

Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) sometimes called Wellness Programmes stem from the late 19th century when organisations employed so-called welfare secretaries to help workers with alcohol use and abuse (Occupational Alcohol Programmes – OAPS) and other social problems (for instance, family issues usually connected to illness and death). In the 1980s, Employee Enhancement Programmes (EEPs) were formed which emphasised holistic health and stress related problems. Fundamentally, these were aimed at promoting better production and workers had little or no say in how they were used or designed. Employee Assistance (or Wellness) programmes adopted a broad brush approach in the 1960's encompassing all aspects of health, familial problems, mental health and financial and legal problems, although they did not become commonplace until the early 1990s. In South Africa EAPs have received little attention from unions, workers, management and other stakeholders (for instance, local communities) often rendering them under-utilised. Various wellness programmes exist in the country most are under-utilised by workers owing to their association with Human Resources Management (workers feel their private information is not confidential even if the EAP is out-sourced). Another problem is that all stakeholders, most importantly workers, are not consulted on how an EAP should operate. When EAPs are introduced to an organisation it should always be within the company (as a community in itself) the local environment (community) as well as the broader country context (system). Drawing on different models of psychology namely, social action, mental health, organisational and ecological we assessed an EAP using a multi-method research design in an exploratory manner. Process evaluation in a systemic framework comprised of EAP intervention measurements during an 18-month period. Data were collected using EAP intervention surveys which utilised Likert scales; from focus groups and interviews during and after workshops introducing the

concept of an EAP and consulting workers and management on what they wanted. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) underpinned the construction of questions for focus groups and interviews as it focuses on desired outcomes and builds on present strengths. The sample was all 500 employees. Continuous time-series data were compiled from weekly reports during an 18-month period after the programme was implemented. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and the Chi-Square statistic (to test for any association between nominal variables). Qualitative data from interviews (and open –ended survey questions was analysed using Thematic Content Analysis (TCA). Results revealed that the EAP was very well utilised because employees stated that they had ‘helped’ in the process of designing it. Psychological services were utilised by 50% of the workforce in the first 6 months on various issues and 60% in the first year. All race groups utilised the programme with African Black groups using it the most comprehensively. For instance, they utilised the EAP for marital, career, trauma, HIV/AIDS, stress, depression, gender issues and gambling. On the post-EAP implementation survey employees felt that the company had ‘made change work for us in a practical and positive manner.’ Financial and legal services were included in the EAP mix and were out-sourced to local professionals which also proved successful. Basically, the EAP was sustainable and successful.