system and to explore the tutor's real needs, experiences, problems, and perceptions, to enable E.Y.S. to support their employees more effectively.

1.3 PURPOSE, GOAL, AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Purpose of the study

According to Neuman (1997:19): "The purposes of social research may be organized into three groups based on what the researcher is trying to accomplish - explore a new topic, describe a social phenomenon, or explain why something occurs."

The purpose of this study was to explore the current support system of E.Y.S. as well as the tutor's perceptions and needs regarding a support system, in order to enable E.Y.S. to support their employees more effectively. According to Fouché (2002:109), exploratory research is: "to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community, or individual."

Stebbins (2001:2) describes exploratory research as a mission to discover as much information as possible on a specific subject, while Morgan (1998:12) suggests that qualitative research methods are especially useful for exploration and discovery.

1.3.2 Goal of the study

Neuman (1997:23) describes the goal of a study as follows: "The researchers' goal is to formulate more precise questions that future research can answer. Exploratory research may be the first stage in a sequence of studies."

Morgan (1998:11) states that the goal of a study is to gain a richer understanding of the participant's experiences and beliefs.

The goal of this study was to determine the tutors' perceptions of, and needs for, a support system in E.Y.S. in the United Kingdom.

1.3.3   Objectives of the study

Punch (2003:50) describes the objectives of a study as short-term outcomes, which contribute to reaching the final goal of the research. Fouché (2002:119) suggests that the objectives of a study should be: "specific, clear, and achievable."

The objectives for this study were:

- To conceptualise tutorship and support systems in a work situation from a theoretical frame of reference.

- To determine the nature of the current support system which is available to the tutors in E.Y.S.

- To investigate the needs and perceptions of tutors regarding the current support system and requirements for an effective support system.

- Based upon the results of the investigation to make recommendations about a more effective support system for the tutors of E.Y.S.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Halloway (1997:138) defines a research question as: "a general question about the phenomenon under study and about what the researcher wishes to learn/understand about it. It is related to the problem that researchers want to examine and which the researcher aims to answer. Often developed at the start of a project, in qualitative research it is an ongoing process of formulating and modifying."

The research process thus has to start with an inquiry into a specific question or hypothesis. The questions for this study were:

- What is the nature of the current support system available to the tutors of E.Y.S.?

- What are the needs and perceptions of the tutors regarding a support system in E.Y.S.?

1.5 RESEARCH APPROACH

Research approach can be divided into two main approaches, namely qualitative and quantitative research.

The researcher used a qualitative research approach in this study. Fouché and Delport (2002:79) describe this approach as: " an anti-positivistic, interpretative approach, which is idiographic and thus holistic in nature, and aims mainly to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life."

According to Gomm (2004:7): "Most people that call themselves qualitative researchers are primarily interested in investigating how people experience the world, and or how they make sense of it."

The qualitative approach includes using observations, interviews, and document studies to gather information, and provides a warmer approach in the process of working with people and their feelings. This approach lends itself well to exploring the perceptions, needs, and struggles of the tutors of E.Y.S. It provides the researcher with a pattern of data to explore the overall needs of the tutors and enables the researcher to have a holistic view of the phenomena and of how best to meet the needs of the individual tutors and the needs of the organisation as a whole.

1.6 TYPE OF RESEARCH

Research can be divided into two types of research, namely basic and applied research.

According to Fouché (2002:108), the difference between basic and applied research is that: "Basic research seeks empirical observations that can be used to formulate or refine theory, whilst applied research, on the other hand, is most often the scientific planning of induced change in a troublesome situation."

The researcher chose to use applied research, because it enabled the researcher to explore the tutors' perceptions, needs, and problems in practice in an objective manner, and enabled the researcher to ultimately provide guidelines and make practical suggestions of how to improve the current support system of E.Y.S. This applied study therefore addresses immediate problems facing the tutors in practice.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research strategy is the logical plan/blue print to follow during the process of gathering information to understand phenomena. The researcher made use of the collective case study design because it was the most appropriate strategy to gain a better understanding about the groups' needs, their experiences, and problems regarding a support system.

In this regard Creswell (1998) as quoted by Fouché (2002:275) stated: "a case study can be regarded as an exploration of in-depth analysis of a bounded system, (bounded by time and/or place) or a single or multiple case, over a period of time."

In this study the researcher explored the perceptions and needs of the tutors (multiple cases) as a 'bounded system' in E.Y.S. regarding the need for a support system.

The researcher made use of focused group interviews to gather the richest information possible and to gain a group voice of the current support network as well as the needs and perceptions of the tutors regarding possible future tutor network support systems.

Morgan (1998:1) describes focus groups as follows: "Focus groups are group interviews. A moderator guides the interview while a small group discusses the topics that the interviewer raises. What the participants in the group say during their discussion is the essential data."

Holloway (1997:73) provided another definition for focus group namely: "Focus groups involve a number of people with common experiences/characteristics, whom a researcher interviews for the purpose of eliciting ideas/thoughts/perceptions about a specific topic/certain issues linked to an area of interest."

1.8. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

Despite the diversity of social science research, according to Gomm (2004:1) there is only a limited toolkit for the researcher. The result is that different researchers use

different tools from the kit in different ways and interpret the results by using the tools differently. The point is that although every researcher will have a different opinion on a subject, the important aspect for the researcher is that it is vital that specific research procedures are followed to ensure a scientifically correct process.

Gomm (2004:36) stresses the very important aspect that if different people are involved in collecting information, they may interpret the task in different ways, so the same situation will be recorded in entirely different ways by each recorder. It is important, therefore, to use well-designed data collection instruments leaving few opportunities for ambiguity.

The qualitative research approach makes use of several data collection methods, namely participant-observation, interviewing, document studies, and secondary data analysis. The researcher used interviewing--specifically focus group interviews--as a data collection method.

Greeff (2002:292) states that: "interviewing is the predominant mode of data/information collection in qualitative research."

The researcher used interviews as an opportunity for the participant/s to tell their story, their experience of a situation, and an opportunity to make their voices heard.

According to Greeff (2002:305): "Focus groups are group interviews. Participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group."

The researcher decided to use the focus group interview technique as defined in the previous section as the most appropriate technique, because the participants are all tutors from E.Y.S. dealing with similar issues and is faced with similar pleasant and unpleasant experiences. (Participants have similar characteristics in common as suggested by Greeff in the above paragraph.)

The researcher arranged a suitable time and place to facilitate the focus group interviews. The groups consisted of five to six respondents in a group. For the

purpose of this study, a total of 20 respondents (tutors) were included in four focus group discussions. The researcher briefed the participants in advance about the purpose of the interviews and provided the opportunity for participants to withdraw from the process if they were not comfortable with it.   The group sessions were held at the local E.Y.S. learning centres. During the group sessions, it was the role of the researcher to create a comfortable, friendly, and tolerant environment to encourage the participants to share perceptions and needs.

Rubin and Rubin (2004:198) suggest designing main questions or probes for the interviewing process. The researcher therefore made use of an interview schedule with questions, which had been prepared in advance and used to guide the discussions. Punch (2003:1) supports this by mentioning that qualitative surveys, using open-ended questions results in rich words and information.

The researcher also made field notes during the focus group sessions using Greeff's (2002:307) guidelines on:

- Seating arrangements
- The order in which people speak, to aid voice recognition
- Non-verbal behaviour
- Themes that are striking
- Highlighting as much of the conversation as possible.

The following step in the research process is data analysis; the "making sense" of all the data that has been collected. Greeff (2002:318) describes the aim of data analysis as an opportunity to look for trends and patterns. Through an analysis of the transcripts and field notes, the researcher identified themes regarding the perceptions and needs of the tutors. This procedure is supported by Gomm (2004:10), who suggested: "The researcher looks for what comes up in the data commonly and interestingly, calls these 'themes' and then uses these as headings for writing up the research report."

1.9 PILOT STUDY

According to Strydom and Delport (2002b:337), a pilot study " is usually informal and a few respondents possessing the same characteristics as those of the main investigation can be involved in the study, merely to ascertain certain trends."

Holloway (1997:121) also defined a pilot study as: "a small scale trail run of the research with a very small number of participants chosen by the same criteria as those in the main research."

1.9.1 Feasibility of study

The researcher considered this a feasible subject of study, because the subject matter relates directly to the organisation by which the researcher is currently employed, making available not only the respondents, but also the research materials. The directors of the organisation supported the researcher in the study process, and agreed to a certain number of days for study purposes, enabling the researcher to conduct the research in working hours when the respondents were available for interviews.

The organisation is also already in the process of addressing some Human Resource issues and has recently employed a Human Resource manager to aid the process of employee wellness. The researcher considers this piece of research as a perfect support for the Human Resource manager to establish the needs of the employees in the organisation.

The researcher is currently employed by the organisation as an Area Manager, and is already trusted by the employees and aware of the company culture. The researcher is aware of who the main role players are in the organisation, who to get involved, and who will be able to influence the employees positively to participate in the research. The researcher had access to the different E.Y.S. sites in the Essex area. There were no expenses in terms of premises, the use of computers, internet facilities, or hotel costs.

1.9.2 Pilot test of the focus group interview schedule.

The pilot study (focus group) was an opportunity to test the focus group interview schedule. Three respondents who were not part of the main study were approached for the pilot study. Doing a pilot study before commencing with the main research project provided an opportunity to carefully review the questions asked, how they are phrased, and whether they actually attain the information that the researcher initially intended to ascertain. Strydom (2002:215) suggests that the researcher actually ask the respondents' opinions on the wording of the questions, the sequence, possible redundant questions, and missing and confusing questions. Certain patterns of reactions should also be considered. All the questions were clear, and no changes were necessary.

1.10 DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH UNIVERSE AND POPULATION

Arkava and Lane (as cited by Strydom & Venter, 2002:198) defined the terms "universe" and "population" as follows:

- Universe: "refers to all potential subjects who possess the attributes in which the researcher is interested"

- Population: "sets boundaries on the study units. It refers to individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics."

The researcher identified all the tutors of E.Y.S. (135 tutors) as the universe of this study. The population of this project was all the tutors in the four learning centres in the Essex area namely Colchester, Basildon, Harlow, and Lowerstoft. All the tutors in these centres, i.e. twenty tutors, were involved in this study as respondents. No sample was selected.

1.11 ETHICAL ISSUES

Homan (1991:1) defines the ethics of social research as: "The science of morality."

Fisher (2003**:6**) defines ethical behaviour as follows: "Ethical behaviour is generally those that fulfil the fundamental moral obligations to do good, to do no harm, to respect others, and to treat all individuals honestly and freely."

Holloway (1997:55) describes ethics as: "The moral standards. The researcher applies the principles that protect the participants in the research from harm/risk and follow ethical guidelines and legal rules."

Gomm (2004:298) describes research ethics as: "rules of morally good conduct for researchers"

Morgan (1998:85) made a few practical suggestions as to how best avoid un-ethical behaviour. The first suggestion was to avoid harm to the respondents at all times. Details of Morgan's suggestions and the applicability thereof in this study will be discussed under the following appropriate headings.

1.11.1 Harm to experimental subjects and/or respondents

Morgan (1998:85) suggested that the best way in which to avoid harm to any respondents is to ask yourself the question: Do the research project put the participants at risk? He continued to advocate that the research should not be exhaustive, and the researcher must always prepare a 'Statement of Informed consent' for the participants to read and sign.

The proposed research study had the potential to inflict emotional harm to the respondents, because the researcher addressed and explored personal problems, feelings, and needs of the respondents.

To avoid any emotional harm, the researcher informed all the employees in the organisation about the proposed study and provided each participant with a Statement of Informed consent. This gave employees the opportunity to reflect on past and

present practise as well as personal issues they would like to discuss or address. The researcher pointed out to all the employees that this is not a counselling opportunity, but merely a research project which might or might not lead to support in the workplace. The research was therefore truthful and transparent.

Once the respondents had been selected, the researcher informed the respondents of the type of questions which would be asked, and gave the respondents the opportunity to withdraw from the research project if they wished to. The respondents, who chose to continue, received a consent form to ensure that every respondent committed and agreed to the research project.

The researcher attempted to deal with the stressful nature of the research project by clearly stating that the project was of a voluntary nature, and participants were not obliged to answer any questions. The researcher advocated that participants take a break at any time during the sessions if and when needed.

The researcher also discussed the project with the E.Y.S. counsellor, who is currently supporting the troubled young people of the organisation, and the researcher negotiated additional hours for the use of employees if necessary after the research project, as part of the de-briefing option to minimize harm to the respondents to provide the employees with a safety net in case they open up a can of worms, so to speak, and need immediate support. The researcher also prepared an information sheet which included relevant agencies and referral sources the participants could contact directly for support and further help.

1.11.2 Informed consent

The researcher earlier mentioned the fact that for this research project it was crucial to obtain the consent of the directors first, because as the funding holders as well as the researcher's employers, this project would not have been successful without their consent and agreement. The respondents all gave their consent following a detailed information session informing them exactly what the purpose/aim of the research was and what their involvement would be.

1.11.3 Deception of subjects and/or respondents

This involves the researcher being dishonest about the purpose of the research and deliberately withholding information in order to ensure participation of subjects when they might otherwise not have participated.

The researcher attempted to avoid any misunderstandings by having an information group session with the respondents, and provided them with an opportunity to ask questions.

1.11.4 Violation of privacy/anonymity/confidentiality

Holloway (1997:57) defined anonymity as: "Participants cannot be identified at any time by the reader of the report."
Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality are crucial issues during the research process. Violation of these aspects involves the violation of the respondent's human rights. Confidentiality is both a legal and ethical concept that protects the privacy of the respondent.

The researcher ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents by keeping all information separate from the personal files of the employees, as suggested by Morgan (1998:85), to ensure restricted access to the information that reveals a participant's identity. All identifying information was made anonymous before reporting to the directors. Gomm (2004:311) suggests the researcher use pseudonyms or code numbers for anonymous participants.

The researcher changed all the participant's names to ensure confidentiality and followed another suggestion by Morgan (1998:85), namely to not mention any specific incidents/events or places in the report.

A written consent form was devised to ensure that all the relevant information could be shared with the directors.

1.11.5 Actions and competence of researcher

Researchers are ethically obliged, according to Strydom (2002:69), to ensure that they are competent and adequately skilled to undertake the proposed investigation.

The researcher acted ethically and professionally correct, and kept the difficult cultural beliefs and background of the British nation in mind.

The researcher also had de-briefing sessions after the group session, to deal with any problems. The use of the organisation's counselling services was offered for any further support needed after the research project.

1.11.6 Limitations

- Although an acceptable representative amount of respondents were involved in this study, according to mini-dissertation's requirements, more comprehensive results could have been achieved by involving all the tutors of E.Y.S.
- The researcher would have wanted to further explore the daily challenges experienced by the tutors of E.Y.S. to establish whether the lack of support was the result of lack of understanding and support from the organisation or whether it was more generic and experienced by other tutors from other organisations as well and therefore perhaps a government responsibility. Due to the extent of the mini- dissertation, this was however not possible.

1.12 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

In order to have a better understanding of the most important issues in this study, the researcher found it necessary to provide some definitions of some of the key concepts in this study.

1.12.1 Young people:

- Adolescent: "Somebody in the period of life between puberty and maturity" (Allen, 2002:11).

- Young person: "Somebody in an early stage of life or growth" (Collins, 2004:660).

- The researcher has defined young person and adolescent to stress the fact that the "clients" of E.Y.S. are vulnerable, developing, easily influenced young people who are in need of boundaries, guidelines, and some consistent and stable support, to enable them to grow and develop into responsible adults.

Although the above definitions described young people from a wide range of ages, young people in the context of this study are specifically between the ages of 16 and 18 years.

1.12.2 Disengage:

- According to Allen (2002:245) "disengage" means: "To release or detach oneself from something that holds, engages, or entangles one."

- Collins (2004:166) defines disengage as: "Release from entanglement or confusion."

- The definition of disengagement is relevant to the study, because it illustrates to the reader that the learners of E.Y.S. has been disengaged from mainstream learning and the formal structures of education in the U.K. The challenge for private learning centres is now to re-engage the learners in a more creative and interesting way of learning.

1.12.3 Tutor:

- Allen (2002:965) defined a tutor as: "A person employed as a private teacher, especially one who teaches individuals or small groups, or who gives extra

instruction or remedial help in addition to the education received at school or college."

- According to Allen (2002:965) a tutor can also be described as: "A university or college teacher who teaches a small group, often also having responsibility for the student's welfare."

- The researcher would define tutor as an individual who has been employed to teach and guide young people (in terms of this specific study), in multiple aspects of their development. The tutor role in E.Y.S. is a very challenging and multi-tasked role. The tutors have to teach each learner by means of an individual learning plan to raise their level of education, but also to support their general welfare and social development.

1.12.3 Support System:

- "Bear the weight of; give practical or emotional help; take an active interest" (Collins, 2004:580).

- The second definition of a support system was found on a medical website (www.medical.webends.com). "provides assistance and encouragement to individuals in order that they may cope better."

- The researcher would define the concept support system for the purpose of this study as "the use of training, emotional- and physical support for the tutors of E.Y.S." The support system the researcher would advocate is a tutor network support group, because Baron (1996:44) defined groups as an affective way improving performance and productivity: "Early research comparing individual performance with grouped performance generally favoured groups - groups tend to be more accurate, faster and more productive"

The researcher would describe group forming as one of the most primitive human tendencies.   Individuals come together in times of fear, sorrow, or extreme

excitement. Humans seek out other in times of stress. Therefore the researcher would define a group, specifically a tutor network support group in the case of this study, as an opportunity for humans to come together in a supportive environment in which they can safely share their problems, stresses, and difficulties. It will also serve as an opportunity to share good practice and get motivated. Puchta and Potter (2004:5) described group interaction as crucial.

1.13 CONTENTS OF RESEARCH REPORT

CHAPTER 1:

This chapter outlines the motivation for the study, the problem formulation, the goals, and the objectives of the research project, the research question, the research approach, the type of research, research design, procedures, pilot study, ethical issues involved, and definitions of the key concepts of the study.

CHAPTER 2:

This chapter consists of a literature study regarding tutorship.

CHAPTER 3:

This chapter consists of an in-dept literature study focussing on support systems.

CHAPTER 4:

This chapter focuses on the empirical findings.

CHAPTER 5:

This chapter includes the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of this study.

CHAPTER 2

TUTORSHIP

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As the goal of this study is to explore the current support system in the organisation, E.Y.S., as well as the needs of the tutors for a future support system, this chapter will first focus on an exploration of the concept tutorship and assist the reader to gain a better understanding of the role, the responsibilities, the challenges, and the joy of tutorship. In order to fully understand the role of the tutors, especially in the context of E.Y.S., it is necessary to start this chapter with a more holistic picture. A brief description of the history of the education system in the U.K., an outset of the governing and inspection bodies in the U.K., a diagram putting informal education and E.Y.S. on the education map, and a general description and exploration of tutorship.

2.2 THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

In order to map out the E.Y.S. position on the education map, the role and responsibilities of the tutors within this position, and the rationale and motivation behind the role of the tutor, this will be explored in this chapter. The following text by Meredith (2002:3) provides a brief background description of the Education system in the U.K.:

- The Education Act, 1944, originally envisaged a balanced partnership between the central department and Local Education Authorities (henceforth: LEAs). The LEAs have a very significant strategic planning role in the education system namely the setting of standards for schools and other education establishments, quality insurance and inspection of provision.

- LEAs' strategic planning and other functions came under particular attack during the tenure of the Conservative government from 1979 to 1997. If the Conservative government had retained power in 1997, LEAs, as we know them, might have gone almost out of existence.

- Under the present government, and particularly by virtue of its first major education measure, School Standards and Framework Act 1998, LEAs have obtained a crucial role in promoting and improving standards in schools.   However, the secretary of state enjoys extensive powers of prescription, control, and intervention.   The organisational structure is highly centralized and authoritarian.

- The role of the LEAs in the future is open to question, particularly by virtue of the advance of private sector involvement in the provision of educational services in the maintained sector – a development the government is embracing with some enthusiasm, but that raises critical questions relating to democratic control and accountability.

To confirm that the recent trend to include the private sector in the education realm, but also to point out the challenges of such a move, the researcher finds it important to introduce the reader to the complexity of the British education system, which is mostly dependent on the politics of the country. This background provides the reader with a better understanding of the constant changes and conflict that occur, and the difficulties the teachers, tutors, and trainers have to deal with in terms of pressure from the bureaucracy part of the educational system.

 The researcher also found an interesting fact in Mackinnon and Statham (1999:46) about the education system in the U.K., namely that the Dearing Report – Review of qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds, already suggested in 1996 that vocational courses should be open to pupils as young as 14 years who do not find school of relevance to them, while remaining of school age. The researcher supports this recommendation.

Young people, as young as 14 years old, can definitely benefit from a more flexible and learner-orientated approach in all the schools and other learning centres.

It is a fact, however, that the current Government has set high standards for the education and development of the young people in the U.K. to ensure a good quality education and the continuing of full-time education, post 16 years of age. *The White Paper, Excellence in Schools* (2003) (henceforth: The White Paper) clearly stated that every school or education establishment is responsible for setting and raising standards in partnership with the three different government bodies.   Meredith (2002:10) provides a summary of the three government bodies, namely the LEAs, the Office of standards and education department (henceforth: Ofsted), and the Department for Education and Skills (henceforth: D.E.S).

- The LEAs' role is to help schools to set and meet their targets, and to provide an external assessment of the state of the school system as a whole.

- Ofsted's role is to inspect performance by individual schools and educational establishments.

- The role of The D.E.S is to set the policy framework, promote best practice, and to provide pressure and support in relation to the LEAs tasks.

E.Y.S., like every other school and learning centre in the U.K. is supported by the D.E.S and is inspected by Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (henceforth: ALI) to ensure the highest quality of service to all young people.

Mackinnon and Statham (1999:94) provided a diagram to visualize the education establishments and enable the researcher to point out where E.Y.S. fits into the education and training picture – See Figure 2.1

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   ┌──────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────┐      │
│   │ Continuing, full-time│              │ Comprehensive        │      │
│   │ Education at School, │   ───────▶   │ Grammar              │      │
│   │ Post 16              │              │ Independent          │      │
│   └──────────────────────┘              └──────────────────────┘      │
│                                                                       │
│ ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────────┐ │
│ │ Compulsory   │  │ Full-time        │  │ Sixth form               │ │
│ │ Schooling    │▶ │ Further Education/│▶│ FE College               │ │
│ │              │  │ Higher Education │  │ Tertiary College         │ │
│ └──────────────┘  └──────────────────┘  │ College of Higher Education│ │
│                                         └──────────────────────────┘ │
│                                         ┌──────────────────────┐      │
│                                         │ Block release/       │      │
│                                         │ Day release          │      │
│                                         └──────────────────────┘      │
│                   ┌──────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────┐      │
│                   │ Employment       │  │ Part-time            │      │
│ ┌──────────────┐  │ Apprenticeship   │  │ Further Education/   │      │
│ │ Other        │▶ │ Youth training   │▶ │ Higher Education     │      │
│ └──────────────┘  │ Unemployment     │  │                      │      │
│                   └──────────────────┘  └──────────────────────┘      │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Figure 2.1: The Education Establishments in the United Kingdom

Figure 2.1 provides a diagram to visualize the education establishments in the U.K. Compulsory schooling starts at the age of five or six years and continues until age 16. The Further Education provides the student with an opportunity to progress into either full time, further education, or higher education on an academic route at school in a Comprehensive, Grammar, or Independent establishment. (Also called State Education). The second option of further education is in the form of vocational training (in colleges), namely Sixth Form, Tertiary-, Further Education-, and Higher Education Colleges. A very popular other option available to the students is employment, apprenticeship and youth training. E.Y.S forms part of the youth training option available to young people. The youth training schemes aim to motivate and support the young people back into further higher education, vocational training schemes, or the open labour market, which is the final least favourable option, with the ultimate aim of reducing the unemployment rates in the U.K..

Mackinnon and Statham (1999:188) explained vocational training schemes with the following quote: "In addition to employment and conventional education in schools or colleges, young people, especially school leavers aged 16 and 17, have a number of vocational and pre-vocational training schemes available to them. Some of these schemes operate within or partly within schools and colleges, others outside."

E.Y.S. forms part of the pre-vocational youth training schemes, and the goal of the organisation is clearly explained in the organisation's office manual, (E.Y.S. Office manual 2003:15) namely: To empower young people, whatever their abilities to maximize their potential, through:

- Learning

- Leading

- Challenging

- Inclusion

This includes motivating and assisting young people back into full or part time education, work-based learning programmes or to enter the open labour market. To further explain the goals and ethos of E.Y.S., the following section will explore the reasoning and motivation behind informal education and how an organisation like E.Y.S fits into the general education picture.

2.3 INFORMAL EDUCATION

E.Y.S. makes use of a very unique and successful training ethos, as described in chapter one. This unique approach encompasses a very challenging and rewarding role for the tutors, and for the rest of this chapter we will explore the concept of alternative education and the role of the tutor in this process.

Jeffs and Smith (1996:3) remind the reader that informal education is not a new concept and has been part of family life for centuries. Ideas were shared, skills developed, and values tested before the mass schooling of today was the norm. They

continue the discussion about the school as an institution, as we know it today. The school system was developed to educate the masses for working in an industrial society, and has not changed very much since then, nor has it taken into consideration the changes in the world and society. Technological advances have brought along different needs, expectations, and skills requirements, which have to be taken into consideration in order to support a more effective schooling system.

 E.Y.S. provides exactly this kind of old-fashioned and alternative approach to teaching (as discussed in Chapter 1 under the introduction section) and steers away from the traditional method of teaching as described by Rogers (1996:3) which includes: "forty desks facing the same way: teachers teach, while students listen and record, learn and regurgitate. It does not, indeed cannot facilitate effective mixed-ability considerations, integration, active learning, or co-operative strategies."

Carnie (2003:1) provides the readers with an introduction to what alternative education should encompass: "Alternative education is about personal development, keeping children off the streets and installing in them the knowledge, skills and attitudes to create a fairer and more sustainable world."

Carnie (2003: 2) states that it has been proven that children learn better when their individual needs and interests are taken into consideration. The learner-centred approach, which is based on the concept that each individual learner is assessed at the beginning of the course, and an individual needs-development programme is written and introduced to the learner and reviewed monthly. This is the core element which makes E.Y.S. and other private learning providers more successful in teaching and developing certain young people to their full potential.

This learner-focused learning environment presents the tutor of these learners with a challenge, however. Each tutor is responsible for approximately 15 learners, with different needs, abilities, and standards. It is the role of the tutor to support each learner to develop, grow, and learn. This chapter will focus on the comprehensive role of the tutor. Carnie (2003: 18) confirms the challenges for the tutor role and suggests that, in order for tutors to successfully support the learners in their development process; the tutors/teachers need to know their learners'/students' needs,

wishes, and capabilities, in order to teach them effectively. Small groups of learners are necessary to achieve this goal of personal attention and support.   She continues to advocate that education should be a holistic approach, and aim to foster creative, emotional, moral, and spiritual growth.   Learners should be part of the decision-making process and should develop their own individual learning plan.   The final stage of holistic education is to involve the learners' parents and the local community in contributing to the learning programme.

All the above-mentioned ideas and theories of holistic and alternative education are supported by E.Y.S. and its tutors and form the basis of the learning process in E.Y.S. learning centres. An example of how E.Y.S. attempts to meet the diverse needs of the learners is the Individual Development Plan, which was devised by the Learning and Skills Council and introduced into all the learning centres in the U.K.

This plan is based on the individually assessed needs of each learner. Each plan is written to the learner's needs and abilities and the aim is to improve the learners' educational, social, and work abilities. The challenge of this Individual Development Plan is that the individual needs of each learner, which are very diverse, have to meet in the "classroom" with a comprehensive but flexible lesson plan.

The researcher will include the Individual Learning Plan (Example 1) as an example to demonstrate the in-depth support the tutors have to offer to the learners.   The researcher will also attach the Review of the Learning Plan, (Example 2) from which the Individual Development Plan or e2e programme was taken, for information and background only.

Example 1: Individual Development Plan.

Name   Date of birth

Address   Emergency contact

Telephone No.   National Insurance No.

Email

E2E start date

Key Worker contact details

Name

Address

Telephone No.

Personal Adviser contact details

Name

Address

Telephone No.

Employer contact details

Name

Address

Telephone No.

Support agency contact details

Name

Address

Telephone No.

Expected length of time required to complete objectives

Young person's career and progression aims   Date Achieved

Key Objectives

Expected length of time required to complete

Learning and Support modules
1. Basic and Key Skills
2. Personal and Social Development
3. Vocational Development
4.Additional support activities to be provided by other organisations

Qualifications, awards and certificates to be achieved during E2E	Date achieved
Confirm agreement of the objectives, programme and anticipated achievement outcomes identified above. Young person's signature Date	
I confirm agreement to provide the necessary training and support to meet the objectives, programme and achievement outcomes identified above. Key Worker's signature Date	

Example 2: Review of the Learning Plan

Name:	

Agreed targets for the period up to the next review and the support required to meet targets	Comments on progress against targets including views of the learner, Key Worker, Personal Adviser, Employer, and others participating in the review
Date planned for progress to be reviewed. Names of personnel involved in agreeing targets	
Names of personnel involved in reviewing progress.	

Comments on progress in any other aspects of learning since the last review

Health and Safety awareness

Equal Opportunities awareness

I agree to the targets set for me and will work to achieve them Young person's signature Date	I agree with the comments made about my progress since my last review Young person's signature Date

The two forms that have been included in this chapter are two very important learning tools in learning centres. The first form, the Individual Development Plan, is used on the first day of induction as an orientation document. The induction process involves a tour of the facility, introduction to staff and other learners, a health and safety awareness document being filled in, which points out fire procedures, escape routes, and where the fire extinguishers are kept. The learner then does two basic skills assessments, a literature and maths test and completes the first part of the Individual Development Plan, as shown on page 37, which includes the educational background as well as the young persons' own goals and objectives for the future. The tutor uses the questions in the document to lead the discussion, break the ice, and show interest in the young person and his needs. This induction process is an important part of building a trust relationship between tutor and learner for further exploration of the learners needs at a later stage and to enable the tutor to support the learner in the correct and appropriate way.

The second part of the form, the Learning and Support modules, is filled in over an introductory period of eight weeks. This document is a live document and is being reviewed every two to four weeks, depending on the learner's needs and abilities. The learner also has to sign the document to commit to learning and self-development.

The following document, (Example 2) is an example of the Review of the Learning Programme. This is another important tool for the tutor and assists the tutor to set certain targets for the learner in partnership with the learner and other agencies such as the social worker, career development officer, or the probation officer. The reviewing process is a joint exploration of the needs development and other concerns or difficulties that the learner might be experiencing. It identifies which targets have been achieved, which ones have not yet been achieved, and why not. The learner has to be present and has to participate in every review, because it does motivate and commit the learner to his/her own development.

These are only two of the tools used to guide and support the learners and already it is clear that each tutor has a big responsibility to meet all the different needs of the learners on the course. The rest of the chapter will explore tutorship and the reasoning behind this method of teaching.

2.4 TUTORSHIP

Informal education providers, such as E.Y.S., make use of a variety of staff members, for example informal educators, basic skills teachers, career development officers, driving instructors, counsellors, and other professional services, such as the probation officers or social workers, as well as tutors. In the context of this study, the focus will be specifically on the tutor.

2.4.1   Definition of the concept "tutor"

Jeffs and Smith (1996: 3) define "tutors" as follows:

> Informal educators work in a multitude of ways. They exploit and create learning opportunities. Central to their work is the fostering of conversation – working so that people can engage with each other and the world. Like all educators, they improvise, but more so. They seek to make the world more intelligible for those they work with. To achieve this, they share knowledge, experience, and where appropriate, offer guidance and advice. However, they always do so within some sort of moral framework. They try to make the world not only more intelligible, but also a better place. We seek or resist change, to reduce rather than exacerbate suffering, to improve life-chances rather than damage them.

Mahoney (2001:17) describes tutors as being youth or community workers, project workers, detached workers or drugs/alcohol workers, teaching through formal- and informal methods. Informal learning opportunities include residential trips, music groups, art, sport, discussion groups, or one-to-one work. The overall aim is education.

In the context of this study, as indicated in chapter 1, a tutor is defined by Allen (2002:965) as "A person employed as a private teacher, especially one who teaches

individuals or small groups, an university or a college teacher who teaches a small group often also having responsibility for the student's welfare."

2.4.2 Core values underlying the role of a tutor

Banks (2001:64) listed the core values underlying the role of a tutor as follows:

- A respect for persons
- A belief in democracy
- A commitment to fairness and equality.

The researcher interprets these core values as respect for each individual learner, taking into consideration their uniqueness and individual needs, wishes, and feelings. Democracy and self-determination is a very important value to keep in mind. Each learner should be part of his/her learning process, make decisions, take responsibility, and set targets for their own development. The final values as quoted by Banks is fairness and equality, which brings us back to respect for each individual learner, his/her beliefs, and his/her culture. Tutors should be committed to non-discriminatory practice and equal opportunities for all.

Another important aspect which should be built on Bank's core values is the learning relationship between the tutor and the learner. Tiffany (2001:99) describes what she sees as the qualities in a relationship that foster learning, namely:

- Trust and commitment
- Mutuality
- Appreciating vulnerability

Trust implies some form of emotional investment in a relationship, something which is crucial if a tutor wishes to engage a learner. The learners whom the tutors generally have to deal with are less motivated and are apprehensive about learning and engaging in a trusting relationship with their educator. They have often been failed by mainstream education and sometimes even rejected by their parents and society in general. Being able to gain the trust of a learner is difficult, but if the tutor is honest

and has their best interest at heart, a trusting relationship will slowly but surely form, and learning can progress.

Mutuality refers to the learning relationship in which both parties give and take something to progress in the developing and learning spheres.

The last characteristic of the learning relationship between the learner and tutor is that of appreciating *vulnerability*. Vulnerability according to Tiffany (2001:101) often comes from fear of failure. Therefore a positive relationship can encourage learners to take risks with learning, which they might otherwise not have taken. The researcher is of the opinion that, as mentioned earlier, the learners are very negative about learning and sometimes are not even motivated to engage in any form of learning or job, because they do not believe in themselves. The tutor has the very challenging job of motivating and supporting the learner to believe in him/herself and in his/her future.

2.4.3   The role of a tutor

Jeffs (2001:36) provides a historic view on the role of tutor with the following statement:

> Informal education probably pre-dates the formal variety. Philosophers, teachers, and clerics have traditionally gone to places where people gathered, in order to engage them in dialogue and conversation. It is a matter of conjecture as to the importance and frequency of such encounters. However, we know that those who hoped to bring about change or secure influence sought an audience on the street or in the square. This was often the only way to reach adults; especially those denied a school education. It was a hit and miss approach. Practitioners not only had to cope with the vagaries of the climate; they had to be entertaining, at the risk of being superficial, and handled a fickle crowd uninterested in their message.

Jeffs and Smith (1996: 59) describes six basic responsibilities in the role of a tutor namely:

- Being about

- Being there

- Working with individuals and groups

- Doing projects

- Doing administration and research

- Reflecting on practice

The role the tutor has to play is a very challenging and sometimes even stressful role, because the tutors are so much more than a teacher. Jeffs and Smith's six basic key responsibilities can lead us in this discussion. The tutor has the role of *"being about",* which seems a very simple concept, but just being around in the room and being available to talk to or to support a leaner is the basic on which a trusting relationship between the learner and the tutor develop. The learner has someone to talk to, something which might seem obvious to some of us, but which might not necessarily be the case for some of learners. The second bullet point, *"being there"*, takes the "being about" one step further; "being there" puts the tutor in the position to respond to situations, worries, and crises. The tutor now becomes more involved with the learner, the relationship between them grows and develops, and so does the trust. The tutor has now become 'a shoulder to cry on'.

Now that a trusting relationship has developed between the tutor and the learner/s, the tutor is in a position to *start working* with the individual or the group. Learning can take place and the learners are able to build on their skills and work towards their goals. The tutor also needs to organize and arrange projects such as residential trips and days out. These projects are still based on the learning curriculum and the learner's individual development plan, but are also fun, providing the tutor with an opportunity to reward good work and for the learners to experience something new or see somewhere new.

The tutors also have various *administrative tasks* to complete. This can range from checking the learners' timesheets every week to updating their individual development plans, reviewing their progress every week, and also marking their portfolio and the work that they have completed in the learning centres. The final

bullet point mentions, *"reflecting on practice,"* the researcher would interpret this as the opportunity for tutors to reflect on their own practice, discuss it with their supervisor, or even in group settings. The aim of reflecting on practice is to improve on practice and to develop oneself.

It seems therefore as if the tutor has a very exciting, but challenging role to play in the development and progressing of his/her learners.

2.4.4 The responsibilities of a tutor.

Riley (2001:148) stated that tutors have a very comprehensive and complicated responsibility to incorporate formal learning into the holistic development plan of each learner to enable the learners to achieve their goals. She suggested the following elements be part of the learning structure, namely:

- The needs of the young people taking part
- Timescale and programme content
- The environment in which the programme will take place
- The constraints there are in terms of resources
- Flexibility within the programme to allow for, and encompass, deviations from 'intended' outcomes
- Provision for the further development of young people
- Effective, user-friendly monitoring, reflection, and evaluation of work
- Health and safety procedures

The above-mentioned elements are integrated in the E.Y.S. programmes, and the responsibility of the tutor can be described and explained as follows:

 E.Y.S. does a comprehensive need assessment of each learner's abilities and needs when they join the programme. The tutor has the responsibility to welcome the learner, do an induction and introduction to the company, the staff and the rules and regulations of the learning centre. The tutor has also the responsibility to a*ssess the*

learners' needs, abilities, and specifically their basic skills abilities through a numeracy and literacy assessment.

Following the first day of introduction, there should be a programme-planning session, during which the tutor in partnership with the learner set individual learning targets for each learner according to their individual development plan which has been put in place to guide the tutor and the learner in the development and learning process. These learning targets are reviewed every week, and new targets are set to reach the specific assessed target of each learner. The *timescale and programme* contents are all based on the individual learner's abilities and needs.

The environment in which the programme takes place also has to be selected carefully by the tutor. E.Y.S. has created an interesting learning environment guideline, which each tutor has to develop as creatively as possible. The music tutor, for example is able to teach his music programme in an actual fully-equipped music studio, with music decks and computers. It is up to the individual tutor to use this learning environment to his advantage. As with everything in life, there are some *restraints* on the programme due to financial resources, time, lack of equipment, and other restrictions, such as paperwork, planning, and guidelines from the government, but it is the responsibility of each tutor to cope with these hurdles and to provide the learners with the learning and development they deserve.

The positive flipside of the restraints and stresses is definitely the possibility for *flexible and interesting teaching and learning*. Learning can take place anywhere in any shape or form. Once again it is up to the individual tutor to use these flexible guidelines to their advantage.   Flexible learning should, however still be planned and have a purpose. The learners might not necessarily have to know this, but the tutor must plan effectively and creatively. All learning should be *monitored and evaluated*. This is done through a review process with every learner, as well as monthly, in partnership with the learner, their career development officer and any other professionals involved in their programme, for example probation officers, social workers, or counsellors. It is the tutor's responsibility to co-ordinate the reviewing process. *Health and safety* aspects are included in the introduction programme and are reviewed regularly.

An example of the Needs assessment, devised by expert staff within E.Y.S., from the Learner Passport, is illustrated below, to demonstrate the comprehensive support a learner can expect from the tutor.

Example 3: Needs assessment form

INITIAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Name: **Referral Source:**

Area: **Action/Support required**

Achievements, qualifications, and prior experience/learning

Learning Experience

Language, Literacy, Numeracy, ESOL, and key skills

Career preferences and suitability

Interests and hobbies

Learning difficulties or other support needs

Learning style

Personal and social skills

Health

Personal circumstances

Other relevant information

I confirm that I permit the information contained on this form to be shared with my Personal Adviser and the following organisations which may help me in fulfilling my future goals:

Please highlight any information, which the young person does **not** wish to be shared with other organisations specifically.

Young person's signature:

Key worker Signature   Date

The Needs assessment form as illustrated in Example 3 forms part of the development process with each learner. Each tutor has to use this form as a tool and guideline for supporting and developing each of their learners. The tutor has to know the learner's background, abilities, and needs, in order to support the learner effectively. This assessment tool also has to have the learner's signature on to give permission for tutors and other staff to share sensitive information with other agencies or professionals.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Chapter 2 explored the concept of tutor, the roles, responsibilities, challenges, and joys of tutorship.

This chapter commenced with a brief description of the education system in the U.K. in order to set the background for the chapter, and put tutorship into perspective. The reader would hopefully now have a better understanding of the challenges put on the tutors, from a bureaucracy point of view, as well as from the day-to-day challenges they have to cope with, during their journey in supporting, and developing the young people they work with. Tutorship forms part of the "informal education" system in the U.K. and is a holistic approach to learning which suits the needs of some of the young people, who are not necessarily main stream education material, who has had some difficulties in their lives, and therefore has been failed by the mainstream education system.

The conclusion the researcher would like to make from this chapter is that the tutor has a huge responsibility to guide the learner through the learning process and also has a very challenging role to co-ordinate the rest of the responsibilities which would contribute to the learner's development. Therefore it is crucial to support the tutor in the job and provide the necessary training, counselling, education, and any other support required by each individual, to enable the tutors to effectively support their vulnerable clients. The next chapter will explore the nature and reasoning behind such a support system.

CHAPTER 3

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the importance of supporting a company's employees, the advantages, disadvantages and the consequences of not doing so; what a possible support system could look like, and the importance of the professional development of any employee in the education system. Zwell (2000:1) refers to this process as building a culture of competence, an organisational system that encourages, motivates, and develops people to work cooperatively to accomplish the organisation's purpose and objectives in accordance to its values.

For the purpose of this study, it is also important to focus on how E.Y.S. could benefit from effectively supporting their tutors, benefit the learners and the organisation as a business. In this regard, Zwell (2000:9) suggests that there are three cornerstones that form the foundation for an organisation's success, namely:

- The competence of its leadership
- The competence of its employees
- The degree to which the corporate culture fosters and maximizes competence.

Gold and Roth (1993: vii) set the tone for this chapter with the following statement: "Research has consistently demonstrated that those in the professions, particularly the helping professions, have significantly higher levels of stress and burnout. Studies have shown that the profession with the greatest vulnerability to these illnesses is teaching."

Taking Gold and Roth's statement into consideration, the researcher would like to point out at the beginning of this discussion that the tutors of E.Y.S. have to fulfil several roles within the domain of education, namely a teaching role, mentoring role, leading by example, role model, counsellor, parent, and friend.

Gold and Roth (1993: ix) continued their discussion with the following statement, and commented that research showed that during the recent "reform movement" within the education system, issues such as the National curriculum were focused upon, but that teachers themselves have expressed the need for some kind of reformation focusing on support and assistance for the teaching professionals.

Taking into consideration the request from the teaching professionals, the researcher is aware that all professionals in a teaching or mentoring role enter the profession with high expectations and excitement, but demands, pressures and the conditions they work in often lead to disillusionment and even burnout.   Gold and Roth (1993:3) provided the following quote: "The most dangerous threats to the physical, emotional, and intellectual welfare of teachers are the stressful and emotional dilemmas they encounter almost daily. If you aren't well, you can't teach well."

To demonstrate the different problems and how the needs of the educators have changed over the years, and to support the fact that a support system for tutors is now needed more than ever before, the researcher found that Gold and Roth (1993: 5) provided a very interesting list of problems experienced by educators in the 1940's and a list of the problems experienced in the 1980's.

1940's	1980's
• Talking out of turn	Drug abuse
• Chewing gum	Alcohol abuse
• Making noises	Pregnancy
• Running in the halls	Suicide
• Cutting in line	Rape
• Violating the dress code	Robbery
• Littering	Assault

It is the researcher's opinion that these lists speak for themselves in terms of the type of stresses that today's educators have to cope with. Mills (1994:7) stated that 85% of all illnesses are apparently stress-related; therefore it is important for E.Y.S. to identify and explore stress in the workplace as soon as possible, to ensure the effective support of staff, and to avoid possible unnecessary absenteeism and

additional costs to the company. Mills (1994:7) also mentions another disadvantage of not effectively supporting employees in the workplace. He focuses on the hidden costs to a country and a company: "Stress costs this country billions of pounds per year through absenteeism, (from stress-related illness and inappropriate coping devices such as alcohol and drug abuse), mistakes, accidents, disputes, and the reduced performance of people in the workplace." Against this background, the researcher will now explore the nature, advantages, and disadvantages of an effective support system in more detail.

3.2 THE NEED FOR A SUPPORT SYSTEM

The need for a support system for any employee is extremely important, and the need for an effective support system for staff in the education system is crucial. Mills (1994:8) provided a useful stress/performance diagram, to illustrate the necessity of a support system and the consequences of not having one.   See Figure 3.1
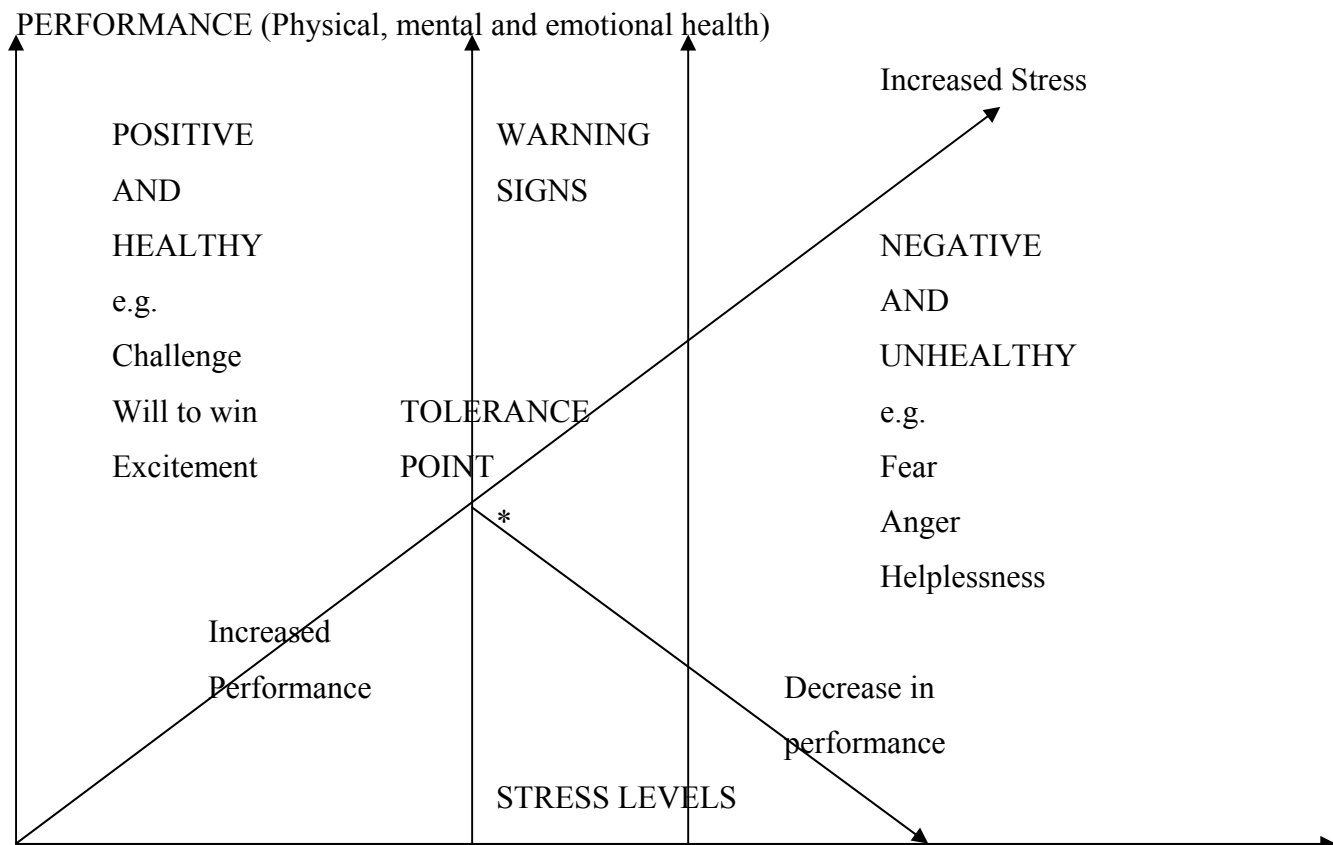
PERFORMANCE (Physical, mental and emotional health)

Figure 3.1: The influence of stress on an employee's motivation to work

The researcher interprets Mill's diagram as a confirmation that stress is good for motivation and success. The figure starts of with a positive and healthy employee who has the 'will to win,' is excited about the challenges ahead, and is eager to work. There is a tolerance point in every employee's life, however, where stress can become too much and the person's natural ability to cope with the stresses and strains is negatively influenced and fails. The researcher finds it important that an employer should be aware of this tolerance point and should ensure that the necessary support network is in place to support employees and to avoid a decrease in performance and productivity and efficiency, as demonstrated with the Occupational Stress Model adapted by Clarke and Cooper (2004: 6). See Figure 3.2.

Sources of pressure	**Individual**	**Stress Outcomes**
Intrinsic to the job Role in the organisation Relationships at work Career development Organisational structure and climate Home-work interface	E.g. coping mechanisms	E.g. mental ill health Physical ill health, sickness absence and work accidents
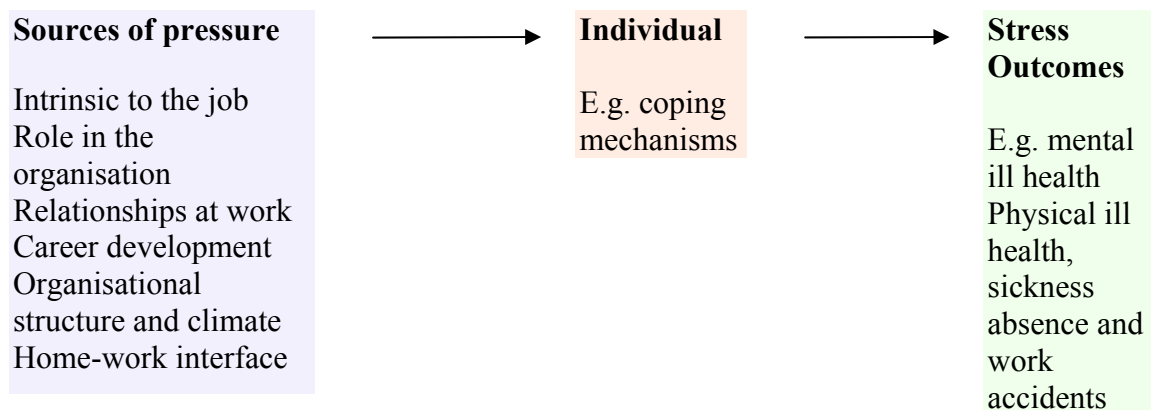
Figure 3.2 Pressure and outcomes of work-related stress

Figure 3.2 illustrates the sources of pressure, the individual coping mechanisms, and the possible negative outcomes if an individual's coping mechanisms fails.

According to the list of 'sources of pressure' mentioned in Figure 3.2, Gold and Roth (1993: 18) also listed some possible professional and personal stressors which could lead to the stress-related illnesses mentioned in Figure 3.2, namely:

- Disruptive students
- Excessive paper work
- Curriculum issues
- Environmental pressures
- Administrative entanglement
- Lack of mobility

- Change

- Health

- Relationships

- Finances

- Living conditions

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 are relevant, because an employer should be aware of the stresses and strains with which an employee is struggling, in order to enable the organisation to effectively support its employees. The employer and managers should be aware of how far an employee is from reaching his/her tolerance point, as illustrated in Figure 3.1, to avoid unnecessary burnout or work-related incidents and accidents.

Figure 3.2 points out sources of pressure of which employers and managers could take note and what the results are of not supporting an employee effectively.   The following section will explore in detail the rationale of supporting employees.

3.3 THE RATIONALE FOR A SUPPORT SYSTEM

This part of the discussion will look at the advantages of supporting the tutors in their roles and at the benefits this holds for the tutors, the learners, and the company, as well as the disadvantages and consequences of not supporting the tutors.   The advantage of supporting employees and developing them is summarized by Davenport (1999: xii), namely: "People are investors in a business, paying in human capital and expecting a return on their investment."   The discussion continues, and Davenport (1999:7) also suggests that:

> People possess innate abilities, behaviours, personal energy, and time. These elements make up human capital – the currency people bring to invest in their jobs.   Workers, not organisations, own this human capital. Workers, not organisations, decide when, how, and where they will contribute to it.

The above statements by Davenport are important to keep in mind when reasoning and deciding whether to invest in employees or not. It seems as if investment in employees is inevitable to ensure financial and productivity sense. Especially if the challenging role of the tutor, as discussed in chapter two is taken into consideration and E.Y.S. wants their employees to be creative, supportive, and positive.

Zwell (2000:11) stated the following in regards to supporting employees:

> People are not machines and treating them as such seldom works very well. We cannot just say to our subordinates,' Increase your productivity by 15 percent this year,' and expect it to occur. It usually isn't that easy. People have emotional needs, desires, and feelings. They want to feel cared about, and they have their motivations. They will not help you succeed in achieving the organisation's objectives or your personal objectives, unless their own wants and needs are satisfied in the process.

In this regard, Clarke and Cooper (2004: 1) are of the opinion that working in a stressful environment increases the risk of suffering physical illness or symptoms of psychological distress as well as the risk of work-related accidents and injuries. If the employees' needs are not met, compensation claims for "cumulative trauma" will increase.

According to Clarke and Cooper (2004: 1): "Cumulative trauma relates to the development of mental illness as a result of continual exposure to occupational stress."

Clarke and Cooper (2004: 4) also discussed the costs associated with occupational stress, and noted that the International Social Survey Programme, conducted in fifteen countries, found that 80 percent of all employees reported being stressed at work. The United Kingdom Health and Safety Executive estimates that 20 percent of all employees admit to taking time off work, because of work-related stress, and 8 percent consult their general practitioner on stress-related problems.

Clarke and Cooper (2004: 4) also found that a survey on working conditions by the European foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions showed that 57 percent of all European workers consider their health negatively affected by work, and 28 percent felt that their health and safety was at risk.

The researcher would like to support this train of thought, and is of the opinion that workplace stress also accounts for a high proportion of sickness absence in E.Y.S.

According to Clarke and Cooper (2004: 5), the Health and Safety Executive estimated that 60 percent of all work absences are caused by stress-related illness, totalling 40 million working days per year. The Confederation of British Industry estimated that in financial terms, sickness absence costs approximately £11 billion per year in the United Kingdom, of which 40 percent is related to workplace stress. This figure translates to two to three percent of the gross national product, or £438 per employee per year. In the context of E.Y.S., it means £438 times 300 employees working for E.Y.S. This equals approximately £131 400.00 per year lost due to workplace stress.

Civil (2003: xi) listed some losses for any individual suffering from stress and of an employee who is not supported within his/her working environment, namely:

- Sense of humour
- Self-love and self-worth
- Self-confidence
- Quality of life
- Trust
- Respect
- Influence
- Genuine relationships
- The ability to make decisions
- Psychosomatic illness

It has now been established why employees need to be supported in their working environment, and the advantages of supporting and motivating employees in the workplace will be explored below.

Gold and Roth (1993: 21) suggested that supporting employees in a constructive manner is a vital part of handling stressful situations. It also provides the opportunity to gain insight into new or different ways to handle stressful events, and to avoid the negative outcomes mentioned in Figure 3.2.

Janisch (2002:5) promotes the idea that support and motivation of staff is crucial for the benefits of the learner as well as for commitment to the organisation and motivation of tutors. "Organisations who compete successfully in the intense competitive environment of global markets are reliant on a committed and skilled workforce who functions in effective teams.   This requires individual skill, knowledge, and experience, and the ability to co-operate with other team members to maximize the output of the functions."

There are many theories to support Janisch's comment.   The following three motivation theories are the most relevant to the researcher, and point out the advantages of motivating employees:

- **Maslow's hierarchy of needs**

    Tierney (1996:41) provides us with Maslow's well-known hierarchy of needs, which is very useful in understanding the tutor's needs for development, fulfilment, and self-actualization, as illustrated in Figure 3.3.
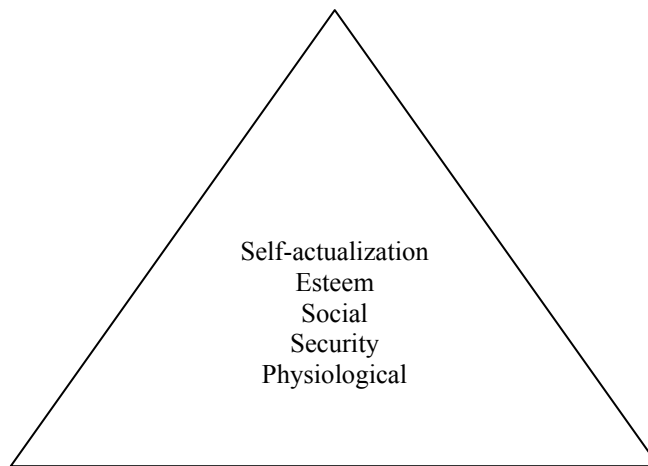
Diagram 3.3 Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a framework to use when motivating an employee. The employer/manager first has to establish where the employee finds himself on the hierarchy of needs, to enable the employer to set targets for the employee, in order to motivate and support the employee to aspire to a higher level of development/progression.

- **Hertzberg two-factor theory:**

According to the Hertzberg theory as discussed by Tierney (1996:42), health and safety factors do not actually motivate employees to work harder or better, but they do need to be at least satisfactory if they are not to demotivate people.

In the context of this study, the tutors at E.Y.S. need to learn how to restrain difficult and violent young people. A manual-handling course is offered at work, and should be attended by every tutor before he/she is put in a vulnerable position. The tutors need to know that they are able to protect themselves and that the organisation is concerned about their welfare.

The Hertzberg theory also states that work should be challenging and interesting. An employee should be made responsible for tasks and duties carried out, and recognition of completed work and the possibility of personal development/ transfer/ promotion are crucial. In this regard, therefore, it

seems as if the tutors at E.Y.S. must be made aware of the major responsibility that lies on their shoulders. The responsibility of teaching, training, and developing the future citizens of the U.K. depends on the tutor's ability to support, teach, and motivate the learner. Being a tutor is also a major role to take on, because the young people that they work with are vulnerable young people who need a lot of support, and back-up, from positive role models and mentors. A second-hand service will ethically not do for these young people. The tutors fulfil a challenging role, and should receive recognition for hard work done to make them feel valued, motivated, and committed. Finally, the tutors should be given the opportunity to develop themselves, to feel qualified and equipped to do the job successfully, and to feel positive about themselves and their futures.

- **Vroom's expectancy theory:**

Vroom's theory, as discussed by Tierney (1996:42), is that any individual's needs/goals and his/her expectations of achieving them are very important. Each individual has different levels of importance or valency of expectancy. If a high valency is to act as a motivation, the individual need to feel that the specific need/goal can be satisfied. According to Vroom's theory, E.Y.S. should be aware of the tutors' individual work-related targets and the goals for themselves. The organisation could use the current appraisal system to help the tutors to set some goals for themselves and also to support and encourage them to achieve these goals. Each individual will function on a different level and will have different targets to meet.

Taking the three motivational theories into consideration, it is clear that it is important to assist, support, and motivate the tutors in identifying goals and objectives for their individual work-related progression and development. Team targets and group objectives could also be set in order to motivate the tutors to work as a team and to support each other. Motivating the tutors will not only benefit the individuals, it will also benefit the organisation as pointed out by Sagie and Koslowsky (2000:19):

Acceptance of authorized decisions by the workers is desirable, especially when performance involves overcoming obstacles and demands an expenditure of effort. For example, in a case of organisation change or crises, challenging goals and demanding decisions may not be fully accomplished, unless those workers expected to carry them out are involved in making the decisions or setting the goals. The gap between failure of management plans and their success may therefore be a function of the gap between worker resistance to acceptance of these plans.

Involving the tutors in the decision-making process therefore not only motivates them, but could also contribute to the success of the organisation.

However, informal support by itself is not sufficient. Formal supervision, appraisals, and other support mechanisms are crucial, and the tutors are legally entitled to it as discussed by Werhane, Radin, and Bowie (2004:29):

Certain conditions are necessary, in order for employees to have rights, construed as the absence of coercion, due process, and self-development. Safety is necessary for self-preservation. Free speech and association enable development and self-protection. Privacy is also important, as it indicates limiting access to information that influences the individual's future choices. In addition, equal opportunities and procedural due processes serve to protect the choices that employees are free to make.

Not only are supporting employees a legal responsibility of the employer, they are also a social responsibility as suggested by Werhane *et al.* (2004:112) "The reciprocal nature of employee-employer relationships in the workplace entails some important employee rights, and particularly rights to fair treatment and respect. If an employee is expected to 'act solely for the benefit of the principal, and not to act or speak disloyally', the employer has the duty to treat the employee with similar respect."

It is the researcher's opinion that, in the case of this study, such fair treatment and respect includes listening to the tutors' needs, wishes, and feelings, and putting in place the appropriate support system, as requested by the staff.   If, however, the tutor's needs are not met, and they are not appropriately and effectively supported, the result will be occupational stress and a less-than-satisfactory support and service for the learners, as well as lower productivity and commitment to the organisation. To understand the nature of the occupational stress that the tutors would be exposed to, Clarke and Cooper (2004: 5) provided an explanation, namely*:*

> Stress is not located in the person or in the environment, but in the relationship between the two.   Working from this understanding, stress refers to the overall transactional process, not to specific elements such as the individual or the environment. Stress arises when the demands of a particular job/situation are considered by the employee to be too much to cope with, and the feeling of lack of skills and resources to deal with the situation are overwhelming.

Stressors are described as the events that are encountered by individuals, while strains refer to the individual's psychological, physical, and behavioural responses to stressors (Clarke and Cooper 2004:6). In this regard, Clarke and Cooper (2004: 6) categorized the following sources of occupational stress, and the researcher integrates it with the tutor's situation in E.Y.S:

- Role in the organisation – The role of the tutor in E.Y.S in itself is challenging and complicated, but the stress escalates when the tutors are not certain about what their roles are, how to progress and develop in these roles, or how to fulfil the criteria for these roles. Without clear guidance and support, the tutors could experience lack of motivation to work, a feeling of not being valued, and lower productivity.

- Relationships at work – Working relationships form a crucial part of teamwork. Teamwork forms a crucial part of the tutor's role, and needs to be

developed, nurtured, and used for support, sharing of ideas, and back-up in a challenging or dangerous situation. The relationship between employer/ manager and employee is also important. The tutors will need to feel supported and valued in order to be able to render their full potential.

- Career development – Developing and supporting the tutors in their own personal development is important. Not only does this provide the organisation with a pool of knowledgeable and experienced staff, it also ensures that the employees feel valued and invested in, which will, in return, result in higher productivity, commitment and staff giving that little bit extra.

- Organisational structure and climate – Having an organisational structure in place illuminates stresses such as the tutor being unsure where to turn for advice, support, and back-up, as well as clear job roles and responsibilities for all the staff in the learning centres.

- Home-work interface – It is not possible to separate the home and working environments. It is ideal but not realistic. The tutors are also parents, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters with other responsibilities. Flexible working conditions and a shoulder to cry on can only strengthen the bond at work, and have a positive outcome.

It therefore is the researcher's understanding that sources of pressure are caused by not only the nature of a specific job (e.g. violence towards a tutor in the classroom), but also from the structure and climate (e.g. management style) and level of support received from within the organisation.

The rationale for supporting an employee has been summarized in this section of the chapter. Support, training, and development of the tutors are important to motivate, enable, and equip the tutors to fulfil their roles more effectively. It will also provide a better service to the learners as well as more commitment towards the organisation. In the following section of this chapter, the researcher will explore the reasoning behind

the motivating and supporting of employees in the workplace as well as the advantages to the employee and the organisation in doing so.

3.4. THE ADVANTAGES OF AN ORGANISATION SUPPORT SYSTEM

The following section will concentrate on the advantages of a support system. The focus will be on the advantages of the employee's work motivation and increased productivity, and of organisational and staff development.

3.4.1 Work motivation and increased productivity

The researcher is of the opinion that one should go back to the basics as to why we work. Ultimately, work gives meaning to one's life. It defines who one is, what one wants to be, and where one wants to go. It provides a social network, and it is connected to one's self-esteem, one's status, and even one's social class. Work defines a person, and therefore it is important that work should be as positive and enjoyable an experience as possible. Work-satisfaction and ultimately higher productivity and commitment to an employer is only possible if an employee is feeling supported and positive about his/her work environment. Werhane *et al*: (2003:130) supports these thoughts with the following statement:

> Without some identity or satisfaction with a job, profession, or vocation, people do not feel loyal or committed – the work seems of no consequence. Through good morale and productivity incentives, and by recognizing the connection between such things and employee satisfaction, employers can produce and maintain employee satisfaction and increased productivity.

This statement is interpreted as meaning that, if the employers want a motivated and committed workforce that will internalize the goals of the company, it is necessary to train employees for achievement, and to support them in the way and in areas in which the employees themselves feel the need for support. This does not mean that an employee has absolute rights to meaningful work and that employers have absolute

responsibility to provide training and support, but it seems clear that both the employee and the employer can undoubtedly benefit from a more positive and supportive working environment, which will include committed, positive, loyal workers and long-term performance which will increase productivity.

3.4.2   Enhance Organisational development

Based on the previous paragraph and the thought that supporting and developing employees in the workplace can contribute to the effective development of the staff and an organisation, Pfeffer (1998:64) as quoted by Werhane *et al*. (2004:144), provided the following list of characteristics of a successful people-orientated organisation and the advantages of developing employees, namely:

- Employment security
- Selective hiring of new personnel
- Self-managed teams and decentralizing of decision-making
- Comparatively high compensation contingent on organisational performance
- Extensive training
- Extensive sharing of financial and performance information throughout the organisation.

Each of Pfeffer's characteristics compliments employee rights and can add value to an organisation's development. *Employment security* offers the opportunity to ensure that the staff is feeling valued and motivated. *Selective hiring* contributes to the most appropriate and best-skilled worker being employed for a specific job role. *Decentralising of decision-making* provides employees the opportunity to take responsibility for decisions. This creates a feeling of ownership and trust, and in return makes the employee feel part of the development and growth of the organisation. This results in the need to work harder and more effectively to ensure the success of a specific task and ultimately the success of the company. *Compensation* and acknowledgement for good work is crucial. If an employee feels that he/she is appreciated and that all the hard work that he/she is doing is not going unnoticed and un-appreciated, it will once again be a motivational factor for harder,

better, and higher productivity behaviour. Job-related and employability *training* not only motivates the employee and makes him/her feel that he/she is suitably equipped to do his/her job more effectively, it also creates a pool of qualified and suitable employees to use in any other area of the organisation, if or when the opportunity or need would arise.   The last point is that, through making an employee part of the changes within a company, it once again benefits the organisation, because management will actually receive valuable information from the people on the ground who quite frankly are the experts in certain fields, enabling them to make more effective decisions. Employees will then also be able to prepare themselves better for altered or new policies to be introduced into the workplace. It will also avoid crisis management and feelings of being overwhelmed and not being listened to.

The researcher is of the opinion that the tutors of E.Y.S. could greatly benefit from Pfeffer's list of suggestions. Exploring the current support system available to the tutors as well as their expectations of a possible future and more effective support system, if required, would provide the managers and stakeholders of E.Y.S. with a golden opportunity to motivate their workforce and to increase productivity and effectiveness.

Pfeffer (1998:33) as quoted by Werhane *et al*. (2004:153) supports the researcher's opinion with a list of how managers can turn employees into value creators that turn into profits by giving employees a meaningful voice. His argument is as follows:

- People work harder because of the increased involvement and commitment that comes from having more control over, and more say in, their work.
- People work smarter – high performance management practices encourage the building of skills and competence, and, as importantly, facilitate the efforts of people in actually applying their wisdom and energy to performance.
- High commitment management practices, by placing more responsibility in the hands of people further down in the organisation, saving on administrative overheads and other costs associated with having an alienated workforce in an adversarial relationship with management.

Werhane *et al*. (2004:153) refers to research which proved that a saving of $18 000.00 per employee, resulted from the introduction of people-centred management. They continue to suggest that "employee teams" can help to shift decision-making from the manager to the team itself, which means that the employees who are closest to the customer/learner in the case of E.Y.S., can discuss and make the most appropriate decisions to benefit the learners, the staff, and ultimately the company. Setting up a tutor-network support group therefore not only can assist the managers in the decision making process, but will also provide the tutors with an opportunity to discuss problems, come up with solutions, and create an informal group-supervision environment and a support group.   Werhane *et al*. (2004:156) suggest that the economic advantages are that teams displace layers of management in the traditional hierarchy structure, decisions are made on the spot, and time is saved and it puts a lot of pressure on absenteeism.

Connecting to this thought is a quote from Gold and Roth (1993: 22) which states the following regarding employee participation and causes of stress in the workplace:

> Teachers have told us that they have little or no control over their professional situation. They state that they feel helpless with the many changes taking place. Even though they are told that they are expected to take part in the decision making, little of what they suggest is included in the policy making. What they feel is a sense of powerlessness. These helpless feelings, when not handled, only increase stress.

Gold and Roth (1993: 42) listed the consequences of not supporting an employee effectively, namely:

- Unfulfilled expectations, and not being able to teach, support or develop learners.
- Progressive disillusionment and despair.
- Psychological symptoms such as depression, anger, guilt, sadness, anxiety, and burnout.

- Physical symptoms such as colds, insomnia, headaches, and serious long-term illness resulting in absenteeism.

The researcher would like to point out that this study presents E.Y.S. with a perfect opportunity to listen to their tutors, make them part of the planning for a support system, and reduce the possibility of the very alarming list by Gold and Roth (1993:42). The advantages of a support system are clear, namely that it will enhance the tutors work motivation, it will increase productivity, and it will enhance the whole organisation's development.

3.5   THE NATURE OF A SUPPORT SYSTEM

The following section will focus on the nature of a support system, specifically focusing on the goals, the content, and the functions of such a system.

3.5.1   The goals of a support system

Now that we have established the real need for, and advantages of supporting employees and in the context of this study, the tutors of E.Y.S, as well as the consequences in not doing so, we can have a look at what such a possible support system could include. To enable the organisation to effectively support the tutors, the following factors should be taken into consideration and incorporated into a support system, as suggested by Rogers (1996:93), namely:

- An opportunity to identify development needs and to develop a personal action plan
- An exploration of own learning style, and how it could improve the employee's practice and communication
- An exploration and participation in alternative development options
- Assessing and recognizing personal progress

Gold and Roth (1993: 48) suggest that an employer should be meeting the basic needs of employees in their professional preparation and development through a comprehensive support package. This support package could focus on the psychological, psycho-social, and personal-intellectual domains of each individual through the use of a support group, mentoring, and training. Gold and Roth (1993: 50) say that if a tutor is not personally secure, he is lacking in confidence, or has a feeling of not being in control of themselves and their environment, they are not able to teach, train, or support their learners effectively. The purpose of the support system therefore is to focus on underlying problems and needs as well as to manage stress, to share good practice, and to develop a better working environment for the tutors and the learners.

In practical terms: through a support system the following goals must be achieved:

- Helping the tutor to perform his/her current role more efficiently
- Developing the skills and abilities of the tutor for future practices
- Increasing the tutor's self-esteem and confidence at work
- Expanding the tutor's skills and abilities, in order to enable him/her to become more flexible in his/her job and in the company
- Developing transferable skills to increase employability
- Enhancing autonomy over tutors' own career aspirations and development
- Helping the tutor in his/her self-exploration and quest for success.

3.5.2 Content of a support system

In order to understand what the content should entail for a support system for tutors, the major responsibilities of educators must be clear. In this regard, Freebody (2003:11) listed the major functions of the education system and schools. The researcher replaced the word "school" with "education," because "school" stands for the education system that represents:

- A pastoral function: children are provided with caring and humane environments in which to grow and develop;

- A skilling function: the production of a skilled and competent workforce;

- A regulative function: the transmission of forms of orderliness and control;

- A human-capital function: the investment of effort and money in education to directly enhance economic productivity;

- A function of individual expression: education is properly the context in which individuals can learn to explore, develop and express their personal goals and aspirations;

- A cultural heritage: people, especially young people, are introduced to the ways of thinking and acting that have been valued over time – cherished art works and scientific inquiry;

- A political function: education produces a citizenry dedicated to the preferred political principles of the society.

If one judges the major functions of the education system, and for that matter also the tutor's functions, it seems as if a support group will be an ideal type of support system for the tutors. A support group will enable the tutors to discuss their feelings and difficulties in a supporting environment. Gold and Roth (1993: 153) provided a list of advantages of a support group namely:

- Group cohesiveness.

- Sharing of information.

- Commonality.

- Offering of hope.

- Development of communication techniques.

- Genuine caring for others.

- Modelling.

- Commitment

Group cohesiveness develops a sense of solidarity and motivates employees to work towards the collective welfare of the group, and could provide the tutors with a part of a support system. Sagie and Koslowsky (2000:93) suggested that managers allocate adequate time for meetings, training, making decisions, and sharing of good practice, because this will encourage group cohesiveness among team members and will

facilitate teamwork.   They also suggested setting team challenges rather than individual-based incentives. This connects to the following bullet point, which is the s*haring of information,* which can be very useful for tutors in sharing common difficulties and possible solutions. A group provides the tutors with a feeling of hope and a stronger voice. The feeling of belonging to a group and knowing that one is not isolated in one's feelings of despair and depression, can help tutors to feel more supported and cared for, and they can act as mentors to one another. This will ultimately result in a feeling of commitment towards each other, their learners, and the company.

 Commonality refers to the common goal and practice that the tutors share.   They understand each other's difficulties and challenges, and are able to support each other more effectively. This leads to the *offering of hope*, a feeling of being understood, and a feeling of belonging to a group that understands the daily challenges and feelings experienced. The group environment also provides tutors with an opportunity to *develop new communication techniques* and new ways of dealing with daily stresses and challenges. In a group setting, the members come to *genuinely care* about each other and they form a friendship and supporting environment in which they can feel safe and supported.

The group setting also provides a platform for the *modelling* of behaviour, and provides ideas and examples for better and more effective practice. More effective practice leads to *commitment* to the learners and the organisation.

The final suggestion would be that the content of a support system must also meet the psychological and intellectual needs of the tutors, by mentally stimulating them through training as well as personal- and professional development. Rogers (1996:5) made the following statement about the need to train and develop staff: "people with high self-esteem feel better, work better, and deal with stress more effectively than those with low self-esteem. The former are confident about themselves and their contribution to their work, to the development of their students, to the team."

Professional development for tutors is very imperative, and forms part of a support system for the staff. Maitland (1995:45) provided the following definition of staff development:

> The systematic and continual process of improving employees so that they make the fullest possible use of their abilities, this benefiting both them and the firm. Encourage self-development, set targets, and training, people like to learn something new and see it as a reward. Given people skills and knowledge to do their jobs competently, keeps them up to date with changes and developments.

Professional development of tutors consists of a variety of aspects such as:

- Formal supervision − Setting targets, reviewing performance, and dealing with queries or difficulties experienced in the work environment.
- Informal (group) supervision − Group sessions in which employees have the opportunity to share good practice and gain new ideas and work practice.
- Training − Work-related training is important for continued development and effective, up-to-date work practice.
- Further educational studies − Keeping up to date with new initiatives and work-related theories and practice.

Richardson and Wolfe (2001:261) define supervision as follows: "Supervision relates to that aspect of inner life through which supervisees acquire insights into their personal existence, which are of enduring worth. It is characterized by reflection, the attribution of meaning to experience, valuing a non-material dimension to life, and intimations of an enduring reality."

Building on the above definition, the researcher is of the opinion that supervision of tutors is very important. Tutors work with learners in a way which is very different from that of other educators. The tutors work in a very learner-focused way, and they often have to work with limited resources, making use of their own personal creativity

and skills. Tutors often have to make on-the-spot decisions, and have to take responsibility for their own actions. Decisions could include aspects such as educational, social, and emotional needs of learners. It is crucial, therefore, that these tutors have an opportunity to discuss these decisions and scenarios with their supervisors/managers to firstly liaise about their practices, but also to de-brief after a challenging or emotionally upsetting event or incident.

Forming part of the supervision process is performance management, described by Reeves et al. (2002:4) as an on-going cycle consisting of three annual stages namely:

- Planning – discussion and recording of priorities and objectives and of how progress will be monitored.
- Monitoring – constant review of progress, providing support if necessary.
- Review – evaluation of the teacher's performance, taking account of progress against objectives.

Bennett, Glattter, and Levacic (1994:101) connected with the cycle provided by Reeves *et al*. (2002:4) by stating that evaluation is a very important part of the professional development of staff. They describe the two main purposes for the evaluation of staff performance, namely:

- Accountability to prove quality, for example to demonstrate that funding is being properly deployed to maintain and improve standards;
- Development to improve quality, for example, to assist in the process of improving curriculum development and delivery.

In this section, the nature of support systems was discussed, and the advantages of supporting an organisation's employees have been proven. The conclusion was made that a support group seems the most appropriate support system for the tutors of E.Y.S., and a list of the advantages of a support group were thoroughly discussed. The conclusion for this chapter will follow in the next section.

3.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the need and the structure of a support system in detail, and the researcher would like to conclude the discussion with the thought that E.Y.S. has "*Investors in People*" status. "*Investors in Peopl*e" is the world's only people quality standard to help an organisation set the standards for supporting and caring for their employees. People who know what their organisations want them to achieve have a goal to aim at. People with the right knowledge and skills, and with positive attitudes towards their work are more likely to play their full part in the organisation's success. "For every organisation, what people understand about how their jobs fit in, how they are motivated to do it, and how they can carry it out consistently means the difference between success and failure" (Peart, 1995:5).

Investors in People is not a badge that can be bought; it is a standard which has to be achieved. Organisations often say that people are their greatest asset. This statement is not always followed through, however. Investing in people, when done well, means that the people who make up the organisation generally believe they are treated as assets. Assets should appreciate in value. Employees who are treated as assets tend to behave like them. They grow in value – knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Their confidence and motivation increases. They accept that their organisation takes an interest in what they do and how they do it. They feel involved, and know that their contribution is valued. They may even feel that the organization has invested in them.

The flipside of the coin is that, from the organisation's point of view, investing in people means motivating, managing and developing people to achieve what the organisation wants to achieve. To achieve the organisation's goals, Maitland (1995:7) made the following suggestions for a motivated workforce:

- Be a good leader and a good example and involve people in what you do
- Work as a team. Individual team members have different strengths, wants, and needs. Use team-building events.

- Improve jobs. Employees are affected by people working alongside them; make sure the right person is in the right job. Use appraisal systems and re-arrange workload if necessary.

- Develop people. Everyone wants to feel fulfilled and wants to make use of his/her talents and abilities to progress.   Therefore an organisation should encourage self-development by setting standards and goals, and employees should understand the organisation/job goals and mission/aim, to know what they are working towards

- Train employees. It is crucial to provide employees with the skills and knowledge necessary to do their present and future jobs properly.

- Have regular assessments/ discussions with supervisors/ others in a similar situation, to monitor progress/ success.

- Pay staff benefits and other benefits as a motivational factor.

- Provide a healthy and safe workplace.

- Know the relevant laws for everyone's protection

Finally, any company, including E.Y.S., can only gain by effectively supporting its employees. Davenport (1999: xii) provides another interesting reason why it is important to invest in human capital, namely: *People are investors in a business, paying in human capital and expecting a return on their investment."* This definition provides food for thought, and with this vision, E.Y.S. can look at their employees with a new approach.

In the following chapter, the empirical finding of this research project will be discussed.

CHAPTER 4

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on the empirical process that has been followed in order to reach the goal and objectives of this study. This chapter will also provide the answer to the research questions asked, namely:

- **What is the nature of the current support system available to the tutors of E.Y.S.?**
- **What are the needs and perceptions of the tutors regarding a support system in E.Y.S.?**

Before the goal, objectives and research process is explored, analyzed and described, the statement from Lewis, Thornhill, and Saunders (2003:7) sets the tone and the background for the exploration of the research subject, namely the relationship between employer and employees: "The employment relationship is an economic, legal, social, psychological, and political relationship, in which employees devote their time and expertise to the interests of their employer in return for a range of personal, financial and non-financial rewards."

The relationship between an employer and an employee forms the basis of all operations within an organisation. If an employee feels acknowledged, supported, and positively challenged, it is likely that such an employee will in return invest in a good and committed working relationship with the organisation.

Lewis et al., (2003:14) refer to this working relationship as the psychological contract between the employer and the employee: "The psychological contract is based on exchange theory, where individuals make an investment in expectation that an appropriate reward will be forthcoming."

The researcher explored this psychological contract in E.Y.S by focusing on a specific aspect of the contract, namely to determine the tutors' perceptions of the current support system and their needs for a future support system in E.Y.S. The type of research conducted was applied research with a qualitative research approach, aiming to investigate the goal of this specific study, namely to explore the needs and perceptions of the tutors of E.Y.S regarding the current support system and the requirements for an effective support system.

The aim of this study was to provide the researcher with a pattern of data to explore the overall perceptions and needs of the tutors, and to enable the researcher to have a holistic view of the phenomena and of how best to meet the needs of the individual tutors as well as the needs of the organisation as a whole.

In the following section, the researcher will focus on the details of this study, such as how the information for this study was gathered, which methods were used to analyze the information, and finally the researcher will be able to interpret all the information and identify certain themes and trains of thought.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

4.2.1   Research Approach

A qualitative research strategy was followed for the systematic gathering of information, the analysis of this information, and the interpretation thereof.

According to Fouché and Delport (2002:79), this approach is: " an anti-positivistic, interpretative approach, is idiographic and therefore holistic in nature, and aims mainly to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life."

Freebody (2003:37) also states that qualitative research:

- Is an inductive and holistic approach – In this study it means the *objective exploration of the   tutor*'s *perceptions and needs regarding an organisational support system.*

- draws on 'natural settings' as the source of data collection – *tutors being interviewed in their working teams and in their learning centres where they feel comfortable and safe.*

- is interested in the subjects' point of view – *the aim of the research was to explore the tutor's perceptions and needs regarding a support system.*

- is descriptive (rather than neglectful) of the taken-for-granted experiences of members – *tutors' opinions are directly represented through a transcript of the focus group interview sessions, and the researcher has aimed to summarize and conclude only what has been retrieved from the tutors.*

- is humanistic – *the research process was sensitive towards the tutor's needs and difficulties experienced by them.*

- has an emphasis on validity, regards all settings and people as worthy of study, and regards research as a craft. – *the perceptions and experiences of the tutors are valid and need to be addressed.*

The above characteristics suit the specific objectives of this study, i.e.:

- To conceptualise tutorship and support systems in a work situation, from a theoretical frame of reference.
- To determine the nature of the current support system available to the tutors in E.Y.S.
- To investigate the needs and perceptions of tutors regarding the current support system, and to investigate requirements for an effective support system.
- To make recommendations, based on the results of the investigation, for a more effective support system for the tutors of E.Y.S.

4.2.2   Research universe and population.

The researcher identified 135 tutors in all the E.Y.S. centres in the UK as the universe of this study.   The population of this study was restricted, however, to the total

number of tutors (20 respondents) of the learning centres in Essex only, namely Colchester, Basildon, Harlow, and Lowestoft. No sample was selected, because all the tutors in these four centres, i.e. twenty tutors, participated as respondents in this study.

4.2.3   Data collection method

The researcher made use of focus group interviews to gather information and this section will therefore explore focus groups interviews, the planning, requirements and process, for a successful session.

The following definition by Bennett et al., (1994: 290) lays the foundation for the discussion:

> Focus group interviewing is a qualitative research technique, in which a small number of respondents – generally eight to ten - and a moderator participate in an unstructured group discussion about selected subjects. A typical discussion session lasts for one to two hours. Focus group interviews elicit in-depth, albeit subjective, information, to help researchers understand the deeply-held perceptions of students or other groups of policy importance to a college or university.

The researcher decided to make use of the focus group interview technique, and used Morgan's (1998:97) checklist to establish whether the focus group technique would be appropriate for the proposed study:

- One's goal is to listen and learn from other people.
- One can explore the topics that interest one, by means of conversations among the participants.
- One can obtain in-depth knowledge through listening.
- One can pursue interpretative questions about "how" and "why" by means of group discussions.

- The purpose of the study is to identify problems one can address.
- The purpose of the study is to plan for compiling a programme, and to improve the implementation of a project.
- One is researching behaviour and motivations.

The researcher was able to adhere to the information in the checklist, and therefore made use of the focus group interview technique.

The following guidelines, as suggested by Bennett et al., (1994:274) were integrated during the planning of the focus-group sessions:

- Identifying the general approach and specific purpose of the focus group study – In the context of a qualitative approach, t*he researcher decided to make use of four focus groups, consisting of five participants in every group. The researcher made use of an interview schedule for guidance questions during the interview sessions, and recorded all the information for analysis purposes. .*
- Recruiting appropriate respondents – *The researcher decided to interview all E.Y.S. tutors in the Essex area, due to the fact that they are a good representative group of all the tutors in E.Y.S.*
- Preparing the participants. – *The researcher prepared the participants by explaining in advance the purpose and process of the research project. This included the Chief Executive Officer giving permissions for the study in writing, and each participant signing a letter of informed consent. The researcher was also available to answer any questions and concerns before the interview sessions. The researcher gathered as much information as possible from the Human Resources Department regarding each participant, as well as other relevant information, such as absenteeism in the company, etc.*

- The next step was the *rapport building, exploration, and probing during the focus group interviews.*

- Limiting the number of discussion topics. *The researcher concentrated specifically on the interview schedule, focusing on five questions as a guideline for discussions. The researcher made it clear to the participants that all participation was voluntary, all information would be kept confidential, and feedback would be given to the participants. The final results of this research project would also be presented to E.Y.S. directors. The researcher also reminded the participants that the E.Y.S counsellor would be available for any problems after the focus group sessions, and the research project itself would not ensure any change, but would solely be a guide for the directors as to the needs of the tutors.*

- The researcher left ample time to *analyze the results and write the research report.*

Taking all the guidelines and suggestions into consideration, the researcher facilitated four focus group interview sessions. The sessions were held in the four E.Y.S learning centres in the Essex area. The groups had enough space, felt comfortable in their own working environment, and had privacy for the interviews. Open-ended questions were used in the interview schedule during the sessions in order to guide the discussions and to obtain as much information as possible. The researcher was aware of the importance of observation, and took notes of the verbal as well as the non-verbal communication between the respondents. All four the sessions were audio-taped after permission had been granted by all the respondents.

The researcher was accepted and trusted, because of the researcher's previous experience as a tutor and manager. The researcher was able to empathize and show insight into the difficulties the tutors were experiencing.

The researcher did not use a service provider for the research project, because it was a relatively small research project, the researcher was already working in the area, and the researcher was familiar with the set-up within E.Y.S.

The respondents were all chosen for their specific role and involvement within E.Y.S. A strong bond existed among the tutors and provided the researcher with valuable information, which stemmed from their unity as a group. Bennett *et al.*, (1994:194) confirmed that an advantage of the focus group interviews is that through the combined effort of the group the information gathered is more than one would get from individual interviews. The researcher experienced this phenomenon and witnessed that one thought by a group member can stimulate a related thought by another member of the group and this has a snowball effect in the group. This results in more information than one might retrieve from one individual interview session.

The focus group interviews were guided by the following interview questions:

- What do your day-to-day tasks include?
- What are currently the most important problems and needs that you experience on a day-to-day working basis*?*
- What type of support do you receive currently to do your work effectively? (Physically, emotionally, socially etc.)?
- What are your perceptions regarding a support system?
- What type of support do you need?

The researcher made use of Tesch's analysing approach in De Vos (1998:343) namely:

- The researcher read through all the transcripts various times to get a holistic understanding of the results of the focus group interviews.
- The researcher then identified some main- and sub-themes (regularities) in the transcripts and made some notes in the sidelines in an attempt to make some sense out of all the data.
- Similar topics/themes were clustered together and put into columns.

- The topics/themes were abbreviated as codes and the codes were written next to the relevant text.

- The researcher then decided on the most descriptive wording for each topic/theme as well as sub-themes and arranged them into categories and sub-categories.

- The connection and relevance between each category was clearly indicated by connecting lines in an attempt to identify some plausible explanations.

4.3 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The following section will focus on the profile of the respondents and will provide some background information for the summary, conclusions, and recommendations in the final chapter.

A profile of all the respondents that have participated in this study is presented in a table and graphical format. This information enabled the researcher to analyze all the relevant data and ultimately to interpret the data and to make conclusions and recommendations.

The profile of the respondents includes their age, sex, marital status, the period of time that the respondents have been working for E.Y.S, the number of working hours contracted per week for each respondent, and the actual hours worked per week. The researcher also found it important to establish how many of the respondents have relevant qualifications to perform their jobs effectively. With relevant qualifications the researcher refers to a teaching qualification, a Certificate in Education, as suggested by the organisation itself, as well as additional qualifications and skills required to work with vulnerable young people, for example a social work, psychology, counselling or mentoring qualification.

4.3.1   Respondent's profile according to each learning centre

In Tables 4.1 to 4.4 below, all the above information is consolidated for each learning centre in the Essex area. The final profile of all the respondents will be indicated at the end of this section.

Table 4.1: Respondents at the Colchester Centre

Respondent	Age Categories: 20-39 years 40-60 Years	Sex	Marital Status	Work Period Categories 00-06 months 07-12 months 13-24 months 25-36 months	Contracted working hours / week	Actual hours worked / week	Relevant Qualifications
1	40-60	M	Married	25 to 36	27	30	Yes
2	20-39	F	Single	13 to 24	37.5	40	No
3	40-60	F	Married	07 to 12	37.5	40	No
4	20-39	M	Married	07 to 12	37.5	40	No
5	20-39	M	Single	00-06	37.5	40	Yes

Table 4.2: Respondents at the Basildon Centre

Respondent	Age Categories: 20-39 years 40-60 Years	Sex	Marital Status	Work Period Categories 00-06 months 07-12 months 13-24 months 25-36 months	Contracted working hours /week	Actual hours worked /week.	Relevant Qualifications
6	20-39	F	Married	25 to 36	37.5	45	No
7	40-60	F	Married	25 to 36	37.5	40	No
8	20-39	M	Single	07 to 12	37.5	40	Yes
9	20-39	F	Married	07 to 12	37.5	40	No
10	20-39	F	Single	00 to 06	37.5	40	Yes

Table 4.3 Respondents at the Lowestoft Centre

Respondent	Age Categories: 20-39 years 40-60 Years	Sex	Marital Status	Work Period Categories 00-06 m 07-12 m 13-24 m 25-36 m	Contracted working hours /week	Actual hours worked /week	Relevant Qualification
11	20-39	M	Married	13 to 24	37.5	45	Yes
12	20-39	M	Single	13 to 24	37.5	38	Yes
13	20-39	F	Single	13 to 24	37.5	40	No
14	40-60	F	Married	13 to 24	37.5	40	Yes
15	20-39	M	Single	07 to 12	20	30	Yes

Table 4.4 Respondents at the Harlow Centre

Respondent	Age Categories: 20-39 years 40-60 Years	Sex	Marital Status	Work Period Categories 00-06 m 07-12 m 13-24 m 25-36 m	Contracted working hours /week	Actual hours worked /week	Relevant Qualifications
16	20-39	F	Single	07 to 12	37.5	40	No
17	20-39	F	Married	07 to 12	37.5	40	Yes
18	20-39	M	Single	07 to 12	37.5	40	Yes
19	40-60	F	Married	13 to 24	37.5	40	No
20	40-60	F	Single	13 to 24	37.5	40	No

4.3.2   Summary of the respondent's profile

A total number of 20 respondents were involved in the study.

4.3.2.1 Age of respondents
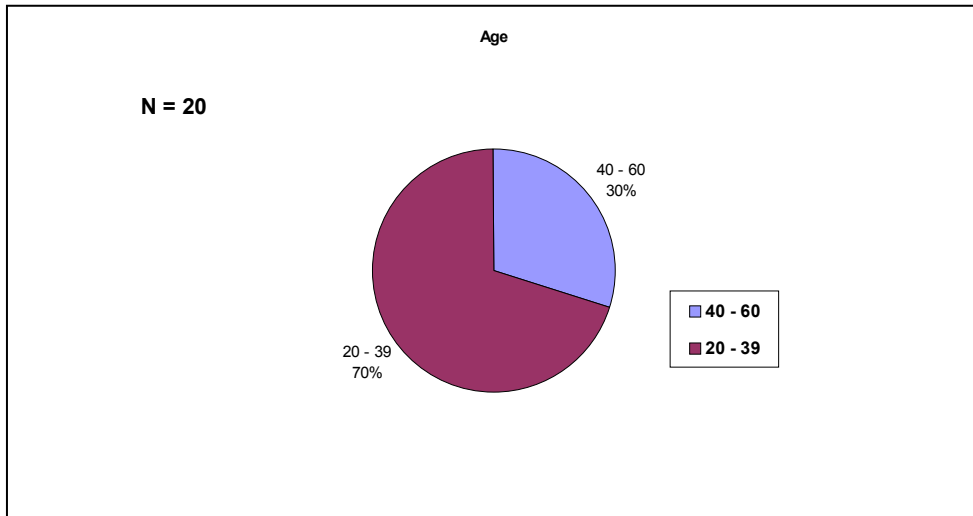

Figure 4.1: Age of respondents

Figure 4.1 shows that the majority of the respondents, 14 (70%) are between the ages of 20 to 39 years of age while only 6 (30%) falls in the category of 40 to 60 years.

4.3.2.2 Gender of respondents
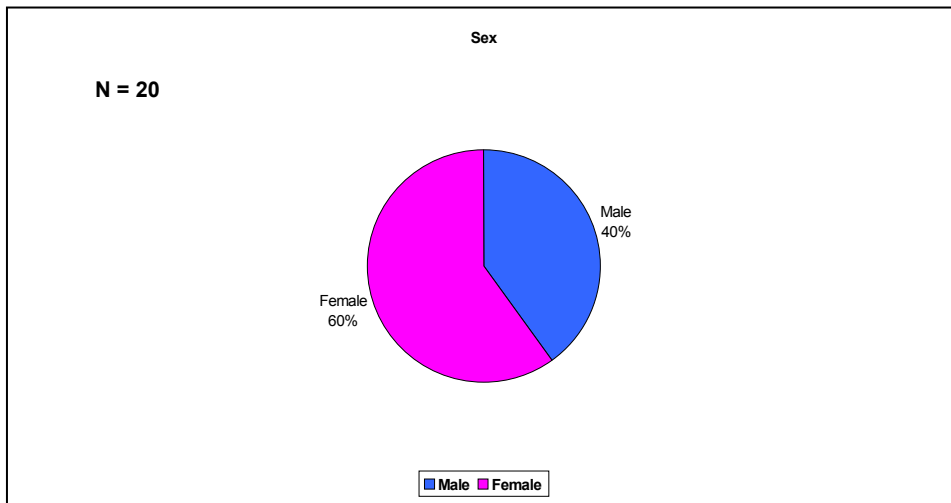
Figure 4.2: Gender of respondents

Figure 4.2 shows that the majority of the respondents, 12 (60%) are female, while only 8 (40%) are male.

4.3.2.3 Marital status of respondents
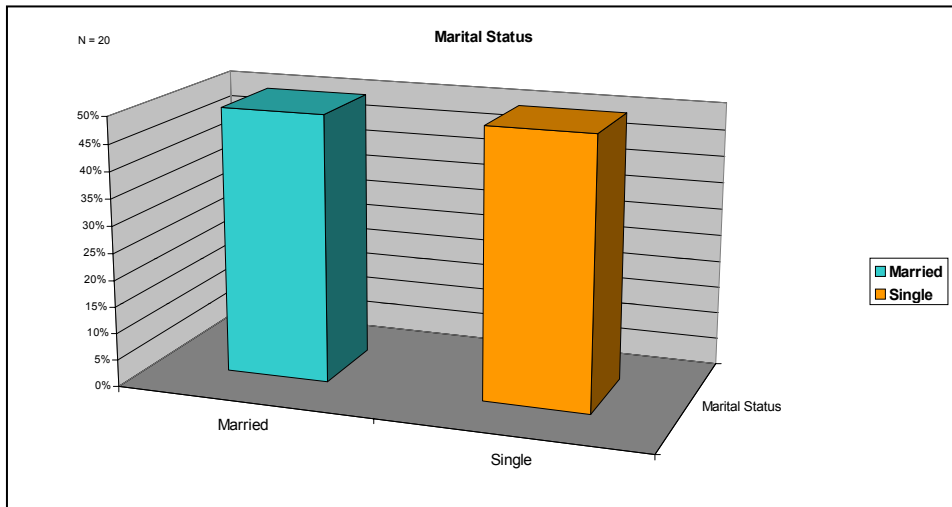
Figure 4.3: Marital status of respondents

Figure 4.3 indicates that marital status of the respondents is equally divided:
10 (50%) are married and 10 (50%) are single.

4.3.2.4 Period of time respondents have worked as tutors for E.Y.S.
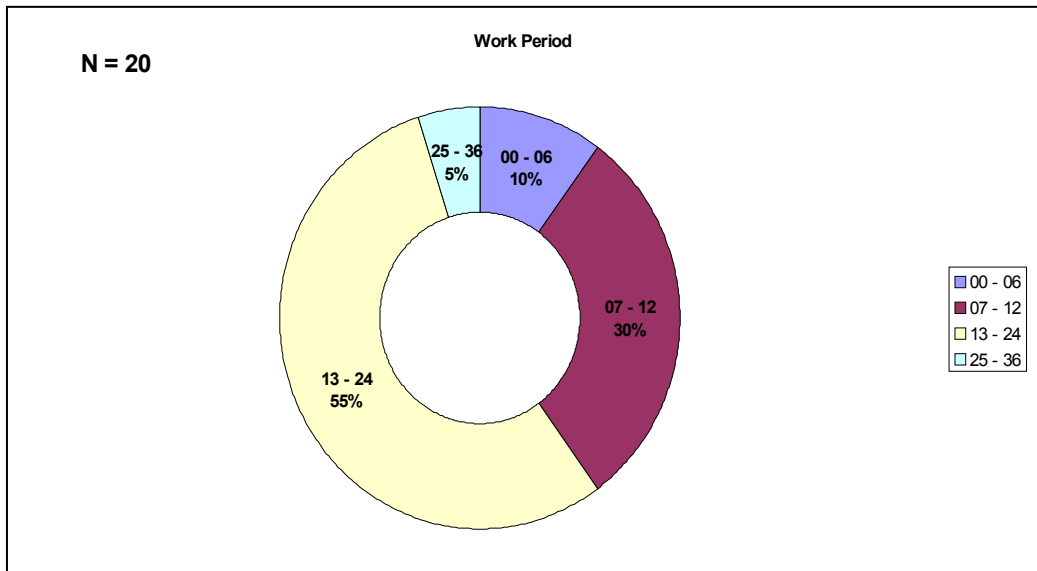
Figure 4.4: Work period of respondents

Figure 4.4 indicates that most of the respondents, 11 (55%) have been working for E.Y.S. for a period of 13 to 24 months, 6 (30%) of the respondents have been working for E.Y.S for 7 to 12 months, 2 (10%) have been working for less than 6 months and only 1 (5%) have been working for the organisation for the period of 25 to 36 months.

4.3.2.5 Working hours contracted per week
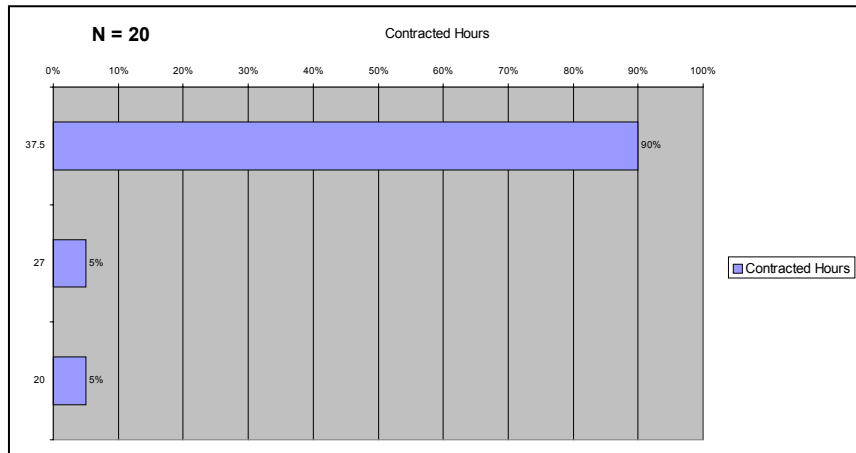
Figure 4.5: Contracted working hours per week

Figure 4.5 indicates that most of the respondents, 18 (90%) were contracted to work 37.5 hours per week, one (5%) to work 27 hours per week and one (5%) to work 20 hours per week.

4.3.2.6 Actual hours worked per week

Figure 4.6: Actual hours worked per week

Figure 4.6 indicates that all the respondents work more than their contracted working hours per week, 15 (75%) work more than 40 hours per week. Two (10%) of the respondents even work 45 hours per week. Two (10%) of the respondents work 30 hours per week and one (5%) works 38 hours per week.

4.3.2.7 Relevant qualification
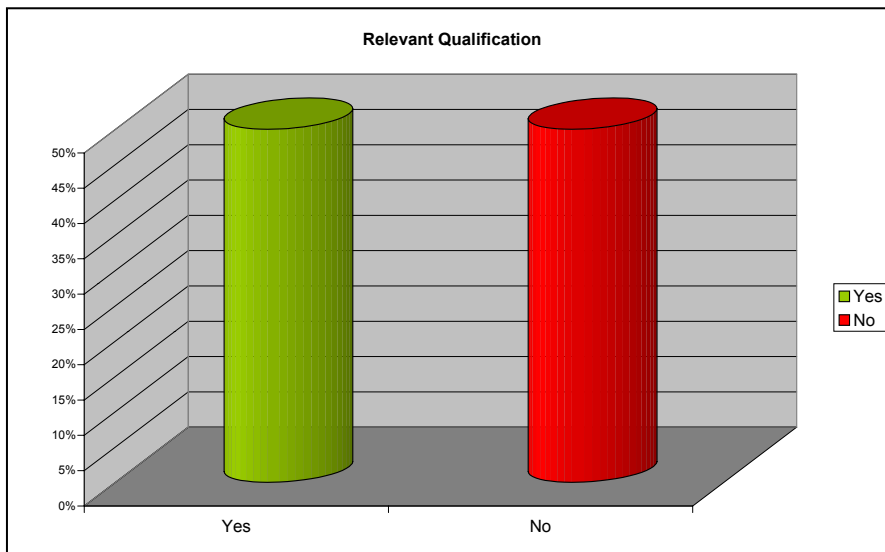
Figure 4.7 Relevant qualifications

Figure 4.7 indicates that half of the respondents, 10 (50%), have the relevant qualifications to do their jobs effectively and 10 (50%) do not have the relevant qualifications.

According to the different variables and the above statistics and graphs, it seems as if:

- The majority of the respondents, 14 (70%) fell in the age group 20 to 39 years old, while only six (30%) of the respondents are in the age group of 40 to 60 years.
- The majority of tutors working for E.Y.S. are female, 12 (60%).
- The results of the marital status were equal, with 10 (50%) of the tutors being married and 10 (50%) of the tutors being single.
- The work period chart indicated that two (10%) of the tutors have been working for E.Y.S. for six months or less. Six (30%) between seven months and a year, 11 (55%) between 13 months and two years, and only one (5%) for more than 25 months.
- The contracted hours were very similar with all the tutors. Only one employee (5%) was contracted for 20 hours per week, one employee (5%) for 27 hours per week and the rest of the tutors, 18 (90%) were all contracted to work 37,5 hours per week.
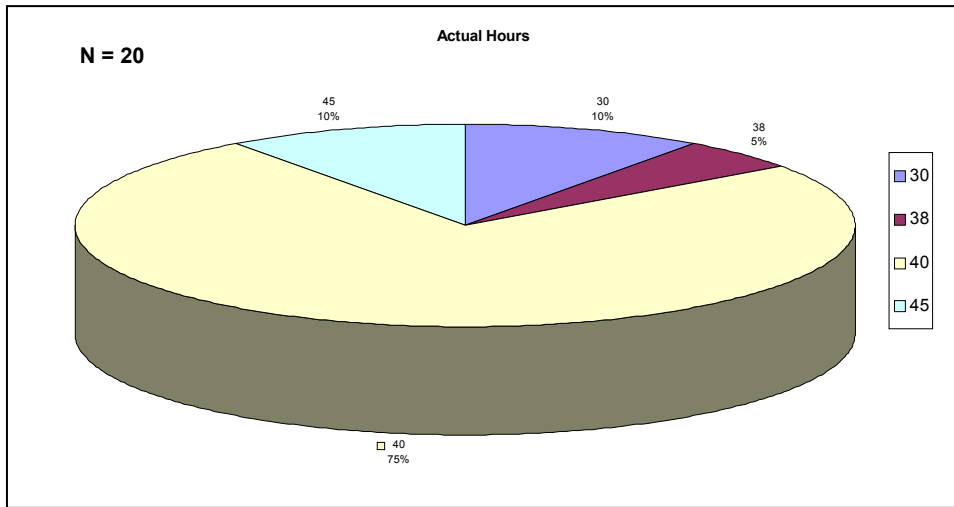- The actual working hours worked per week indicated that all the tutors (100%) worked more than their contractual working hours.
- The final table indicated that only half of the tutors (50%) had the relevant qualifications to do their jobs effectively.

4.4 EMPIRICAL RESULTS

In order to analyze the qualitative data, the researcher made transcripts of all the focus group interviews (See Appendix 4 – example of an anonymised transcript). The content of the focus group interviews were overwhelmingly similar in all the groups. The researcher will make some conclusions in chapter five.

Based on the analysis of the empirical results, the following themes and sub-themes as demonstrated in Table 4.5 were identified.

Table 4.5 Themes and sub-themes identified in the study.

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
4.4.1 DAILY CHALLENGES (PROBLEMS)	4.4.1.1 CHALLENGES WITH THE ORGANISATION 4.4.1.2 CHALLENGES WITH THE LEARNERS 4.4.1.3.CHALLENGES WITH THE TEACHING PROFESSION
4.4.2 CURRENT SUPPORT SYSTEM	4.4.2.1 TEAM MEETINGS 4.4.2.2 TRAINING 4.4.2.3 PEER SUPPORT
4.4.3 FUTURE SUPPORT	4.4.3.1 COMPANY STRUCTURE 4.4.3.2 TRAINING 4.4.3.3 SUPPORT GROUPS 4.4.3.4 EXPERT ADVICE

In the following sections, each theme with its sub-themes will be conceptualized, described, and verified with literature.

4.4.1   DAILY CHALLENGES (PROBLEMS)

All the tutors described their daily tasks as challenging, rewarding, and frustrating in certain ways. The daily challenges can be categorized in three sub-themes, namely challenges (problems) regarding the organisation, the learners, and the teaching professions, and could be discussed as follows:

4.4.1.1 CHALLENGES (PROBLEMS) REGARDING THE ORGANISATION

The following quotes are an indication of the tutor's perceptions and experiences about the challenges (problems) with the organisation as part of his/her daily tasks:

- *Lack of planning from head office, and the massive lack of communication regarding changes, expectations, and requirements.*
- *We get no guidance.*
- *We have had to cope with a lot of changes and no support.*
- *The lack of an infra-structure.*
- *Lack of practical resources.*
- *Staff from head office not being honest with us about changes and what is happening to the company and our jobs.*
- *Sometimes we receive positive feedback*

INTEGRATION WITH LITERATURE

All the respondents' answers during the focus group interview sessions were remarkably similar. The above quotations are only a few of many, but they clearly indicate that the tutors feel a lack of support and guidance in their daily working environment. The importance of supporting an organisation's employees have already been discussed in chapter 3, but Zwell (2000:49) confirms the importance of support and development of employees:

There are many things managers can do to develop their subordinates. They can give sub-ordinates feedback on their behaviour and performance, and help them better understand what is working and what isn't. Help subordinates analyze situations, and offer examples and alternatives that will expand their capabilities. Perhaps most importantly, they can maintain and communicate high expectations for employees that will help inspire them to perform at their best.

How to reach commitment from an organisation's employees is pointed out by Zwell (2000:52), namely:

- Help others understand how their work relates to the business goals.
- Ensure that resources, time, and attention are allocated in proportion to the business priorities.

4.4.1.2 CHALLENGES (PROBLEMS) REGARDING THE LEARNERS

The following quotes were selected to illustrate the tutor's perceptions and needs regarding a support system to assist them in dealing with the problems they are experiencing with the learners they have to deal with, namely:

- *Trying to deal with the learners' personal issues, when I really don't know what I am doing.*
- *Quality Assurance meetings to make sure that all the learners are happy and that they receive a good service from us.*
- *Assessing and addressing the social needs of the learners; this includes community skills, respect, and manners. Some of our learners have no idea how to behave towards other people.*
- *I do individual and group work with my learners, but I do find it difficult, because they are all of different abilities, and it is difficult to keep them all occupied at the same time.*
- *We also have to deal with all the incidents that happen between the learners. Violence, aggression, and abuse.*

INTEGRATION WITH LITERATURE

It is clear from the above quotes that the tutors are passionate about their jobs and the clients they work with, but they are working in a challenging environment, with difficult, disengaged young people, who need a lot of support and one-to-one attention. The following literature supports the thought that these tutors need back-up and support to do their jobs effectively.

Alternative education has already been discussed in Chapter 2 by Carnie (2003:1), "Alternative education is about personal development, keeping children off the streets, and installing in them the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to create a fairer and more sustainable world."

To reach this goal of alternative education, the tutors have to multi-task and daily meet a variety of different learners' very different needs, a challenge every tutor could enjoy if he/she has been appropriately equipped with the right knowledge and resources. Part of the tutor's challenges is to deal with violent and aggressive behaviour from learners, drug and alcohol abuse, and other personal issues. To address these issues, the tutors need a basic understanding of drug and alcohol abuse, child protection issues, physical restraining procedures, and the law.

4.4.1.3 CHALLENGES (PROBLEMS) REGARDING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

The following quotes were taken from the focus group interview sessions to represent the tutors' opinions on their daily challenges in the teaching profession:

- *We are not teachers and we need to learn how to do our jobs properly.*
- *I don't have the right qualifications to teach NCFE.*
- *We have to play a different role every day.*
- *Liaising with people such as probation or the youth offending team regarding the learner's progress and future plans is important, but we don't have enough time.*
- *Planning, planning, and planning. Lesson planning, development plans, curriculum planning, activity plans, and just general preparation to try to keep the learners interested.*
- *Literacy and numeracy, assessments of the learners' abilities and needs, exams. We are not experts*

- *Career planning with every learner.   This includes mock interviews, letter writing, C.V.s, and filling in application forms for jobs. We are not properly trained for it.*

INTEGRATION WITH LITERATURE

The tutors' responses to their daily teaching problems were clear. They do not feel competent and appropriately trained to fulfil the teaching role with confidence. Zwell (2000:58) suggests that emotional blocks and barriers can limit mastery of competencies and that feeling such as fear of making mistakes, being embarrassed, or not being liked, can limit motivation and initiative. It is the researcher's opinion that all the tutors currently employed by E.Y.S are able to be very good tutors. They are committed to their learners and are passionate about teaching and developing the young people. They do, however, need the correct training, as pointed out in Table 4.5, when only 50% of the tutors indicated that they have a relevant teaching qualification.

4.4.2 CURRENT SUPPORT SYSTEM

The next section will explore the second theme with it's sub-themes. The aim of this study was to explore the current support system in E.Y.S available to the tutors of the organisation. Lowe (2004:8) suggested that employees are the best judges of whether a workplace is healthy: "employees' perceptions of the quality of their work environment are useful in diagnosing job satisfaction, commitment, absenteeism, and individual performance problems."

As employees are the experts on their current working environment and their own needs, the researcher found it necessary to establish the tutor's perceptions of the current support system in E.Y.S., and the following quotes were relevant to this section, namely:

- *We have a guideline, but how we interpret it seems to be up to us.*

- *Vaguely, I agree with the others we do what we think is right, until something goes wrong, then Head Office phones up and shouts at you and makes you feel really stupid for not knowing what to do, but nobody has ever shown us what to do properly. We need a proper induction and proper training.*

- *From outside the centre – NONE.*

- *We don't have any supervision; I have never had any targets set for me. I do what I think is right.*

- *Head Office only phones up when something is wrong. We also don't know who to listen to. If something does go wrong, you have five people trying to tell you how it should have been done.*

INTEGRATION WITH LITERATURE

Kraft (2004:30) wrote the following guidelines regarding investment in employees and providing the appropriate support, namely: "investment in human capital must ensure that employees are:

- Capable and confident in their ability to perform their jobs;

- Managed well in performance of their jobs;

- Rewarded when they do their jobs well;

- Healthy enough to show up for work and to work well.

To ensure that an employee/tutor is capable and confident in their own ability to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently, comments such as listed above will have to be taken into account when planning for a more holistic and required support system. The tutors also gave their perceptions on the three support mechanisms (team meetings, training, and peer support) in E.Y.S. in comments such as:

4.4.2.1 TEAM MEETINGS

- *We have some team meetings, but it is always about management's agenda, not to answer our questions or to give feedback on previous questions. Waste of time.*

- *Some positive feedback and recognition would be nice. Every team meeting is about telling us, what we do wrong. We hate going to team meetings.*

INTEGRATION WITH LITERATURE

The purpose of team meetings is to provide the employees with new information on changes, feedback from other company meetings such as board meetings, to discuss new legislation and initiatives, and to generally assist the tutors. It should be an opportunity to review group performances as well as good and bad practice. It should be an opportunity for learning and sharing of information. Zwell (2000:34) suggests that team work is more than playing your role and holding up your end of the stick. "Excellent team players elevate the performance of other team members through a multitude of behaviours and styles."

The discussion continues with the idea that all employees can contribute to the team meeting in a different manner. Some might be good with coordinating work activities; some might contribute to motivating and encouraging team members with their energy and enthusiasm. Regular team meetings can provide tutors with all the information they have requested during the focus-group interviews. It is also an ideal opportunity to give some positive feedback and recognition for hard work.

4.4.2.2 TRAINING

The second sub-theme that was identified by the tutors was training. The following quotes evidence the current lack of training in E.Y.S.

- *The job description and the contract are so vague that you don't really know what to expect.*

- *Never received a job description or training. It would make no difference; we do everything in this centre, and it changes all the time.*

INTEGRATION WITH LITERATURE

Zwell (2000:57) confirms the need for training, and suggests that developing employees' skills is very important. Improving an employee's skills will probably increase their proficiency, and can impact positively on the corporate culture and individual competence.

Training can also include experience. If a tutor is able to participate in tutor network groups, it will provide him/her with an opportunity to share experiences, to role-play possible outcomes, and to improve their practice and efficiency.

4.4.2.3 PEER SUPPORT

The respondents confirmed the need for peer support through the following quotes:

- *We support each other in the centre*
- *We have no support outside the centre – NONE.*
- *I get support in the centre and from my music manager.*
- *I get support and advice from my colleagues in the centre. It is my saving grace.*
- *We support each other. We all get on great.*

INTEGRATION WITH LITERATURE

Zwell (2000:37) emphasized the importance of building relationships: "At most jobs, success involves obtaining the cooperation of others. When people can develop caring, trusting relationships, they are likely to succeed in the people aspects of their jobs."

It seems as if the tutors have formed a very good support system between themselves in the different learning centres, based on caring for each other, trusting each other,

and helping each other. They are currently surviving their working environment based only on the support they receive from each other in an informal support system.

4.4.3   FUTURE SUPPORT

The third theme identified during the focus group interview sessions was the need for support and the tutor's opinions of what such support should entail. From this theme, four sub-themes were identified namely the lack of company structure, the lack of training and development, the need for peer support groups, and guidance and support through expert advice and leadership.

- *If you feel supported and qualified to do your job, we will feel better and have peace of mind. A support system can put some procedures in place, which will make us feel better and more in control.*

INTEGRATION WITH LITERATURE

Blair (2004:33) confirmed the need for a support system, suggesting that it is important to remember that employees are valuable to any organisation and should be supported: "workers in an organisation are an asset to be enhanced and in which to invest, not a cost to be managed and controlled."

Therefore an organisation can grow its assets and reduce its liabilities if its employees are seen as assets. Lowe (2004:9) provided some guidelines for a healthy workplace and the importance of a support system, namely:

- Supportive culture that clearly values employees and is trust-based.
- Commitment from top-management is critical and must be visual.
- Good mental an physical health means leading a balanced life, developing one's potential, making a meaningful contribution to the organisation and having a say in workplace decisions.

- Direct employee involvement in all stages of developing a support system is critical to success.

- The support system and policy should be tailored to the business context, workforce characteristics, and the employee's needs.

- Ongoing support is crucial, and resources should be allocated

- Open and continuous communication is necessary to make a successful transition into a more supportive company culture.

4.4.3.1 COMPANY STRUCTURE

The first sub-theme identified by the tutors as needing to be changed to meet their needs was the company structure:

- *A proper company structure, where you know who is responsible for what and who you can phone for answers and support.*

- *Someone who will support you, back you up, and take some responsibility for major decisions that I don't feel comfortable in making.*

- *I see support as having an appraisal process in place. I need to have targets set for me; so that I can know what I am doing is right or not.*

- *I need guidance and clarity*

- *I need someone to be approachable, helpful, and knowledgeable.*

- *An opportunity to let people know how we feel. The frustrations and what we need. Not what they think we need.*

- *We need a proper pay scale structure. We need to be rewarded for the work we do, accordingly to a structure. Not all the tutors are on the same salary. We should have a bonus scheme, and our salaries should be reviewed every year.*

INTEGRATION WITH LITERATURE

It became clear from the focus group interview sessions that the tutors all felt that they needed a more formal company structure which would include a manager, who is

able to support them in all aspects of their work and development. They need to feel supported and they would like the security of feeling that someone will back them up in their challenging role as tutor. They need an experienced individual whom they could have confidence in, trust, and talk to. They also mentioned that they experienced a lack of support from the organisation in general, and some were even fearful to ask questions. They also mentioned the recent redundancy and the feelings of insecurity and anger towards the company. They felt uninformed and treated un-fairly. They actually requested better communication from the organisation, and an opportunity to air their views.

Zwell (2000:71) commented on the aspect of communication and trust.

> Employees don't feel that they are well informed of new decisions, policies, successes, losses and so on. They often feel that they are told to do things without also knowing the reason for doing them. The lack of communication causes employees to feel unappreciated and unimportant. It also adversely affects production and customer relations, as problems are not promptly communicated and immediately dealt with.

It therefore is important to communicate appropriately with the tutors and to show respect and commitment from the organisation's side.

4.4.3.2 TRAINING

The second sub-theme identified as an area for change was the training and professional development of the tutors, as indicated by the following quotes:

- *We need examples and training.*
- *Training and education for myself to improve the service I give to the learners.*
- *Training and examples of how we need to do something. We have no examples to work by.*

- *We need a proper induction and in-house training when we start, and someone being available when you need to ask questions.*
- *We could do with some staff training in our centre. We need some time off to work on our studies, such as the Cert. Ed. Qualification.*

INTEGRATION WITH LITERATURE

The conclusion the researcher was able to make is that tutors of E.Y.S. are currently feeling unqualified to do their jobs effectively. They are requesting training and support to enable them to develop professionally and to ultimately be able to provide a better and professional service to the clients of the organisation.

Zwell (2000:170) connected training with creating a vision for an employee: " A vision which can include all aspects of human functioning, including behaviour, health and fitness, emotional state, intellectual capability, relationships, career development, wealth, community relations, and spirituality. "

Tutor training should include all these aspects, and has clearly been requested by the tutors of E.Y.S. The training requested related specifically to improving job performance, the ability to render a better service to the learners, setting personal career development goals, emotional well-being, and general health and fitness.

4.4.3.3 SUPPORT GROUPS

The third sub-theme that was a clear need from the tutors was the need for support groups. The tutors clearly indicated that they need something to benchmark their own practices against. They would also like a safe group environment in which they can share ideas, discuss bad practice, and have an opportunity to relax and gain new energy and perspective. The following quotes are evidence thereof:

- *We are all tired.   A support system will prevent us all "burning out."*
- *A support group will improve our practice.*

- *We work with vulnerable and challenging young people and we need to feel supported and protected to do our job effectively*

- *We need a support system so that we don't all leave. We don't want to. We love the job and the learners, but the rest of the job is awful.*

- *To feel appreciated and understood.*

- *Someone to understand the pressures you have to go through.*

- *What would be great are more social events with other tutors in similar positions than us. Informal support.*

- *I already meet up with other music tutors from other centres in our own time, for team building and some socializing. It is brilliant and does help a lot. Getting together on a regular basis would be great. I would definitely go.*

- *I think it is a good idea. It is a great opportunity to air your concerns and get new ideas.*

INTEGRATION WITH LITERATURE

Zwell (2000:313) suggests that with our social culture the natural desire that people have to be accepted and liked by others can be used to reinforce performance plans in ways that employees find supportive. He made several suggestions, namely:

- Buddies – Employees form 'buddy teams' with the aim of supporting their buddies to accomplish action steps and goals. It was found that 'buddies' communicate most effectively and they talk about their daily goals, plans problems and concerns. 'Buddies can also support each other to overcome obstacles and to address problems that would often otherwise not be attended to.

- Work team/staff meeting – These teams meet weekly and provide each team member with feedback on goals and action steps.   This is often sufficient motivation to increase the amount of generated energy to be applied toward goal completion.

- Weekly e-mails to team members or managers – Communication about progress on goals and action steps also serves to remind employees of the importance of their goals and action steps.

- Meetings with managers – Such meetings can be used to report on and address the status of performance planning execution. This should be part of a natural supervisory process.

4.4.3.4 EXPERT ADVICE

The final sub-theme that was an interesting request and that forms the basis of any supervision/mentor relationship, was the need for one or more identified and allocated 'expert' that could be contacted as and when needed.   The following quotes are evidence thereof:

- *A support system should include being able to pick up the phone and to ask someone for some honest advice without any fear of humiliation.*
- *I would like some respect and recognition for what I do.*
- *Advice and someone who is consistent in their responses and approachable*
- *Someone I can talk to and ask questions and air all these concerns I am carrying around in me and taking home with me.*

INTEGRATION WITH LITERATURE

It seems as if the request for an expert in the organisation to deal with specific tutor-related issues is an aspect that requires serious consideration. The Standards Committee of EAPA-SA (1999:13) suggests that to ensure the quality of client services, to protect the employees' interest and to enhance performance, consultation, and case supervision is crucial. The revised document by The Standards Committee of EAPA-SA (2004:14) mentions that to protect the client/employees interests and to enhance the employees' professional knowledge, attitude and skills, consultation and case management is crucial. This could prevent isolation and professional burnout. The tutors of E.Y.S also need some expert advice, supervision, and support to avoid burnout and low productivity.   The guidelines further suggest that should the supervisor/consultant have sufficient work experience and if they are not able to meet the employees needs, outside advice and expertise should be brought in.

To briefly summarize the themes and sub-themes discussed in the latter part of this chapter, the empirical results from the focus group interview sessions indicated that the three main themes of concern and daily problems that the tutors of E.Y.S. experience are firstly, operational problems, namely problems with the organisation, problems with the learners, and general problems regarding the teaching profession. The second main theme that was identified were concerns regarding the current support system in E.Y.S., namely team meetings, training, and lack of peer support. The final theme was requirements for a future support system, and included sub-themes such as company structure, training, support groups, and some expert advice available in the organisation. The next section will summarize and conclude chapter four.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the empirical findings of the research project, as well as on the research methodology namely the approach, data collection method, and the profile of the respondent group. The goal was to explore and establish the perceptions and needs of the tutors of E.Y.S regarding a support system.

Themes and sub-themes were identified, and it seems clear that the tutors would like some support, training, and acknowledgement for the work they do.

The researcher found these empirical findings extremely interesting and relevant, because it lays the foundation for the next chapter, and enables the researcher to make a summary, conclusions, and recommendations regarding a support system for the tutors in E.Y.S.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The following and final chapter aims at providing closure to the research process. Chapters one to four covered the plan for the research project, a literature exploration of the main themes of the project, namely tutorship, and support systems and the empirical study. The final chapter will be a summary of the first four chapters and a conclusion from all the gathered information, as well as some recommendations for future support and the implementation of a more efficient support package for the tutors of E.Y.S.

Bennett *et al*. (1994:200) described the purpose of feedback to the organisation and the participants, as an opportunity to give information in order that the participants make a commitment to take action. The task is to present a clear picture of the current situation, and the recommendations are to encourage the organisation to focus on doing something about the problem.

The authors listed the main groups who might benefit from the feedback, namely:

- Those who have the power to make decisions about the action recommended.
- Those who are directly affected by the feedback and recommendations.
- Those who have taken part in the consultancy (Bennett et al.,1994:200).

The researcher will provide feedback to the directors of E.Y.S. and will make some recommendations about a support system for E.Y.S. The recommendations will also be adaptable to suit the needs of the other employees, for example the learning centre managers and the area managers, who have already shown some interest in the study and the possibility of a support network/group for themselves.

The researcher will also provide feedback to the participants, who will be affected by the recommendations, to show that their voices have been heard, and that their efforts and inputs have been appreciated and have served a purpose.

5.2 SUMMARY

In order to facilitate the drawing of conclusions and the making of recommendations, a summary of all the chapters is provided below:

5.2.1. Chapter One

Chapter one focused on a general introduction and orientation to the study by discussing the motivation for the study, the problem formulation, the purpose, goal, and objectives of the study, as well as the research approach, type of research, the research design and procedures that would be used during the research process.

All the mentioned subjects were discussed in order to contextualize the study and provide a framework in which the pilot study and the main study could take place. Research etiquette and ethical guidelines were discussed in detail, followed by definitions and descriptions of the key concepts, which would be used during the study.

The researcher provided a brief background explanation of the education system in the U.K. The purpose was to point out that the education system in the U.K. in the past century was a one-size-fits-all approach, which left little room for individual needs of the learners. This approach resulted in many young people being failed by the education system and losing interest in further education. Estelle Morris, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills made the following comment in the Green paper (2003:2): "Our aim is clear – keeping young people in education and training at 16, academic excellence, high-quality vocational routes, and increased participation in higher education. This will build the foundations for lifelong learning among future generations. It will be a system in which all are valued and all can have confidence. W**e must promote education with character**. Academic achievement is essential, but education must also be a basis for citizenship and inclusion."

Chapter one concluded with a short plan for the four chapters to follow.

5.2.2   Chapter 2

Chapter 2 begins the exploration of the concept "tutorship" and assists the reader to gain a better understanding of the role, the responsibilities, the challenges, and the joys of tutorship.

As an orientation for this chapter, the researcher provided an illustration of the different education establishments in the U.K., as well as the different training and education routes available to the children and young people.

The U.K. education systems start with compulsory schooling at age five or six years until age 16 years. The Further Education provides the student with an opportunity to progress into full-time further or higher education on an academic route at school in a Comprehensive, Grammar, or Independent establishment. (Also called State Education). The second option of further education is in the form of vocational training in colleges, namely Sixth Form, Tertiary-, Further Education-, and Higher Education Colleges. A very popular option available to the students is a choice between employment, apprenticeship, and youth training. E.Y.S forms part of the youth-training option available to young people. The youth-training schemes aim to motivate and support the young people back into further higher education, vocational training schemes, or the open labour market which is the final, least favourable option, with the ultimate aim to reduce the un-employment rates in the U.K.

Focusing specifically on the mentioned youth training schemes or apprenticeship schemes, it has been suggested that an alternative, more creative approach is crucial to successfully engage certain groups of young people on these training and education programmes.

Carnie (2003:1) provides guidelines as to what alternative education should encompass: "Alternative education is about personal development, keeping children off the streets, and installing in them the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to create a fairer and more sustainable world."

E.Y.S. is a good example of such an alternative learning and educational establishment, and its mission is to provide the learners with as much individual attention and needs-led training programmes as possible. The belief is that young people learn better when their individual needs and interests are taken into consideration. The learner-centred approach is the core element which makes E.Y.S. successful in teaching and developing certain young people to their full potential, an approach that is clearly stated as the company's mission statement and objectives in the E.Y.S office manual: "Achieving successful outcomes demand giving our best service everyday and by demonstrating our efficiency, effectiveness, the quality of our work, our skill, and our ability to demonstrate to each trainee that we care about them and their future."

- To provide and develop strategies and programmes to promote education, training, leisure, play, cultural, sporting, advisory, mentoring, careers, health, welfare, and support services to children and young people.
- To provide advisory services and act as consultants and project managers to those who wish to provide and to develop strategies, projects and programmes.
- To provide consultancy services and advice on community safety, crime prevention, and reduction measures, and in particular measures to reduce the incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour of young people. Preventing young people from adopting a criminal or anti-social lifestyle and combating social exclusion.

All the employees at E.Y.S are responsible for this complex task of engaging, maintaining, and supporting these young people, but it is the tutors of the organisation who are in the frontlines of this battle. Jeffs and Smith (1996:3) provided a comprehensive description and summary of tutors:

> Informal educators work in a multitude of ways. They exploit and create learning opportunities. Central to their work is the fostering of conversation – working so that people can engage

with each other and the world. Like all educators they improvise, but more so. They seek to make the world more intelligible for those they work with. To achieve this they share knowledge, experience, and where appropriate, offer guidance and advice. However, they always do so within some sort of moral framework. They try to make the world not only more intelligible but also a better place. We seek or resist change, to reduce and not exacerbate suffering, to improve life-chances and not damage them.

Wheldall and Watkins (2004: 65) also supported the ethos of E.Y.S and suggested that young people need to be engaged in the most creative and supporting environment possible to re-engage the young person into learning:

Disaffection and subsequent alienation from school may lead some students into a potential for a generic decline into petty crime/delinquency. The problem appears to begin early as a result of initial academic failure in learning basic literature skills and are then exacerbated by the increasing demands made by a largely text-based curriculum predicated upon mastery of the very skills in which they are most deficient.

This results in disengagement and a lack of motivation to engage in learning.

Based on the background information and the definitions provided, it is clear that the tutor has a huge responsibility to guide the learner through the learning process, and also has a very challenging role to co-ordinate the rest of the responsibilities which would contribute to the learner's development. It is therefore crucial to support the tutor with this challenge and important to provide the necessary training, counselling, education, and any other support required by each individual, to enable the tutors to effectively support their vulnerable clients. The study explored such support options and possibilities in the following chapter.

5.2.3   Chapter 3

Chapter 3 explored the concept of support systems, the value and advantages thereof, and the consequences of failing to effectively support an organisation's employees. The chapter also discussed the daily stresses to which the tutors are exposed, the consequences of not effectively supporting the tutors, and the losses to the organisation as a business. Previous research done in the area of supporting and developing employees concluded that if employees do not feel supported, the results are feelings such as disappointment, unfulfilled expectations, and not being able to do their jobs effectively. They feel disillusionment and despair. Consequently, according to Lewis *et al*. (2003:316), "The employee in this situation is likely to exhibit the traditional signs of dissatisfaction, such as lateness, lack of cooperation, or absence."

Psychological symptoms, such as depression, anger, guilt, sadness, anxiety, and burnout, can develop, manifesting as physical symptoms such as colds, insomnia, headaches, and serious long-term illness resulting in absenteeism.

To combat these results and symptoms, E.Y.S has put the following policies and procedures in place, as found in the E.Y.S. Staff Handbook (2003:10-30) namely:

- *Social Policy*: To provide the initiative and support for all staff in order to ensure that they are in possession of the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to perform their jobs to the highest possible standard, to develop and to maximize their potential.
- *Standards*: The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) inspects all the training and education we provide and we have to comply with the quality assurance standards set out in the ALI Common Inspection Framework. E.Y.S. is also contracted to the LSC and has to fulfil the requirements in the Introduction to the Learning and Skills Council Inspection Framework.
- *Investors in People*: A sharper focus on training and development activity. This gives better alignment between business and 'people planning' systems, as well as heightened motivation in the workplace.

- *Equal Opportunity Policy*: Preventing discrimination and supporting equal opportunities for all.

- *Disability Discrimination Act*: Elimination of discrimination on the basis of a disability.

- *Health and Safety Policy*: E.Y.S. is to ensure that, in the course of its business, all reasonable steps will be taken to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of its employees, customers, and other people who might be affected by E.Y.S.

- *Child Protection Procedures*: The Children Act 1989

- *Physical Intervention Policy*: Duty of care for maintaining an acceptable level of safety.

- *Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy*: Any information we hold or receive of a personal or sensitive nature will be treated in confidence.

- *Violence at Work Policy*: Violence is defined as the use of force, or the threat of it. Serious verbal abuse or other forms of harassment, directed at staff as a result of their work.

- *Confidential Reporting Policy*: To prevent fraud, corruption, bullying, and other serious forms of malpractice.

Alongside the policies and procedures already implemented by E.Y.S., it is also important to motivate employees to support them to grow and develop in their working environment and to deliver a better service. Maitland (1995:1**)** described motivation as follows: "The force or process which causes individuals to act in a specific way."

If employees are not appropriately supported and motivated in the working environment the following signs of stress will be present at work, according to Ash and Ash (2001:137): "Sleeplessness, irritability, losing appetite/starting to overeat, constant tiredness, inexplicable aches and pains, and no enthusiasm for normal activities."

Maitland (1995:45) suggested that motivating and developing staff is: "The systematic and continual process of improving employees so that they make the fullest possible use of their abilities, thus benefiting both them and the firm."

According to Maitland (1995:45) the organisation should encourage self-development by setting targets for every employee and group of employees, by training employees because people like to learn something new and sees it as a reward, by giving people skills and knowledge to do their jobs competently, and by keeping them up to date with changes and developments. Support and development for staff has been proven to be beneficial for all the parties involved, namely the company, the employees, and the clients.

In chapter 4, the results of the empirical study will be summarized. The research supported the researchers' thoughts and confirmed all the previous research done by other researchers outside of this study.

5.2.4 Chapter 4

Chapter four focused on the empirical process that was followed in order to reach the goals and objectives of this study. This chapter also provides the answers to the research questions asked.

A qualitative research strategy was used for the systematic gathering of information, the analysis of this information, and the interpretation thereof. The preferred outcomes for this research study suited the objectives of the study, which were to explore the perceptions and needs regarding a support system experienced by a specific group of people, namely the tutors of E.Y.S. An applied research approach enabled the researcher to explore the tutors' perceptions, needs, and problems in practice in an objective manner and enabled the researcher to ultimately provide guidelines and make recommendations to how to improve the current support system. This applied study therefore addresses immediate problems facing the tutors in practice.

Research design is the logical plan/blue print to follow during the process of gathering information to understand phenomena. The researcher made use of the collective case study to establish the current support system available to the tutors, the effectiveness thereof and their perceptions and needs for a future support system. This was done through focus group interview sessions, which had the aim to identify patterns and trends, and through the systematic analysis of the discussions.

Four focus group sessions were held in the Essex area. Altogether 20 tutors were interviewed, and the results in all four the groups were very similar. The tutors felt un-supported, not valued, lacking training and development, and an urgent need for a support network to avoid burnout and a high staff turnover. An overwhelming number of staff requested urgent training, further studies, and additional resources and support to improve their practice and self-development. Middleton, Ziderman, and Van Adams (1993:1) stated that productivity and flexibility depends on factors such as the level of capital investment, the technology of production, and the quality of a firms' management. They state: "The skills of reading and writing, calculation, and problem solving developed directly or indirectly by general and academic secondary education are fundamental to productivity in all forms and at all levels of employment."

The conclusion the researcher was able to make is that the amount of support available to staff is depending on factors such as financial and human resources available in the organisation, as well the attitudes and interests of the management/shareholders/directors. The following part of this chapter will focus on the conclusions from this study as well as on suggestions to the shareholders and directors as to how they can get involved and improve the support package currently available to the staff, taking into consideration all aspects and financial resources.

The Employee Assistance Programme Association (henceforth: EAPA) provides the mission statement for an Employee Assistance Programme (henceforth: EAP) in the EAPA Standards Document (2005) which forms the basis of suggestions that will follow in this chapter: "To promote the highest standard of practice and the continuing development of employee assistance professionals and programmes."

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

From the literature study and empirical study the following conclusions are relevant:

- The current education system in the U.K. does not meet all the needs of all the learners. *Alternative education styles* and establishments are crucial to meet the needs of all the young people in the U.K.

- The purpose and goal of this study was to explore the current support system of E.Y.S., as well as the tutor's perceptions on a possible future support system. – *The responses from the tutors indicated that the current support system is not sufficient, does not meet their needs, and is almost non-existent. They requested a company structure which enables them to have sufficient supervision, advice, goal setting, and guidelines to perform their jobs more efficiently.*

- The lack of education, training, and support for the tutors of E.Y.S. results in the under-utilization of staff and a lower quality of service to the learners. – *The tutors reported that they feel under-qualified to do their jobs effectively; they felt vulnerable and near burn-out.*

- It seemed as if the tutor roles, tasks and responsibilities are challenging and complex.

- The researcher made use of a qualitative research approach. Specifically the focus group interview technique, which was very successful because the tutors were comfortable with the project, the questions asked, and the reasoning behind the project. The group setting helped the participants to relax and to freely share information about their current working environment, as well as their expectations and needs for the future.

- The researcher was able to ensure confidentiality and objectivity of the project. The participants shared information freely because of the

trusting relationship between the tutors and researcher. The researcher now suggests that E.Y.S pay attention to the difficulties and challenges experienced by the tutors and put the *appropriate and much needed support in place*. Supporting the tutors would ultimately result in trusting, loyal, and committed employees, higher productivity, and a better service to the young learners of the education system. Dutton (2003:83) mentioned the following regarding creating 'trust' in an organisation, namely: "Information is a valuable asset in all work organisations. Information is more valuable when it is relevant, rare, and non-substitutable. By sharing information that is valuable with others, managers demonstrate that they care and are more reliable."

- The organisation lacks a support system to *support the tutors effectively*. The researcher would suggest that further research would indicate that the other employees of E.Y.S could also benefit from exploring their perceptions and needs on the current support system. An employee support system could be implemented through the central development team, already in place in the organisation to deal with training, development, and quality assurance issues.   The progress/success of the programme can be reviewed in a year's time. This support package will indicate that E.Y.S is concerned about their employees' well-being and development and will aid a positive relationship between the organisation and the employees. Dutton (2003:8) suggests that positive relationships are crucial for the success of the organisation, and that negative relationships have a number of damaging effects on individuals. "Corrosive connections make it more difficult for employees to do their work. Connections that tap energy turn people inward, for both protection and for sense-making. Thus low-quality connections cause distractions that make it difficult for people to engage fully in their tasks."

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher was able to make the recommendations based on the results from the focus group interview sessions. To lay the foundation for these recommendations the researcher found the following perspective refreshing, simple, and effective, namely: "The energy and vitality of individuals and organisations alike depend on the quality of the connections among people in the organisation, and between organisational members and people outside the firm with whom they do business" (Dutton, 2003:1). The key to a successful energized working environment therefore is to build "high quality" connections between people. According to Dutton (2003:2), these connections should be marked by: "mutual positive regard, trust, and active engagement on both sides. In a high-quality connection, people feel more engaged, more open, more competent. They feel more alive."

The researcher will make the following recommendations based on the theory that high-quality connections doesn't mean deep or intimate relationships, personal knowledge or extensive interaction. It means making the best of every opportunity, conversations, meeting and e-mail, because low-quality connections can be negative and damaging to relationships in the organisation, as pointed out by Dutton (2003:2): "Low-quality connections are pervasive in an organisation; they eat away at people's ability to learn, to show initiative, and to take risks. They corrode motivation, loyalty, and commitment."

To conclude the foundation theory for the recommendations, the quality of connections between employees is important and plays a major role in the well-being of individuals and the organisation.

- Work related problems should be viewed in a holistic manner and as a whole, rather than as separate parts. A systemic approach creates a conceptual framework that allows us to see overall patterns more clearly and helps us to understand how to support or change these patterns effectively. It is also important to address these problems and patterns as a whole, as pointed out by Johnson (2004:7) "The effectiveness of human assets may be the single most important determinant of a work organisation's success. The behavioural risks that can compromise the effectiveness of human assets are well known, but

frequently they are identified and addressed individually rather than as parts of a whole."

- E.Y.S should aim to gain the trust and respect of their employees in order to ensure a committed and productive workforce. According to Dutton (2003:106), "Trusting means acting towards others in a way that conveys your belief in their integrity, dependability, and good motives. Positive words and actions that create trust include sharing valuable information, appropriate self-disclosure, using inclusive language, giving away control and responsibility, granting access to valuable resources and soliciting and acting on input."

- The support package should be based on the tutors' perceptions, and needs, rather than on the organisation's needs, because the tutors are the experts, and have to effectively deal with the learners every day. Healy, Heery, Taylor, and Brown (2004:155) conclude that:

> It is important to make the distinction between training for employee need and training for employer or business need. Training for business need primarily benefits the organisation and there may be few or only indirect benefits to the employee. In contrast, training for employee need contributes to the workers' broader development and employability and does not restrict training to the needs of the current job. – Creating a pool of qualified and experienced workers for the organisation to use in other areas of the organisation.

- The tutors' role is very complex and challenging. All the tutors working within this new holistic education environment should therefore be thoroughly *trained, developed, and supported* in their working environment to ensure a quality service to the vulnerable clients of E.Y.S. Dutton (2003:11) pointed out that the benefits of feeling supported results in the employee feeling revitalized, less stressed, and motivated, and arms the employees with protective factors that make them less susceptible to depression and self-destructive behaviours.

- The goal of this study was to explore the current support system within E.Y.S., and to investigate the needs and expectations of the tutors for future support. This study can form the basis of a *further in-depth exploration* of tutors, managers, and other employees working for E.Y.S and other training providers in the U.K., with the aim to provide the appropriate training and support to the employee in a very challenging working environment. Dutton (2003:142) has the following opinion about the support and developing of employees, namely:

> When a commitment to affirming people and fostering their development is part of an organisation's way of life, high quality relationships flourish, as people are engaged by their hearts as well as their heads. The valuing of development encourages the expression of what each individual cares about and needs, at the same time that it implies that effort will be made to enable people to work towards and satisfy these needs.

- The researcher suggests that the organisation adhere to the tutors' request for training and support and consider the advantages of establishing *tutor-network support groups*. These groups will provide the tutors with an opportunity for informal supervision, support, and an opportunity to share good practice. The tutors can set their own agendas and discuss subjects relevant to their working challenges and environment.

- The researcher would suggest on-line support for the tutors. This support could include on-line discussion groups, tutor support website, as well as access to interactive learning materials on the web. An article in the Cambridge magazine, *International Outlook* (2004:13) featured an article on world-class teacher support, which suggests menu/options for supporting employees in education establishments: "Professional development, e.g. face-to-face training, self-delivery training packs, online training, and professional development diplomas."

- Based on requests from respondents the researcher would suggest that the company consider a formal pay scale as well as additional training for staff, and skills-based pay in accordance with the qualifications and skills acquired. Another non-pay benefit that E.Y.S could consider is team-based rewards. A weekend away could serve as a team-building event as well as a motivational factor for better performance. Lewis et al., (2003:316) also suggested exploring non-pay benefits such as individual performance-related pay, pension schemes, and company cars.

- The company structure is also involved in the request from the tutors for some guidelines, targets, and direction to achieve their work goals and objectives. An appraisal system and formal supervision could address this request successfully. Setting goals, reviewing progress and acknowledgement for targets achieved are all positive motivational factors and promotes accountability for the job done, as well as general development of the tutor. According to Christie (2004:25), accountability is a health-preserving tactic. Accountability forms a framework within which an employee can develop. If E.Y.S creates a system in which tutors has to be accountable for their progress and the progress of their learners, it will be a motivational factor to perform better. Accountability should not feel like the "big brother syndrome," but rather as the organisation being interested in their progress, their work, their outcomes, and showing respect and appreciation for all the hard work. It also creates commitment, which in return creates a strong sense of purpose, vision, and values. Committed employees work harder, give more, and are generally happier employees. E.Y.S. needs to create a culture of commitment by showing its employees that it cares about them, appreciates them, and rewards hard work. The researcher suggests that the organisation reinstate the yearly tradition of a conference where an employee of the year, etc. is announced. A proper company structure, opportunity for promotion, and a proper pay scale are all crucial.

- The final suggestion connected to the company structure is communication. Various tutors have requested clear and honest communication from the

organisation to enable them to do their jobs effectively. The recommendation would be for E.Y.S to improve its company structure and include better channels of communication in the process. They need to know why things are changing, when and what the advantages and disadvantages are. - Zwell (2000:38) defines communication as follows:

> Attention to communication is the competency by which people keep others informed of important information, whether daily activity, crises, or progress on long-term projects. The underlying assumption is that people can make more intelligent decisions, will feel more part of the organisation, and be more motivated and empowered if they have more information about the business."

- This research project should be expanded to other employees of E.Y.S. to explore their experiences and needs. Staff members, such as the centre managers and the area managers, have also shown an interest in this study. By attending to the needs of all the employees, E.Y.S. will be able to provide a holistic support and development package for all the staff. The aim of such a support system will be to avoid any negative relationships, and to practice within E.Y.S, because Dutton (2003:10) points out the consequences for the organisation not doing so, namely: "Low-quality connections eat away at employees' capability, knowledge, motivation, commitment, and emotional reserves. Moreover, corrosive connections can spark revenge, cheating, and other destructive behaviours."

- The researcher would also recommend that important legislation to keep in mind is the Employment Relations Act 1999 as well as the Employment Act 2002. Employees are entitled to a fair workplace, training, development, progression and a safe working environment. Anderson, Tyler, and Jenkins (2004:8) indicated an article on Preventing Workplace Violence that during the period of 1992-2001 the average cost per workplace homicide was $836 533. Additional costs included issues such as decreased employee morale and

posttraumatic stress counselling. According to this article, customer/client violence forms part of the traumatic workplace-violence incidents, which adds to the employees' stresses and problems. The article mentions healthcare, education, and law enforcement industries as high risks areas. An employee-assistance programme can provide organisations such as E.Y.S with the relevant knowledge, policies, and procedures to dramatically reduce the risk of violence towards the tutors. The tutors have to cope daily with an array of problems, difficulties, and challenges. The researcher feels strongly that violence in the workplace should be one of the concerns and could be addressed.

- E.Y.S. needs to focus on the safety of its employees. Safety in the workplace is important. All human beings need to feel safe in themselves as well as in their environment. Christie (2004:25) suggested that supporting and developing employees will result in the employees feeling safe, in control, and capable of doing their jobs properly.

- The final recommendation is that teamwork is very important within an organisation like E.Y.S. The tutors had clearly indicated that they receive a lot of support from the other tutors in the centres. They mentioned that it was a source of support, sharing of good practice, and friendship. Dutton (2003:141) supported the importance of teamwork with the following statement, namely: "An organisation that values teamwork sees collective responsibility and collective action as worthwhile and good. Team values orientate people to care for the performance and fate of team members who are participating in doing some part of the work of the organisation."

5.5 CONCLUSION

To conclude this chapter, the researcher explored the concept "business psychology" and the importance thereof for productivity in any organisation. Parkinson (1999:1) defined business psychology as follows:

Business psychology is about using an understanding of human behaviour to solve problems at work. It concerns how people organize their activities, and the ways in which the overall structure of work affects what they do. Personal qualities such as ability, personality, and the desire to work as one of a team are the keys to effective performance; it is the understanding of these factors which is at the core of business psychology.

Parkinson (1999:77) suggests that an organisation that motivates and supports its employees in their development and makes them feel valued can increase its profits by as much as a quarter. E.Y.S can achieve this goal by implementing an effective support package through an Employee Assistance Programme. The idea of a support programme is supported by Christie (2004:25), who suggests that the risks and problems present in the workplace can be successfully addressed through employee assistance programmes and multi-professional support teams. He acknowledges the fact that the ultimate goal of any business is growth and profitability, and achieving these results requires productivity, sustainability, and goal-alignment through the maintenance of material assets and human resources. Maintaining human resources means that the organisations' employee should be preserved through addressing their physical and mental needs.

Oher, Conti, and Jongsma (1998:1) suggest that the best way to support an organisations' employees is through an Employee Assistance Programme: "Employee Assistance Services are workplace-focused mechanisms designed to identify and aid employees who need professional assistance with problems in living that frequently impair their job performance."

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APPENDIX 1.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What do your day-to-day tasks include?

1.1 Reflecting back on your job description, does the description   relate to the tasks you actually carry out?
1.2 Do you feel obliged to undertake tasks, which are not covered by your job description?
1.3 Are you aware of what is actually expected of you in your day-to-day responsibilities?

2. What are currently the most important problems and needs that you experience on a day-to-day working basis?

3. What type of support do you receive currently to do your work effectively? (Physical, emotional, socially etc.)?

4. What are your perceptions regarding a support system?

4.1 What is a support system?
4.2 What do you expect from a support system?
4.3 Do you think a support system is necessary?

5. What type of support do you need?

5.1 How can we develop a "culture of support" in E.Y.S.?
5.2 What do you think about tutor network support groups?
5.3 Do you have any other comments regarding a support system or what we have discussed today?

APPENDIX 2.

03-08-2004

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Research within E.Y.S. Ltd.

This is to confirm that I have agreed for Lizel Ives to do some research within E.Y.S. Ltd as part of her Master's Degree in Employee Assistance Programmes.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to call me on the above number.

Regards,

Richard Atkinson

APPENDIX 3.

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Participant's Name: **Date:**

Principle Investigator: Lizel Ives
                                         Education and Youth Services Ltd.
                                         22 Church Road,
                                         Hatfield Peverel,
                                         Essex,
                                         CM3 2 LA

Informed Consent:

1. **Title of Study:** Perceptions and needs of tutors regarding a support system in Education and Youth Services Ltd., in the United Kingdom.
2. **Purpose of Study:** The purpose of the study is to explore the current support system of E.Y.S. as well as the tutor's real needs, experiences, problems and perceptions regarding a support system in order to enable E.Y.S. to support their employees more effectively.
3.
    Procedures: I will be asked to participate in focus group interviews. The researcher will arrange a suitable time and place and inform me of the details well in advance. I will also be briefed regarding the purpose of the interviews and provided with the opportunity to withdraw from the process if I am not comfortable with any of the procedures or any other part of the process.
4. **Risks and Discomforts:** There are no obvious risks or discomforts associated with this project, although I might experience some discomfort or upset when participating in this research project. I shall be given as many breaks as I want during these focus group sessions and I am aware that the E.Y.S. counsellor will be available to me, throughout as well as after the project.
5. **Benefits:** I understand that this is an opportunity to raise my concerns and needs regarding the current support system within E.Y.S. and that it is also an opportunity to shape and develop the support system to meet my needs. It will ultimately inform the management of E.Y.S. as to how they might be able to support their employees more effectively.
6. **Participant's rights:** I may withdraw from participating in the study at any time.
7. **Financial compensation:** The will be no financial compensation.
8. **Confidentiality:** All information acquired will be made anonymous and will be kept confidential. In order to record exactly what I say during the focus group interviews, an audio recording will be made. The tape will be listened to only by the Principle Investigator and other members of the research team. I understand that the results of the testing will be kept confidential unless asked that they may be released. The results of this study might be published in professional journals or presented at professional conferences, but my records of identity will not be revealed unless required by law.
9. If I have any questions or concerns, I can call Lizel Ives at 07803607554.

I understand my rights as a research subject, and I voluntarily consent to participation in this study. I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being done. I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

_____   _____
Subject's Signature   Date

Signature of Investigator

APPENDIX 4.

Focus Group Interview

E.Y.S.

23-11-2004

TRANSCRIPT

Researcher: Thank you very much for your time and participating in this survey. As I have mentioned I am doing this survey as part of my Social Work Degree. The purpose of today is to explore and discuss the current support system within E.Y.S. and then to look at what you would expect from a support system, for the future. Unfortunately I am not able to provide you with the support you request today, but I shall write my report and feed it back to the directors and the Human resource manager with some recommendations. All information will be kept confidential and all names will be anonymised.

The first question I would like to ask is the following:

1. **What do your day-to-day tasks include?**

Stanley: Every day is different. It is chaos at the moment. We have to take turns to drive the minibus, be on kitchen duty for the breakfast club. We do some course work during the day, like ASDAN and NCFE, sometimes we do social activities and play darts and play football.

Helen: Yes, every day is mad. Today I had to o a drugs bust, drive the minibus, and deal with abuse and violence, attempt to make some posters on the importance of wearing a safety belt, to occupy the rest of the learners that wasn't part of the drugs bust, and then we went bowling, because nobody was in the mood to concentrate after the unfortunate event.

Zelda: The day normally starts with some preparations for the day's activities and lessons. Then you have to chase up the learners that have not turned up, write some reviews for the learners, and then start the class as soon as they turn up. Daily support for the learners is an important part of our job, not just with the education, but also with social and emotional problems.

Ron: Reviews, individual learning plans, personal folders, course work, and practical sessions.

Nancy: We have to prepare for every day. I have to have worksheets ready for the one-to-one basic skills that I offer to the students. I also work out a time table for each week, but to be honest, it never works out the way

you plan it. Too many things happen every day that we have to deal with.

Peter: Keeping the personal folders up to date so that anyone who needs some background information on my learners can find out exactly how to approach them, what their abilities and needs are, and what they would like to do in the future. I think this is a very important part of my role, because a basic skills tutor came into my room the other day to teach some reading for an hour. He asked one of my learners to read a piece from the newspaper in front of the whole class. The learner told him to F*** *** and threw the paper at him and then stormed out of the class. The guy was very surprised and upset with this, but I asked him if he had looked in any of the learner's personal folders before he came into my room. He said no. So, I said, well if you did, you would have known that Jimmy can't read or write very well, and asking him to read in front of the class is worst thing you can do. Therefore my folders are very important to do.

I also have to deal with personal issues, emotional issues. Problems at home. I try to give equal amounts of attention to all my students and one-to-one support to those who need it. We also do course work en have fun.

.

1.1 Reflecting back on your job description, does the description relate to the tasks you actually carry out?

Stanley: No.

Helen: No, not at all. I don't think there is a job description for the job I do now.

Zelda: I had a job description for a project worker which was very vague, but I would have like a job description relating the specific job I have to do, for example a job description for a parenting tutor.

Ron: Never received a job description, but it would make no difference, we do everything in this centre, and it changes all the time.

Nancy: No, I have changed roles and am doing what I think should be done.

Peter: No, we are always expected to do more and more and more.

Researcher: O.k. thank you, lets move on to the next question.

1.2 Do you feel obliged to undertake tasks which are outside your opinion of the role of a tutor?

Stanley: Yes

Helen: Yes

Zelda: Yes

Ron: Yes
Nancy: Yes
Peter: Yes

1.3 Are you aware of what is actually expected of you in your day-to-day responsibilities?

Stanley: No, not really.
Helen: Yes, but it does change daily.
Zelda: The expectations are not always clear.
Ron: I agree with Zelda, the expectations are not always clear and there are not enough hours in the day to do everything they expect from us.
Nancy: No, because the manager does not talk to us. We have team meetings where we get told off.
Peter: No, it would be nice if someone asked our opinions once in a while, and didn't force us to do stuff that are blatantly wrong.

Researcher: Thank you, any other comments or can we move on?

2. What are currently the most important problems and needs that you experience on a day-to-day working basis?

Stanley: Lack of computers that work, and just too much to do.
Helen: Lack of resources such as computers and tables and space.
Zelda: Lack of practical resources. The fact that you can't be spontaneous anymore. You have to order the petty cash in advance if you want to take your learners out and some day's quick thinking is necessary to help someone in the group to deal with a traumatic event, or just to defuse a situation. Having access to petty cash for these days will be useful.
Ron: Too much to do and not enough time or equipment.
Nancy: The lack of resources. We are not allowed to buy anything that will make our jobs easier and the learning experience for the learner more interesting and engaging.
Peter: Management don't leave you alone to do the job that you are good at. Always picking on you. Never do we get positive feedback. Only what is wrong.

Researcher: Lets move on to the next question.

3. What type of support do you receive currently to do your work effectively? (Physical, emotional, socially etc.)?

Stanley: I ask the other tutors if I want to know something.

Helen: I don't get any support. Every other centre's Re-start tutor phones me up for advice and support, but I have no-one to turn to.

Zelda: I get support from other tutors, except when you have to deal with a learner's personal hygiene issues, and then no-one wants to help. We don't know how to deal with this. We don't have any supervision; I have never had any targets set for me. I do what I think is right.

Ron: Other tutors, we have no other support system. I have asked for some training 3 years back, it still has not happened.

Nancy: We support each other.

Peter: Yes, I agree the only support we get is from each other. We are not trained to deal with violence and aggression, but we deal with it regularly. We have asked for some training.

Researcher: The next question.

4. <u>What are your perceptions regarding a support system?</u>

Researcher: Let me expand on this question.

4.1 What do you think is a support system?

Stanley: Something that supports you.
Nancy: Someone that understands you.
Helen: Someone who will support you, back you up and take some responsibility for major decisions that I don't feel comfortable in making.
Ron: Support from a manager.
Zelda: Agree

Researcher: Right, following on from these thoughts.

4.2 What do you expect from a support system?

Stanley: I would like some help to do the little things for students, perhaps in a dream, an assistant that could help me, so I can teach the learners. Some of my learner's need a lot of one-to-one support, and then the rest of learners are un-occupied. Someone to help me in the class would be nice.

Nancy: The challenges of a tutor role, not a manager who does not understand and does not even try to understand. Someone who is able to support you in your role as a tutor.

Peter: I would like some respect and recognition for what I do. That will make me feel valued and motivate me to continue with this difficult job.

Ron: Advice and someone who is consistent in their responses and approachable

Researcher: Thank you, the next question is.

4.3 Why do you think a support system is necessary?

Stanley: To improve your practice.

Helen: To protect you when something goes wrong.

Zelda: It is also necessary for us to have someone to discuss all the issues that we deal with on a daily basis, just so that you can say how you feel, and then you are able to deal with the next problem again with an open mind.

Ron: So that we don't all leave. We don't want to. We love the job and the learners, but the rest of the job is s***.

Peter: Getting support will make you feel that someone is on your side and that you are appreciated.

Researcher: O.K. now. Tell me what you would like.

5.   <u>What type of support do you need?</u>

5.1 How can we develop a "culture of support" in E.Y.S.?

Stanley: Some positive feedback. Everything is so negative here.

Helen: We do things like write lessons plans for ASDAN and never get any feedback. We would like to know what is going on. We would also like the lessons plans examples back; it will make our lives much easier. I could also benefit from some supervision. I need to be supported. Also, acknowledgement for good work.

Zelda: We need a pay rise, yearly bonuses, cost of living allowance, a pension, medical, and other incentives.

Ron: Someone to remove the obstacles so we can do our jobs.

Nancy: More training.

Researcher: O.K.

5.2 What do you think about tutor network support groups?

Nancy: Yes, a good idea in our own centres.

Ron: I would like that.

Zelda: Good idea, but will we have time to do it?

Helen: Good idea, but it could just be a whinge, someone needs to chair it.

Stanley: Yes, good idea.

5.3 Do you have any other comments regarding a support system or what we have discussed today?

Helen: We give a lot and get nothing back.

Researcher: Thank you very much for your time. I really appreciate it. I shall put
                 All this information in my report and feed it back to head office. I
                 Would also like to congratulate you on everything you do. I think
                 You do a brilliant job. Thank you.