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EFFICACY TESTING OF A WORK-BASED SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOR TEACHERS IN THE NORTH WEST PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

ABSTRACT

Teachers face increased workplace challenges in South Africa. Through a process of intervention research, this study aimed to develop and evaluate the efficacy of a work-based support programme for teachers. Maslow's hierarchy of needs was adopted as the theoretical framework informing both programme design and evaluation. Teachers (n = 10) were recruited through simple random sampling in the North West Province, South Africa. Qualitative data were collected through focus group discussions before and after exposure to the programme. Data were thematically analysed. Pre-exposure findings supported existing literature that states that teachers face numerous malleable workplace challenges such as learner indiscipline, parental disengagement, overcrowded classrooms, considerable administrative work and burnout. Post-exposure findings indicated that the programme mitigated teachers' perceived weaknesses and seems to have enabled them to cope with and manage their workplace challenges. It is concluded that the programme facilitated a process to enable participants to navigate towards self-actualisation and reaching their full potential in the work environment. Recommendations are offered for the further implementation of the programme and in addressing work-based challenges experienced by South African teachers.

Keywords: *Efficacy testing; intervention research; qualitative research; teachers; workplace challenges; North West Province.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a social phenomenon and an important institution with unique processes and characteristics in every society. It is through the process of education that the course of imparting knowledge, skills and values continues from one generation to the next. The Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) of the Department of Basic Education (henceforth referred to as DBE) (2016) recognises teachers as employees of the state (excluding governing body appointed teachers). The task of the teacher as an educator, is not just to teach content-based conceptual knowledge, but also to understand the (work-based) challenges and be well-equipped to cope with

such challenges (Corzo & Contreras, 2011). Abonyi (2014) commented that the system that produces teachers is just pushing them into the labour market without preparing them for emerging workplace challenges.

In South Africa, teachers have to cope with demands, such as learners from neighbouring countries, an excessive workload, the defacement of school properties, learner indiscipline, lack of parental involvement, lack of resources and an increase in the number of learners per classroom (Freeks, 2016; Vandeyar, 2010).

Overcrowded classrooms and inadequate teaching resources characterise the realities that South African teachers have to face daily (West & Meier, 2020). Isingoma (2014) identified that overcrowding occurs despite the DBE's highest approved learner-teacher ratio for South African primary schools being 40:1 (Motshekga, 2012). A study by Dehaloo (2011) established that South African teachers were dissatisfied because of excessive administration and assessment associated with overcrowded classrooms. In addition, Khumalo and Mji (2014) found that the vast majority of South African schools, especially those in township areas where overcrowding is a concern, lack resources such as teaching materials. In some instances, teachers resort to using their own funds to ensure that additional teaching materials are made available (Sedibe, 2011).

What makes resources even scarcer is the fact that school properties, particularly in the township areas, regularly fall prey to vandalism which is mostly committed by the school learners (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Teachers appear justified in fearing for their safety, with the consequence that the learning process is stymied by the need to deal with this unruly behaviour. Teachers in South African schools not only battle with the challenge of vandalism but also with other problems related to learner discipline as highlighted next.

The most prevalent forms of learner indiscipline include talking without permission, teasing other learners, truancy, non-completion of given tasks, verbal attacks on other learners and teachers and the use of drugs (Pijoos, 2018). In some instances, teachers carry weapons to school to protect themselves against learners (Freeks, 2016). Serame *et al.* (2013) indicate that the level of discipline in some schools in South Africa is far from satisfactory and that problems with discipline in the North West Province (henceforth referred to as NWP) are more serious than the international norm dictates.

Manamela (2015) has linked the lack of discipline among learners in public schools to lack of parental involvement. The current review of available literature has yielded a considerable amount of information regarding parent disengagement at farm, rural and urban schools. Maluleke (2009) specifically mentions that there is a lack of parental involvement at pre-primary, primary and secondary schools in the Vhembe District, Limpopo Province. Similar findings were made by Matshe (2014) in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District in the NWP.

Previous studies reiterate that teachers are not adequately prepared to manage the aforementioned challenges (Lumadi, 2008). Badugela (2012) specifically posits that South African teachers are confronted with such enormous educational burdens that their skills and knowledge no longer match the new demands. Jackson and Rothmann (2005) observed that teachers in public schools in South Africa experience high levels of exhaustion as a result of workplace challenges.

From the aforementioned, it is evident that teachers in the North West Department of Education and Sports Development (henceforth referred to as the NWPDoE) need to cope with

a plethora of work-based challenges necessitating the development and efficacy testing of a support programme for them. However, a holistic work-based programme could not be identified (Moloantoa, 2019). The concept "holistic programme" outlines all pragmatic procedures relating to accessibility, retailing and intervention steps as well as making challenge-specific intervention materials available. The following three are examples of programmes that did not fulfil the requirements for a holistic programme based on their narrow scope. The Resilient Educators support programme developed by Theron *et al*. (2008) aim to enable teachers to navigate towards resilience in an HIV and AIDS altered teaching milieu. The Model for Teacher Support, developed by Eloff *et al*. (2001), was developed to enable teachers to cope with stress in inclusive education. The Job Demand Resources Model of Montgomery, Mostert and Jackson (2005) address stress and burnout amongst teachers. Hence, a work-based support (WBS) programme for teachers in the NWP was developed through the implementation of the first three steps of the Intervention Research (IR) process proposed by Fraser and Galinsky (2010). The adopted steps are as follows: (1) specifying the problem and programme theories; (2) designing programme materials and (3) refining and confirming programme components in efficacy tests. These steps allowed the authors to determine the workplace challenges confronting teachers across the NWPDoE. The programme was exclusively tested (during Step 3) in the NWP, as it enabled the authors to determine the efficacy of the programme in a province with urban and rural school communities within the South African context.

Reporting on the details of all three steps of the IR process concerning qualitative and quantitative data is beyond the scope of this paper. During Step 1 of IR, the qualitative phase adopted the collective case study to solicit in-depth views from the key informants (n = 16, four school principals from each of the four districts in the NWP as key informants) regarding teachers' workplace challenges. This phase was complemented by a survey design, as a quantitative research design, to obtain information from the teachers (n=281) in the NWPDoE recruited from four districts through a process of stratified random sampling in order to further understand the challenges confronting them. In Step 2, programme materials were developed leading to the design and development of the programme manual. However, this article specifically focuses on the qualitative data collected during Step 3 – the efficacy tests of the WBS programme. Hence, the aim of this article is to report on teachers' experience of the efficacy of this WBS programme in addressing their coping needs in the NWPDoE, More specifically, the study endeavoured to answer the following overarching research question: *How effective is the WBS programme in addressing teachers' coping needs in the NWPDoE?*

Firstly, an overview of the WBS programme is offered, followed by the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Thereafter, the research methods as well as the findings and discussion will follow. The article ends with a comparison of the pre- and post-exposure data, conclusion and recommendations.

2. WORK-BASED SUPPORT PROGRAMME

This WBS programme was designed after an extensive needs assessment (Step 1 of IR) (Fraser *et al*., 2009) across the NWP. The findings of the needs assessment were synthesised into five sets of malleable indicators to be addressed through a WBS programme. Malleable indicators involve those challenges that can be modified when exposed to an intervention, such as the WBS programme (Fraser *et al*., 2009). The malleable indicators were as follows: learner-related challenges (e.g. learner indiscipline, immigrant learners), school-related challenges (e.g. overcrowded classrooms, teacher workload), management-related

challenges (e.g. poor leadership from principals and departmental heads), family-related challenges (e.g. lack of parental involvement) and community-related challenges (e.g. crime and drugs in communities) (Moloantoa, 2019). The process ultimately determined the contents of the programme (in the format of a manual) that are synoptically outlined in Table 1.

Table 1:   A synoptic overview of WBS programme for teachers in the NWP

Programme sessions	Description	Objectives	Core practice activities
Session A	Face-to-face session Duration: 45 minutes	Assist teachers to establish a mental road map that should answer the following two questions: Why is it important to work through this manual? How will this manual advance new knowledge or new ways of managing my workplace challenges?	Teachers are provided with step-by-step instructions on how to use the manual. Teachers are asked to discuss their workplace challenges and to provide the facilitator with their expectations concerning the programme manual. Teachers are introduced to the process of engaging in different self-help strategies. In the end, teachers are asked to review and reflect on what they have learnt during the briefing session.
Session B	Self-help sessions Duration: 8-12 weeks	The manual and materials aim to: enable teachers to accomplish greater effectiveness in their work-life balance; equip teachers with self-help/self-actualisation skills to cope and/or manage the specific workplace challenges effectively; and provide additional information regarding the nature and possibilities of professional help available for those whose problems do not yield to self-help.	The challenges to be addressed through the WBS programme for teachers include the following: managing an overcrowded classroom; strategies to deal with workload; dealing with learner indiscipline in the classroom; benefits of and strategies to improve parent involvement; enhancing peer group relations; and prevention of social welfare problems, such as child abuse and neglect.

As depicted in Table 1 above, the programme manual (as the result of Step 2 of IR) (Fraser *et al.*, 2009) comprises an overview and session-by-session content that explains session objectives, important materials and activities that may be used to reinforce key content. Session A encompassed an introductory face-to-face interaction. Participants were provided with step-by-step instructions relating to the contents of the programme manual. In Session B, participants were expected to take the programme manual home and work through the strategies provided on their own for a period not exceeding eight weeks. Fraser *et al.* (2009) suggest to programme manual designers that the duration of the intervention must

be determined to guarantee compliance. The programme design and efficacy testing were underpinned by a theory.

3. MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Maslow's hierarchy of needs informed the programme design and the efficacy testing. The theory has relevance to the field of education as it posits that every individual has the potential to, and also the drive, to move up the hierarchy towards a level of realising his/her full potential (Maslow, 1943). The theory provides authors with a reminder and framework that teachers are less likely to perform at their full potential if their basic needs are unmet. Maslow (1943) conceived that human needs could be split and prioritised into five levels. These five levels are physiological, safety/security, belonging/social affiliation, self-esteem and self-actualisation needs. Maslow's (1943) basic position is that this five-step (level) archetype can be split into deficiency needs and growth needs and that the individual's needs usually emerge only when more prepotent needs have been relatively gratified. The first four steps are frequently alluded to as deficiency needs (lower level needs) and the final step is referred to as growth needs (higher level needs). The individual's actions are customarily pointed towards realising the succeeding cluster of needs that is yet to be fulfilled. The growth needs persist to be discerned by an individual and grow powerful the moment they become engaged. If the growth needs have been practically fulfilled, the individual may be capable of achieving the highest level, known as self-actualisation. Engler (1985) describes self-actualisation as a desire to fulfil one's highest potential through a full exploration of one's talents and capabilities (potentialities). Every individual has the desire and the potential to proceed up the hierarchy towards self-actualisation. Aruma and Hanachor (2017) state that the focus of self-actualisation is on the development of human potential with the ultimate aim of stimulating enhanced performance, competency, efficiency and effective service delivery.

The model in Figure 1 below demonstrates that the individual as a totality/whole strives towards self-actualisation. Secondly, it asserts that teachers in South Africa are confronted with relentless workplace challenges that are potentially affecting their deficiency and growth needs. Thirdly, the model suggests that some of the teachers are unsuccessful in realising their peak career experiences. Lastly, the model indicates that the WBS programme offers teachers an opportunity to embrace new experiences, adopt new views and expertise.
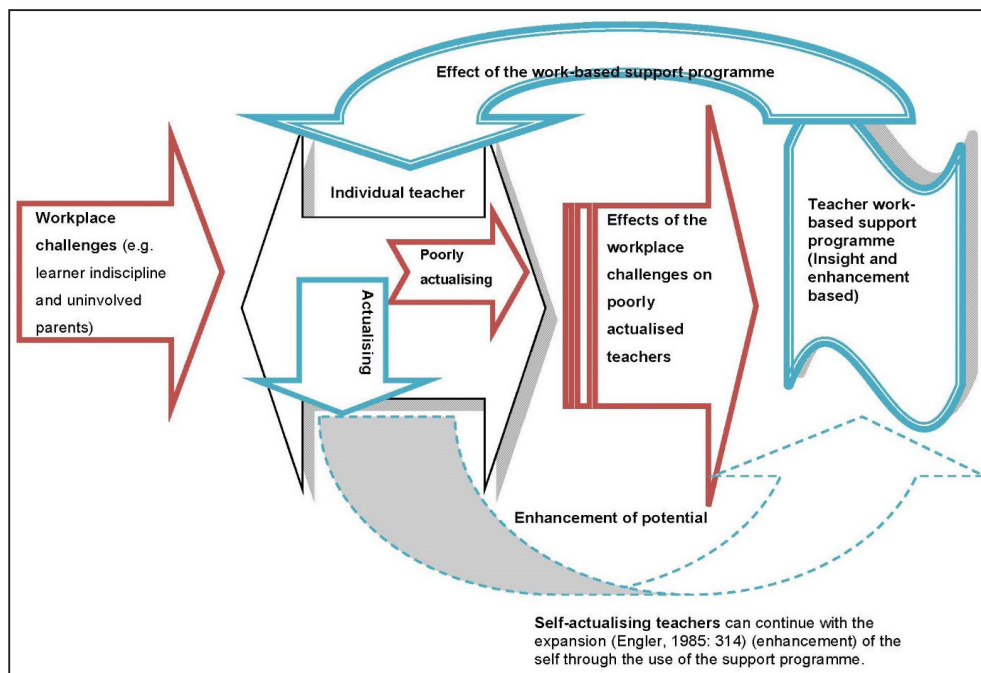
Figure 1: Model presentation of a WBS programme

The model in Figure 1 above is established upon the premise that a desire for the highest needs in the hierarchy is "not a fixed state, but a process of development which does not end" (Heylighen, 1992: 41). The WBS programme aims to identify the workplace challenges experienced by teachers and features as a "vehicle" to actualise/empower themselves and become self-actualised and achieving their full potential in the workplace.

4.   RESEARCH METHODS

4.1 Research approach and design

This article focuses on Step 3 of this IR process. Step 3 called for a series of studies to refine and confirm programme components through efficacy testing (Fraser *et al.*, 2009). Although a mixed methods approach (i.e. convergent mixed methods design) was adopted to undertake Step 3 of the IR process (Ivankova, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2020), this article focuses only on the qualitative data. Qualitative data were collected pre- and post-exposure to the WBS programme. The collected data highlighted areas in the programme manual that needed refinement, adaptation and expansion (Fraser *et al.*, 2009). Rubin and Babbie (2017) opine that qualitative data are often the most helpful during formative evaluations (such as Step 3 of IR) to inform the further refinement of the programme for test effectiveness in different practice settings (i.e. Step 4 of IR) (Fraser & Galinksy, 2010).

4.2 Participants

The study population was teachers at the NWPDoE. Simple random sampling in the Moses Kotane District enabled the authors to recruit 20 participants (i.e. 10 experimental group participants and 10 control group participants) for the efficacy test of the programme

(Babbie, 2016). It is important to note that all 20 teachers agreed to participate and none of them dropped out.

4.3 Data collection

Pre- and post-exposure focus group discussions were only conducted with the experimental group members. Interview guides were developed for data collection. The pre-exposure focus group discussion aimed to gather two sets of information, namely the workplace challenges faced by the participants and how those participants could expect to benefit from the programme. The post-exposure discussion guide considered the impact of the programme as reported by participants as well as their suggestion for the improvement of the programme manual (Fraser *et al.*, 2009).

4.4 Data analysis and trustworthiness

In analysing the data, the six phases of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were implemented. Different strategies were followed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Credibility was ensured by utilising member checking, as the interpretation of the findings was confirmed with several participants (Anney, 2014). Thick descriptions are provided to convey the authentic voice of the participants and to ensure credibility and transferability (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). To comply with confirmability, the first author and an independent coder analysed the data independently and had a consensus meeting (i.e. observer triangulation) (Lietz & Zayas, 2010).

4.5 Ethical considerations

The study received permission from the NWPDoE and ethics clearance by the Research Ethics Committee of the university before implementation (Ref no.: GW20160918HS). Ethical considerations, such as informed written consent, no harm to respondents and the maintenance of confidentiality, were adhered to (Babbie, 2016).

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are outlined in two sections: pre- and post-exposure to the programme. The findings relating to the workplace challenges facing teachers are organised in themes and sub-themes to allow an unequivocal understanding of the problem. Another six themes were extracted from the post-exposure data focusing on the efficacy testing of the programme. Thereafter a section follows with a comparison of the two sets of data against the background of the theory underpinning the study.

5.1 Themes pre-exposure to the programme

The responses were grouped into themes, namely learner-related, family-related, school-related, teacher-related and community-related challenges as well as the expected efficacy of the programme.

Theme 1: Learner-related challenges

Teachers were exposed to innumerable forms of learner-related challenges. They experienced the challenges of having to deal with learner indiscipline. The following are only a few of the similar statements:

> Bullying is common among learners. Learners are aggressive and bully others.

> Some learners bring weapons to the school just to intimidate others and us as teachers.
> We have very angry children here.

Disruptive behaviour has become a great concern, as it renders many schools ineffective in teaching and learning. From the above excerpts, it is clear that participants concurred that teachers encounter learners who are showing disruptive behavioural tendencies. Disruptive behaviour by learners has the potential to leave teachers with the perception that they are incompetent and inefficient in their teaching (*cf.* Aruma & Hanachor, 2017). Empirical studies in South Africa (Freeks, 2016), and in the NWP in particular (Tlhapi, 2015), confirm that the problem of indiscipline is escalating in schools.

Theme 2: Family-related challenges

Parental engagement is a combination of dedication and active contribution on the side of the parent or caregiver to the school. Teachers have to deal with situations where some parents/caregivers are uninvolved with and unsupportive of their children concerning basic psycho-social and educational needs. The family-related challenges are reflected in the comments recorded below:

> Teachers face the challenge of the lack of involvement by parents… The majority of learners come to school dirty. Teachers take it upon themselves to bath these learners.

> We have pregnant learners who stay with their older boyfriends and at time even miss their final examinations ... we delegate Life Orientation teachers to go and look for them as parents.

Another participant reported a concern about orphaned and vulnerable learners as follows: "This is a poverty-stricken area… most orphaned learners come to school hungry". Much has been written about orphans and vulnerable children with regard to their education and living conditions and these were confirmed by the comments forwarded by the participants (Mwoma & Pillay, 2016). Participants were again confronted with a situation where learners simply become disengaged with their school activities because of pregnancy and teachers perpetually have to contend with the matter of pregnant learners.

Theme 3: School-related challenges

The participants were also concerned about what appeared to be the three major school-related challenges currently facing public schools in the NWP, namely overcrowding, an administrative overload and lack of resources. Participants commented as follows: "...teachers have about 80 learners per class. All in all, the administrative overload has become the worst of the worst". Participants continued to mention that "[w]e have a shortage of resources in our schools. It is indeed difficult to maintain a no-fee school."

The above responses demonstrate that the participants view teachers in the NWPDoE as being overloaded with administrative work resulting from the over-enrolment of learners. The DBE (2015) reports that the enrolment of learners is generally very high in lower grades. The NWPDoE (2017) concurs that the average number of learners per classroom exceeds the national average by 3.4%. The discussed school-related challenges impede the potential of teachers to navigate towards self-actualisation, because they feel ineffective in their service delivery (*cf.* Aruma & Hanachor, 2017).

Theme 4: Teacher-related challenges

Teachers experience an inability to cope emotionally and physically with workplace demands. Badugela (2012) concedes that teachers are confronted with such a range of educational demands that their skills no longer match the new challenges. Participants commented as follows:

> Burnout is worse... I have a colleague who resigned as a result of burnout.

> If you resign, you will never come back. But those who come back are doing so purely because of financial problems...

> Teachers have no time to relax and unwind. It is too much for us.

From the above comments, it is clear that participants concurred that teachers are experiencing a great degree of burnout. They considered the inordinate workload to be the fundamental cause of their burnout, stress and lack of quality time with family members. Workplace challenges affecting teachers' emotional and physical needs (i.e. deficiency needs) hinder them from achieving their full potential in the workplace (Maslow, 1943). Montgomery *et al.* (2005) specifically reported that one-third of teachers in the NWP suffer from a high degree of emotional burnout and stress.

Participants were also concerned about the extent to which their weaknesses act as barriers to healthy work relationships. One participant expressed this view as follows:

> In the case of teachers, they are stubborn.... In the best sense, the quality of our work relationships is meant to contribute to an "all-hands-on-deck" mentality. Poor quality work relationships divert attention from results and create negativity.

Steyn, De Klerk and Du Plessis (2004: 59) aptly comment that "sound, interpersonal relations depend very much on ethically sound behaviour". Lack of social connection in the workplace put the navigation of each teacher towards achieving their full potential at risk (Maslow, 1943). Participants appear to be concerned that, at times, teachers display a negative work ethic, show inappropriate values and conduct themselves in a manner that does not enhance the teaching profession.

Theme 5: Community-related challenges

Working with immigrant learners is a growing phenomenon in the NWPDoE. The challenges of working with immigrant learners include linguistic problems. Statements such as the following indicate the responses by the participants: "Most of the learners experience barriers to learning due to language problems. Their language is not used in our schools."

There is an indication from the participants that immigrant learners find it difficult to speak or read the predominant language of their host schools. The mother tongue of the majority of these learners is different from the language spoken in the host school. Vandeyar (2010) proposed different approaches for "blending" immigrant learners with the rest of the learners in terms of acknowledging diversity, practising tolerance, respecting human rights and engaging meaningfully with the immigrant parents.

Theme 6: Expected efficacy of the programme

Participants stressed that developing a teacher-specific support programme may give teachers tools to meet the growing challenges they encounter. For example, participants commented as follows: "There is a need for a programme to help teachers to attend to their challenges."

The quote above suggests that there is a need to intervene in the challenges faced by teachers in the NWPDoE. A greater number of participants felt that, on the national level, the DBE should introduce specific support programmes and that all roles relevant to those teachers should become part of the design of such programmes. Participants concur that a programme should also empower teachers to become proactive in addressing workplace challenges. In the next section, the results gathered from the efficacy testing of the WBS programme are presented.

5.2 Themes post-exposure to the programme

During the post-exposure focus group discussion, participants indicated in more detail how the programme assisted them in addressing workplace challenges.

Theme 1: Programme serves as an awareness-raising tool

Participants contextualised their comments in terms of the programme's ability to provide them with an awareness of and insight into their past ineffective ways of handling workplace challenges. The following statements represent some of the comments:

> The programme helped me to consider the views of teachers and their perceptions...

> I now try to avoid misunderstandings when new ideas are presented by dividing the basic structure of those ideas into small segments and responding appropriately.

After exposure to the programme, participants began to realise that the question of whether workplace challenges will occur is no longer relevant. Instead, the issue was how teachers responded to and coped with the challenges that they were confronted with daily. Although challenges are a fact of teachers' work life, they can no longer be content simply to let those challenges occur. They must be aware of how to plan, direct and control those challenges effectively in an attempt to achieve self-actualisation.

Theme 2: Programme counteracts decreasing motivation

Participants reported that the programme promoted a healthy work-health balance which improved their motivation. Participants elaborated on their views as follows:

> I am starting to look at my work differently now. I wish some teachers would be exposed to this manual.

> Learnt about techniques to maintain good physical and social well-being and to act resiliently.

After exposure to the programme manual, participants indicated that, by going through a series of strategies that constituted several steps towards addressing workplace challenges, they felt that they gained the necessary "tools" for enhancing work-health through self-modification (self-direction) of thought and behaviour.

Participants recounted that the WBS programme manual implementation had a therapeutic effect, especially during the introductory face-to-face session (i.e. Session A). Participants also commented that "The face-to-face session allowed us to let off steam".

From the extracts above, it is evident that participants were relieved that they were able to bring into the open their discontent caused by workplace challenges. They were able to bring to the fore the suppressed negative emotions resulting from those challenges. Peters, Overall and Jamieson (2014) warn that engaging in emotional suppression has negative consequences, such as harming professional working relationships. Conversely, expressing those emotions is crucial for overall well-being (Peters *et al.*, 2014) and towards achieving full potential in the workplace (Maslow, 1943).

Theme 3: Programme breaks down barriers between staff groups

Participants indicated that the programme provided lessons on matters relating to building healthy professional relationships. Participants expressed their opinions as follows:

> …I should be willing to approach my colleagues and discuss my concerns...

> I have learnt that, when you relate well with people around you, you will be fulfilled and productive.

As can be noted, participants were feeling confident about trying to build and maintain healthy and harmonious relations. In fact, social affiliation is an important building block in navigating towards your full potential as a teacher (Maslow, 1943). Participants reported that they have gained strategies to improve relations with their fellow colleagues. Individuals need to get along well with their fellow workers for a positive ethos in workplaces and for healthy interpersonal relationships (Obakpolo, 2015).

Theme 4: Programme empowers teachers to handle all structures with an interest in education

An education partnership represents the collective activities by various stakeholders with each participating member making a meaningful contribution to the organisation (Steyn *et al.*, 2004). The NWPDoE (2017) states that schools must promote working relationships among a range of public services and supporting structures. Before participating in the programme, participants identified that they used many ineffective strategies to resolve the challenges they encountered when dealing with various stakeholders within the field of education. After participating in the programme, participants realised that a healthy relationship with other social structures is important in creating a positive impact on individual teachers' work. Participants' remarks are reported below:

> … in addition to the training provided to both teachers and parents as members of the Cluster Child-care Coordinators (CCCs) and School Based Support Teams (SSTs). I am using the strategies from this book [manual] to improve my relationship with parents and vulnerable learners.

> I have learnt that learners have something positive to contribute to classroom activities.

Participants reported that they gained the following insight from the programme: it is important to work on building proper relationships with all structures, especially parents and

learners, and also to learn to be flexible, so that other structures can contribute freely towards providing solutions to various challenges within the education sector.

Theme 5: Programme promotes appreciation for ethnic diversity

Learners represent a wide range of divergent conditions. Participants reported that the programme offered practical tips on how to appreciate diversity and to create a sense of belonging within classrooms. The following quotation is representative of the views of the participants: "… programme manual helps a lot for teachers ... how to deal with immigrant learners, as this has been a challenge for several years."

South Africa is experiencing the entry of streams of legal and undocumented migrants from outside the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and new ethnic constellations within (Vandeyar, 2010). Participants concurred that the programme enabled those involved in the teaching profession to realise that the classroom is the place where both teachers and learners should show tolerance, especially to those who are different from them.

Theme 6: Programme could advance the principle of total quality management

Total quality management (TQM) represents an integrated effort designed to improve customer satisfaction and organisational excellence (Abu & Umana, 2016). Participants felt that the programme could contribute to a general effective management of the school. The following remarks represent participants' views:

> …I suggest to school principals to read this manual to get closer to understanding how to address different issues.

> The programme manual could provide additional information to the School Management Team [SMT] regarding the overall management of the school.

Participants considered that the programme could empower the SMT to manage the school efficiently. As school principals and teachers learn new skills, they may become effective in their roles.

Two sets of qualitative data presented above are now compared below to deduce the strengths (and limitations) of the WBS programme in addressing the coping needs of teachers.

6. COMPARISON OF PRE- AND POST-EXPOSURE DATA

Overall, the IR entails a critical interplay of literature review, theory, needs assessments, the development of and efficacy testing of the WBS programme. Pre- and post-exposure findings are now compared using themes.

Theme 1: Stakeholder relationship

Three workplace challenges emerged related to fellow workers, learners and parents. After exposure to the programme, participants reported that they were empowered with strategies to engage meaningfully with other stakeholders in order to fully intervene in the challenges faced by teachers in the NWPDoE. Firstly, it was perceptible that they were beginning to gain ground over their own weaknesses which were acting as barriers to healthy work relationships. Furthermore, participants gave feedback that the programme provided them with a range of skills necessary to manage learner-related challenges such as indiscipline and bullying. Participants also held the view that since parental involvement is paramount to promoting

effective teaching and learning, they have acquired the necessary strategies to encourage parents to become involved with school-related activities. The DBE (2018) also emphasises the importance of meaningful interaction between the teachers, parents and learners in order to sustain credible operations.

Theme 2: Social welfare issues presenting in a classroom

It is comprehensible from the data set that social welfare issues affecting the learners remain at the fore of teachers' workplace challenges. These challenges include learners who lack proper adult care, orphaned and vulnerable children and teenage pregnancy. Given this context, participants indicated that teachers carried the additional responsibility of caring for these learners to facilitate effective teaching and learning. The WBS programme suggested strategies on dealing with the challenges. Post-exposure data suggest the WBS programme provided teachers with additional strategies on dealing with the social welfare challenges of learners.

Theme 3: Management of the school

Only one challenge emerged from the data under the theme, namely leadership challenges. After exposure to the WBS programme, participants displayed sensitivity to potential changes that may be brought about by the programme. The participants were convinced that what they acquired from the programme may, to some degree, be used to influence the management of the school in terms of successful leadership. Successful leadership involves a process where all partners (i.e. SMTs and teachers) are prepared to work collaboratively on problem identification and resolution to increase overall management of the school.

Theme 4: Work–health balance (WHB)

Pre-exposure to the WBS programme, participants reported that they experienced an inability to cope emotionally and physically with workplace demands. WHB represents a process of prioritising physical and mental well-being for the purpose of improving work productivity (Gragnano *et al.*, 2015). After exposure to the programme, participants reported that the WBS programme raised their awareness of and insight into their past ineffective ways of solving their workplace challenges and improved their level of motivation to deal with challenges.

From the comparison of the data, it seems that the programme enabled teachers to realise they have the potential to cope with learner-related, teachers-related, family-related and community-related challenges. Considered from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the WBS programme enabled participants to identify and ultimately cope with their workplace challenges (i.e. deficiency needs). Furthermore, the programme offered participants a "vehicle" to actualise/empower themselves and navigate towards self-actualisation and aim to achieve their full potential in the workplace (*cf.* Aruma & Hanachor, 2017).

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The authors are aware that the data reported on is of limited scope, although permissible within the ambit of qualitative research. The programme was designed, implemented and evaluated by the first author. Although the findings originated from only one province in South Africa, the efforts to ensure the trustworthiness of the study elevate the potential of the conclusions and recommendations originating from this study towards application in other provinces in South Africa.

Due to workplace challenges, teachers' work has become more complex and demanding. Teachers have to cope with demands such as learner indiscipline, large class sizes, lack of parental involvement, considerable administrative work and burnout. The numerous challenges identified exert a negative influence and lead to undesirable outcomes for teachers. From the extant literature, it was identified that there is a hiatus in terms of a holistic WBS programmes for South African teachers. Hence, a WBS programme was designed and the efficacy thereof tested through a process of IR. More specifically, the efficacy testing of the WBS programme (Step 3 of IR) facilitated the refinement of the programme through efficacy trials (Fraser *et al.*, 2009). Based on the data, the authors conclude that after exposure to the programme manual, participants reported that they had gained the necessary skills to cope with and address their workplace challenges. Holistically seen from the themes identified when comparing the pre- and post-exposure data, it is concluded that the programme manual succeeded in providing teachers with strategies to deal with the identified malleable challenges and to navigate towards self-actualisation and reaching their full potential.

The following recommendations are offered to relevant stakeholders (i.e. the DBE and the NWPDoE) to manage the workplace challenges in the education sector:

- Sustained efforts are necessary to strengthen the capacities of teachers to find and deal with workplace challenges as they occur. Adopting the WBS programme at the school level could represent such efforts.

- Professional development is part of the work of all teachers and is important for their long-term career development. Engagement in professional development could also be directed through means that seek to discuss hindrances that undermine the professional work and growth of teachers. The WBS programme could be registered as part of teacher training for those teachers involved in employee health and wellness programmes to ease the introduction of the programmes to fellow teachers.

- The DBE needs to develop and enforce education policies linked to priority issues such as learner indiscipline, large classroom sizes, lack of resources and heavy teacher workload, by drawing on current experience, but also by giving more structured support. A WBS programme cannot effectively address the mentioned challenges.

- Teacher well-being should firmly be placed at the centre of all efforts to improve the quality of education. The NWPDoE, school principals, teacher unions, each individual teacher, the South African Council for Educators (SACE) and the Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA) should each play a significant role in this regard.

- Future research should evaluate the WBS programme across the NWP in different practice settings (i.e. Step 4 of IR). The programme should also be implemented and evaluated across South Africa to ultimately be disseminated to all schools to enable teachers to reach their full potential amidst the challenges posed by their role and task as teachers.

The WBS programme discussed in this article represents an innovative intervention to capacitate teachers to reach their full potential in the workplace and subsequently offers a humble contribution to enable South Africa to achieve Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, namely to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education" (United Nations, 2015).

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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