

Chapter 5

The Nature of Employee Assistance Programmes

5.1 Introduction

Since this study is a needs assessment for an Employee Assistance Programme at the University of the North, it therefore becomes essential to explicate in detail the nature and scope of Employee Assistance Programmes. This chapter therefore will outline the definition of EAP, its brief history internationally and in South Africa, essential elements of the programme as well as its marketing strategy.

5.2 Definition

The new dictionary of social work (1995:20) defines an Employee Assistance Programme as a programme of services offered to employees to prevent, relieve or eliminate work-related and social problems with a view to promoting job satisfaction, productivity and general social functioning. In the same sense, Googins (1975:465) defined an EAP as a system for identifying and treating a variety of medical or behavioural problems that might be responsible for an employee's poor job performance.

5.3 The rationale for Employee Assistance Programmes

The following are some of the reasons for the establishment of EAPs in places of work:

5.3.1 Humanitarian reasons

Jones (1985:7) as well as Mogorosi (1997:34) emphasize the humanitarian aspect of the programme as being the important reason for its existence. They maintain that the development of the peoples' potential suggest good management practice as it leads to the improvement of work attendance and the reduction of hospital or medical expenditure.

On the other hand, the motivation for implementing EAPs is not a charitable or humanistic concern of business in this century, nor is it a solely a strategy of modern management to help workers function effectively in the context of a more autonomous, lateral and participatory workplace. The reason that labour and industry is so strong is, in part, pure dollars and cents (Emener and Dickman, 1985:13-39; Kurzman, 1993:37).

5.3.2 Aid to management

The EAP in the organization is the aid to management for it reinforces the management principles, especially those relating to the supervisory role and its responsibilities (Emener and Dickman, 1985:13-19; Googins and Godfrey 1987:108). It harmonizes labour management relations by providing a forum for jointly addressing problems and issues.

5.3.3 Public relations exercise

Googins and Godfrey (1987:109) further stated that an EAP enhances the corporate image of the company in that it provides for what can be called image messages both within the company and to the outside community. If the EAP is properly established, it can serve as a means for the company to communicate its willingness to provide for and protect employees with some personal problems.

5.4 Goals of EAP

The general goals of an EAP have been identified by Dickman, Challenger, Emener and Hutchinson (1988; Starker, 1986:2; Akabas and Akabas, 1982:19-20; Merrel and Rightmeyer, 1985:162-174) as:

- the promotion of employee health, morale and productivity;
- the improvement of employee work performance;
- the minimisation of the costs associated with problems such as alcoholism,

absenteeism, drug abuse, disciplinary actions, grievances and other personal problems;

- the assessment and modification of more broadly defined “troubled” behaviour;
- the strengthening of relationships between and among groups of employees, management, labour unions and local community members.

5.5 Objectives of the EAP

The objectives are specific and operational statements regarding the desired accomplishments of social interaction programmes. They must be simple and measurable and stating exactly what it intends achieving within a specific time period. Klarreich, Francek and Moore (1985:3) outlined the following objectives of the EAP:

- to implement a confidential counselling service to the employees and their families with problems affecting their personal functioning;
- to deliver training and orientation sessions to all employees;
- to develop a public relations package which will be of help to the employees and assist them to use it appropriately.

5.6 Elements of an EAP

Before an EAP can be established, the following structural elements must be in place (Googins 1975:465-466; Wright 1983.:13-15; Dickman and Emener, 1985:84-85).

5.6.1 Statement of programme philosophy

Wright (1983:13) advised that clauses in the statement of programme philosophy may be:

- every employee faces problems in their personal lives and often do not know where to turn;
- this programme deals with a wide range of human problems which include marriage, family difficulties, financial or work related problems, emotional distress or problems caused by alcohol or drug abuse;
- this programme is strictly confidential and is offered as a helping hand, not as an attempt to pry or punish;
- the main reason for this programme is to help employees and their families enrich the quality of their lives, whether or not they are experiencing job-related problems.

5.6.2 Policy and Procedure

Each company must establish a clear policy which recognizes that problems do occur in the lives of employees. It must fully support the treatment and rehabilitation of its employees in their efforts to resolve their problems, and furthermore it must make sure that their job security and status in the company will not be threatened.

Typical policy statements could be as follows (Googins 1975:465-466; Wright 1983.:13-15; Dickman and Emener, 1985:84-85; Jerrel and Rightmeyer 1985):

- this service is primarily designed to assist employees and / or members of their immediate families (spouse or dependent children) who are experiencing personal difficulties and who choose to seek out the assistance of the EAP counsellor on a voluntary basis;
- no personal information that is given to the counsellor in the process of assisting the client will be shared with any other source, either within the company or the general community, without the written consent of the

employee in question;

- employees may gain access to the programme through voluntary, suggested, or mandatory referrals;
- while the suggested and mandatory referrals may be used by the management as an option in dealing with an employee whose performance is in question, it is not an automatic step in the disciplinary procedure;
- the policy, maintenance, planning, and evaluation of the EAP is the responsibility of a committee made up of representatives from a cross section of company employees;
- the professionals contracted to deliver the service on this project will maintain a clearly neutral role in matters affecting the relationship of the company, its employee representative groups and the employee; and
- the professionals who deliver the direct service on this project will work within the frame of reference of the EAP design and are primarily accountable to the providing agency or department.

Procedures should spell out precisely how the policy is to be implemented, what steps should be taken, and what the proper roles of management and treatment personnel are.

5.6.3 Training

Googins (1975:465; Dickman, 1985:47) maintains that to implement an EAP, management has to modify or change its traditional ways of behaving and introduce new ways. Thus an important element of EAP is supervisory training from the highest level of management down to the lowest supervisory level. Because the supervisor is on the cutting edge of the programme, he must understand the philosophy and function of the programme.

Training in policy, procedures, roles and especially in how to confront the problem employee in relation to his declining job performance is an ongoing function of EAP. Training sessions for supervisors are conducted on a regular basis.

In these sessions supervisors can review the various issues involved through role playing, films and discussions.

5.6.4 Provision of services

A programme can have well developed policies and enlightened supervisors, but if the treatment is not effective and professional, neither the supervisors nor employees will take advantage of it (Googins, 1975:465). Often the supervisor's confrontation of the client about the poor job performance and his recommendation that the employee seek help through EAP is sufficient motivation for the employee to recognize the problem and seek help.

Treatment can be provided either directly by EAP personnel or through a carefully developed information and referral service. If EAP staff provide the treatment directly, they must have well developed diagnostic skills to help the employee identify, focus on, and evaluate the nature and scope of his problem.

5.6.5 Follow-up

Once a referral is made to an outside resource, thorough follow-up by the EAP staff is required to assure that the employee is using the service and to evaluate the suitability of the service for that employee. It is important for the EAP staff to continue communications with the supervisor who made the initial referral. This takes place within the boundaries of confidentiality but lets the supervisor know whether action has been taken. The company should also have an understanding of how the programme is operating and what it is receiving for its money (Googins, 1975:466; Schramm, 1985:214-220; Hide, 1993:79).

5.6.6 Management vs Treatment Personnel

Although management and treatment personnel work together, their functions remain separate. Because roles are separated, supervisors do not get entangled in diagnosing problems or looking for alcoholics. They monitor job performance and refer employees with job deficiencies; the specific problem behind the job deficiency is not their concern. In turn, once the employee is referred, EAP personnel do not get involved in management issues or disciplinary procedures.

The relationship between management and treatment personnel is crucial. The two paths—the disciplinary managerial route and the treatment route of EAP run parallel (Googins, 1975:466). The disciplinary route uses a unique tool found only in the work setting, threat of losing a job. Use of this threat, especially in the case of alcohol abuse when denial is strong, greatly improves the chances for effective treatment.

The EAP route offers an alternative to the disciplinary route. By aiding the employee to identify the problem and establish a treatment plan, EAP can alleviate the problem and at the same time reverse the deteriorating job performance that is a manifestation of the problem.

5.7 Models of EAP

The functions performed for both the employer and employee are what distinguishes the different EAP model versions implemented by organisations. An EAP model is the structure that an organisation uses to plan, implement and serve the needs of the troubled employees (Myers, 1984:69). There are basically two types of models, according to Myers (1984:70; Minelli et al 1998:27; Minelli et al 2001:30), the internal and the external model.

5.7.1 The internal model

The internal model are programmes which are implemented by personnel who are employees of the organisation .

5.7.2 The external model

These are programmes which are operated by personnel who belong to an outside organization which specialises in EAP services.

5.8 Functions of EAP

There are four major functions of EAPs (Myers, 1984:70; Balgopal and Stollak, 1992:89-103) which are:

5.8.1 Planning

Planning entails the establishment of EAP policies and procedures which would help the organisation meet its long-term goals. Procedures are prepared to define daily activities while policies are guidelines on operational practice. Other activities are analysing insurance coverage, conducting preliminary cost-benefit studies and preparing evaluation procedures.

5.8.2 Organizing and implementing

This includes the training of managers and employees in EAP goals, policies and procedures and consultation with managers, supervisors, counsellors and others with various problems, especially in the beginning phase of EAP operations.

5.8.3 Client services

This covers all the activities involved in meeting a client's needs, starting from determining of an employee's problem and concluding with the evaluation of the program to which a client's needs are met through a service plan.

5.8.4 Identification of problem of troubled employee

Terblanche (1988:86) mentions that the value of EAPs to the employer is seen here, in the fact that a problem can be identified earlier than what was possible in the past. The advantage in the early identification of problems is that the prognosis is still good and the treatment action necessary is less complicated, as the problem is not in an advanced stage as yet. Erfurt and Foote as quoted by Terblanche (1988:86) stated that a client of an EAP can be identified through his or her performance or more specifically, poor work performance or through the voluntary seeking of assistance by a client.

5.8.5 Referral

The referral of a client is a positive step and there are two types of referrals, namely voluntary and forced/ mandatory referral. Voluntary referrals are clients who seek assistance voluntarily and who willingly accept a referral for a specialized service. However, mandatory referrals usually involve clients who are identified through a poor work performance and who do not willingly accept a referral for further services as a result of constructive confrontation from the supervisor (Kurzman, 1997:36).

5.8.6 Client assessment

Assessment includes the following activities:

- determination of the precise nature of the client's problem;
- determination of the services necessary to treat the problem;

- determination of the best qualified service provider to meet the client's needs; and
- arrangement of appointments for the employee with the service provider

5.8.7 Diagnosis

Diagnosis involves the detailed analysis of a client's problem. If the assessment is done by a qualified person, it would not be necessary to diagnose the problem as this could already have been done at the end of the assessment. The purpose of a diagnosis is to find the best possible service provider who will meet the client's needs. Therefore if an assessment is done over the telephone, through hot-lines or crisis intervention procedures, an accurate diagnosis may become necessary.

5.8.8 Case Planning

Case planning involves the definition of a service plan which includes making appointments with the service providers for the delivery of needed services and making arrangements for the payment of these services because of a lack of progress in an employee, or because of a dissatisfaction with the service or because of extra costs involved.

5.8.9 Treatment

Erfurt and Foote (1985) as cited by Terblanche (1988:121) mention the following two types of treatment:

- the use of treatment facilities in the community which coincides with the external programme of the so-called service centred/ contractual or consortium programme; and
- the provision of treatment facilities through an internal programme which is rendered by internal staff.

5.8.10 Crisis intervention

This is a service that is rendered to clients in life-threatening situations or other traumatic conditions.

5.8.11 After care

After care is the professional assistance given to clients after the discharge from in-patient care. This can take the form of group or individual therapy, orientation and other assistance.

5.8.12 Job re-entry

This is the kind of assistance given to employees who are readjusting to the work environment after being absent from work due to in-patient care. This is similar to after care and focuses on the employee in the workplace.

5.8.13 Control

This is the maintenance of reports and properly written EAP performance information that will be used to conduct cost-benefit analysis and other evaluations. This helps the organisation to evaluate its EAP services.

5.8.14 Service delivery

This involves the actual rendering of services to clients. An example of service delivery to a late stage alcohol employee will begin with a stay in a detoxification centre, followed by out-patient counselling and other after care services. The costs of these services vary according to the assistance methods used.

5.8.15 Case monitoring

This is the monitoring of a case by the EAP counsellor through discussions with each client and the service provider. These discussions provide the counsellor with information on the appropriateness and quality of the services by the client. The counsellor will also question the client on whether the service provider is meeting his/her needs.

5.8.16 Case closure

This is the termination of a client's services and this stage is reached when an employee arrives at the end of the service plan, or when a service provider closes a case because additional services are not necessary or if no progress is being made by the client. An employer may terminate these activities.

5.9 Marketing an Employee Assistance Programme

There are several unique challenges to promoting an Employee Assistance Programme. Most obvious of these is the fact that an EAP is a service, and it is more difficult marketing an intangible service than tangible products. The EAP professional can create an effective marketing plan for their services, if they first understand that, the issue is not whether to market the service, but how to do it more effectively. The EAP professional must view marketing as an integrated strategy designed to attract clients by satisfying customer needs through the delivery of the appropriate services (Balloun and Ward, 1993:37). For marketing to be effective, a marketing plan is essential.

5.9.1 Elements of a marketing plan

Marketing is an integral business strategy. The basic steps in developing a marketing plan for an EAP include (Balloun and Ward 1998:37; Hutchison and Renick, 1985:77-81; Sheafor, Horejsi and Horejsi, 2000:552-555):

5.9.1.1 Executive summary

The planning document should open with a summary of the main goals and recommendations presented in the plan. In the case of an EAP, for example, the executive summary can read:

- the promotion of employee health, morale and productivity;
- the improvement of employee work performance;
- the minimisation of the costs associated with problems such as alcoholism, absenteeism, drug abuse, disciplinary actions, grievances and other personal problems;
- the assessment and modification of more broadly defined “troubled” behaviour;
- the strengthening of relationships between and among groups of employees, management, labour unions and local community members.

Executive summaries are also helpful to outside consultants or new comers to an organizations staff who may want to obtain a quick overview of post marketing efforts by examining summaries of several year plans (Kotler and Bloom, 1975:269).

5.9.1.2 Situation analysis

This step is about analysing both the internal and external environment of an organization, because the environment keeps on changing and calls for new organized strategies. The major questions in an environment audit are:

- what are the major trends in the environment?
- what are the implications of these trends for the organization?

The aim of a situation analysis is to produce a documented picture of the most significant environmental developments around which the organization must formulate its future goals, strategy, structures and systems.

For any trend, analysis of an environment to be maximally useful, it should be converted into an opportunities- threats audit.

5.9.13 Threat analysis

An environmental threat is defined as: “a challenge posed by an unfavourable trend or specific disturbance in the environment that would lead, in the absence of purposeful action, to the stagnation, decline, or demise of an organization or one of its programmes” (Kotler Ferrel Lamb, 1987:123). EAP coordinators should therefore assess each threat according to two dimensions:

- its potential severity as measured by the amount of money or prestige the organization would lose if the threat materialized;
- its probability of occurrence.

The flip side of a threat analysis is an opportunity analysis.

5.9.1.4 Opportunity analysis

This can be potentially more important than threat analysis. By managing threats successfully an organization can stay intact, but does not grow. But by managing opportunities successfully, an organization can make great strides forward. A marketing opportunity is defined by Kotler et al (1987:124) as “an attractive area of relevant action in which a particular organization is likely to enjoy superior competitive advantages”.

Not all opportunities are equally attractive. An opportunity can be assessed in terms of two basic dimensions:

- its potential attractiveness as measured by the amount of revenue or other results that an organization might value;
- the probability that the institution or organization will be successful in developing the opportunity.

The situation analysis can never be complete until and unless the resource analysis has been done.

5.8.1.5 Resource analysis

Following the environment analysis, an organisation should undertake an analysis of its resources and capabilities. The purpose is to identify the major resources that the organization has (strengths) and lack (weaknesses).

The premise that an organization should pursue goals, opportunities and strategies that are suggested by or congruent with its strengths and avoid those where its resources would be too weak.

An organisation should conduct a resource analysis as part of its strategic planning process step. As a strategy for developing goals, the organization should pay attention to its distinctive competencies. Distinctive competencies are those resources and abilities in which the organization is especially strong. Secondly, an organization should pay attention primarily to those strengths in which it possesses a differential advantage.

In evaluating its strengths and weaknesses, the professional service organization should not rely on its own perceptions, but should go out and do an image study of how it is perceived by its key publics (Kotler and Bloom, 1975:46-48).

The environmental and resource analysis are designed to provide the necessary background and stimulus to management thinking about its basic goals as an organization.

5.10 Goal formulation

The purpose of developing a clear set of organizational goals is precisely to keep the organization from drifting into an uncertain future. The issue of goal formulation is divided into two distinct steps:

- what the current goals are?
- what the goals should be?

In carrying out the process of goal formulation, a useful step is to distinguish among three dependent but related concepts, namely, mission, objectives and goals.

5.11 Strategy formulation

Once goals are formulated, the question becomes how best to get there. The organization needs a “grand design” for achieving its goals. This is called strategy. In developing feasible strategies, the organization should undertake two tasks which are, to devise a service portfolio strategy and develop a product/ market opportunity strategy.

5.11.1 Service portfolio strategy

Once the organisation and marketing objectives and goals are set, the administration should examine its current academic portfolio. Administrators are forced to identify the stronger programmes and maintain full support for them, while taking funds out of their weaker programmes. The two primary dimensions of this portfolio are central to the institutional mission and the quality level of the programme (Jerrel and Rightmeyer, 1985:169-171).

5.11.2 Product market strategy

As a result of examining its current portfolio of services, a professional service organization might discover that it does not have enough stars or cash cows and that it must become more aggressive in searching for new services and markets (Balloun and Ward 1998:37; Hutchison and Renick, 1985:77-81; Sheafor, Horejsi and Horejsi, 2000:552-555):. This can be done by:

- market penetration;
- geographic expansion;
- establishment of new markets;
- service modification strategy;
- modification for dispersed market;
- service innovation;
- geographic innovation; and
- total innovation.

This strategy helps the organization imagine new opportunities in a systematic way (Kotler, et al 1975:50-58).

5.11.3 Formulating marketing strategies

The first step in the marketing strategy is to understand the market thoroughly. A market is a set of all people and organization who have an actual or potential interest in a service and the ability to pay for it. Every market is heterogeneous, that is, it is made up of quite different buyers or market segments. Therefore, managers find it helpful to construct a market segmentation scheme that can reveal the major groups making up the market. Then they can decide whether to serve all of these segments (mass marketing) or concentrate on a few of the more promising ones (target marketing) include(Balloun and Ward 1998:37; Hutchison and Renick, 1985:77-81; Sheafor, Horejsi and Horejsi, 2000:552-555).

5.11.3.1 **Competitive marketing**

The selection of a target must be followed by the development of a competitive positioning strategy that will help the organization to compete against the others. Competitive positioning is that art of developing and communicating meaningful differences between one's services and those of competitors serving the same target market. Repositioning can be difficult because it involves trying to change people's long standing images or impressions of an organization. Successful repositioning requires a well- formulated and executed marketing mix.

5.11.3.2 **Marketing mix strategy**

The next step in marketing strategy is to develop a marketing mix and a marketing expenditure level. McCarthy formulated a popular classification called four p's: product, place, promotion and price (Stiner, 1984:87).

5.11.3.2.1 **Product**

The first step is to fully and completely develop EAP services as the product to be marketed. Planning and research at this stage should address some of the following issues:

- kind of EAP will be offered and kind of EAP company will purchase;
- will the service be the "broad-brush" or alcoholism focus;
- will the EAP be assessment referral follow-up or an ongoing service;
- type of orientation to be provided;
- is the product tangible or intangible;
- what are the staffing requirements and credentials needed for staff;
- is there an evaluation procedure for EAP service; and

- has literature on Employee Assistance Programme development been researched thoroughly.

5.11.3.2.2 Place

After a thorough development of the EAP services or product has been completed, it will be necessary to the plan the area or place to market and the following issues become necessary:

- to whom and where are the services going to be marketed?
- are there specific types of business or industry that will be the area of concentration/
- has a decision been reached concerning employee base population characteristics?
- is there a plan to reach the top decision makers in the companies to be marketed?
- is there a consortium service and rate? and
- what research should be done to improve the understanding of best potential market area or place?

5.11.3.2.3 Promotion

Promotion of most service products such as an EAP is primarily persuasive in nature.

Therefore, promotional planning and instruments developed should be directed towards getting attention, arousing interest, creating a desire for EAP services and finally, motivating the person or company to take action. Some of the promotional considerations are as follows Hutchison and Renick 1985:79-80):

- kind and type of promotional instruments for example pamphlets and folders;
- workshops and seminars to promote EAP services;
- anticipated costs;

- is there an evaluative process for all promotional work?

5.11.3.2.4 Price

This is about prices charged for the services. Stiner (1984:87-88) said some pricing considerations are as follows:

- costs to deliver the service;
- is there adequate capital to meet unexpected expenses?
- method to determine fair rate of return and
- what is the competitive price when similar services in the market place are considered.

The EAP's image should be assessed to determine the programme's desired image, packaging the programme so that employees can learn what the programme offers. Publicity, outreach and favourable awareness activities can include employee seminars or luncheon programmes and public speaking arrangements. Publicity should be an on-going and not just a one-time deal (Balloun and Ward, 1993:38).

The marketer has to be creative and tailor the plan to the company, keeping the organization's culture in mind. Promotional activities can be designed to stimulate client interest, trial use, or involvement in some EAP services. "Marketing by wandering" can also be included, in which EAP professionals take casual walks through the work place to generate contacts with employees and supervisors. Trade fairs can be used to show consumers the benefits of some of the more socially desirable EAP services such as financial or retirement planning (Balloun and Ward 1998:37; Hutchison and Renick, 1985:77-81; Sheafor, Horejsi and Horejsi, 2000:552-555):).

5.12 Summary of the findings from literature

The following is a summary of the findings from literature:

- EAPs are company based services that correct job performance of employees through referral to a resource within or outside the company;
- they are established as an aid to management, humanitarian reasons and as image building strategy by the company or organization;
- their goals are to minimise costs and reduce absenteeism;
- services are provided within a context of confidentiality;
- the policy and training of supervisors form the core of the service delivery;
- the service can be provided either internally or externally;
- the model therefore determines the nature and scope of the service;
- before the service can be launched, a situation analysis needs to be carried out;
- once the needs have been identified, implementation has to follow; and
- the programme has to be marketed to the consumers.

5.13 Conclusion

This chapter provided a general overview of Employee Assistance Programmes. The next chapter will focus on the role and adaptation of EAPs in a university as a work setting.