

Adolph Kirsten

Research Article Title:

Exploring the use of Workshops for Educator Support Development

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Abstract

This research aims to explore how the use of workshops can support and develop lecturers to manage and support at-risk students identified in a Higher Certificate programme at a private higher education institution. A quantitative research approach is applied within a post-positivism paradigm. The survey design applicable is cross-sectional survey design and the data collection method is group administration of questionnaires. The target population consists of selected lecturers teaching on a Higher Certificate level. Six respondents participated in this study and each completed the questionnaire consisting of fifteen questions. The analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires confirms the importance of these workshops for educator support development. This is supported through the findings which indicate that the key goals and objectives of the workshop have been achieved and that the lecturers that have participated are now better equipped to manage and support at-risk students.

1. Introduction to the research

1.1 Purpose of the research

The purpose of the research is to determine how a workshop as a training intervention can assist lecturers to support and manage at-risk students in a Higher Certificate programme at a private higher education institution. In this research, at-risk students refer to students who have a high probability of failing or dropping out (Horton, 2015). Within the private higher education institution, at-risk students were cited in a results analysis report as a concern as this caused low throughput rates (CAMS Report, 2016). The consequence of these low throughput rates is directly linked to the decrease of graduate outputs in that programme which impacts negatively on the institution's graduate output.

1.2 Background to the problem

At-risk students are not only a problem at the private higher education institution where the research was conducted, but is a national problem at higher education institutions in South Africa. Nkosi (2015) emphasises the dilemma of high drop-out rates within higher education institutions. The author refers to a study conducted by the Council of Higher Education in 2013, which

indicates that students performed poorly at tertiary level since schools do not prepare them properly for the tertiary environment. According to Scott et al (2007), cited in Murray (2014), up to 25% of students drop out in their first year of study. Also cited in the article, a 2013 report released by the Council of Higher Education, revealed that only one in four students graduated from a contact-based tertiary institution.

Van Zyl (2015), cited in Nkosi (2015) emphasises the fact that half of the 18% of matrics that register at tertiary institutions nationwide, drop out. The author indicates that on average between 50% and 60% of students drop out during their first year of study. Van Zyl (2015) proposes that tertiary institutions should do more to assist at-risk students in their first year of study. He said that students should seek help from their lecturers, implying that lecturers should be better equipped to assist and support at-risk students. Research by Lewin and Mawoyo (2014) also emphasise that throughput rates are still a serious concern in higher education. The authors refer to recent studies in the CHE Report (2013), which indicates that only 27% of undergraduate students in higher education complete their studies within the minimum time allowed and that only half of the students who goes into higher education will probably graduate.

Within the context of the above, the aim of this research is to assist lecturers in supporting and managing at-risk students effectively. A workshop was conducted to explore methods to support and manage at-risk students. The motivation for selecting a workshop as a method of developing skills to support at-risk students, was because it creates intervention pathways on how to identify and resolve common classroom academic problems (Wright, n.d.). The workshop assist lecturers to develop academic intervention plans to assist students in reaching their full potential. The research attempted to determine whether the lecturers have gained value from the workshop and felt better equipped to assist at-risk students in embarking on an academic career.

2. Formulation of the problem

2.1 Justification of the problem

After analysis of the throughput rates of students in their first year for a Higher Certificate programme, it was evident that there was a significant problem. Statistics from the private higher education institution (CAMS Report, 2016) show that the throughput rate for the programme has been low for the past two years and has dropped significantly in 2016. The throughput rate for the first semester in 2016 was 38%, which dropped from 2015 from a throughput rate of 44% (CAMS

Report, 2015). This was also a decrease from 2014 when the throughput rate was 54% (CAMS Report, 2014). These statistics indicate that a problem does exist, and the low throughput rate implies that students have a high probability of failing or dropping out. The focus of the research was to use a workshop to guide lecturers from the programme to offer a more immediate solution by identifying ways in which at-risk students can be supported and managed.

2.2 Research questions

According to Jansen in Maree et al. (2007) the reasons why a research question is needed is because firstly a good question directs the researcher to the relevant literacy resources and secondly it gives the researcher with a specific focus for the data collection.

The following research questions has been formulated to help improve the understanding of the research problem:

- In what way can a training intervention such as a workshop provide lecturers with the knowledge to support at-risk students in a Higher Certificate Programme?
- How would lecturers benefit from a training intervention such as a workshop to manage at-risk students in a Higher Certificate Programme?

2.3 Research objective

The objective of the research is to determine if a training intervention, such as a workshop for lecturers on how to manage and support at-risk students, will enable lecturers to support and manage at-risk students enrolled for a Higher Certificate programme.

3. Literature Review

a. Theoretical framework that provides detail on previous studies conducted which is similar in nature to the topic selected

According to Safron and Safron (1992) there is an increasing need for an intervention such as a workshop to educate lecturers in their effort to try and meet the complex needs of at-risk students. They have introduced a workshop to lecturers, with the aim to provide much needed information on at-risk students, as well as using this workshop as a collaboration tool to enable lecturers to work together on supporting and managing at risk students. Safron et al (1992) refers to a workshop as an intervention method to educate lecturers on how to support and manage at-risk

students. The lecturers are given information on at-risk students and they are encouraged to collaborate with each other and given the opportunity to develop intervention plans and strategies to assist at-risk students. At the end of the workshop these lecturers are equipped with enhanced knowledge and increased skills to help them manage at-risk students.

In addition to the above, Duke (1992) refers to an on-site in-service programme being used to train lecturers on how to intervene early in the academic year in terms of supporting students at-risk from failing or dropping out. There was a need identified for lecturers to learn how to support students who were experiencing problems. According to the author the goals set were to increase the willingness and capability of the lecturers to support at-risk students, as well as to get these lecturers to share their current knowledge obtained through previous workshops. The end goal was to minimise the numbers of students failing or dropping out. A process model focussing on student-based development, accompanied by an instructional assistance plan, was introduced to the lecturers through the on-site in-service programme and focussed on developing lecturers to support students, as well as focussing on lecturers collaborating to assess their own needs and to share information with each other. This provided the lecturers with a variety of interventions to support at-risk students.

A workshop held in 2014 at the University of KZN explored interventions targeting at-risk students (Mungroo, 2014). The workshop was hosted by the College of Humanities Teaching and Learning unit, as well as the by the School of Education and was led by Dr Catherine Gillespie, who is the associate Dean at Drake University in the United States. The focus of the workshop was on interventions targeting at-risk students based on factors causing them to fail or drop-out and assisting these students to succeed academically (Gillespie cited in Mungroo, 2014). According to Mungroo (2014) a lot of ideas, thoughts and suggestions were discussed, and the outcome of the workshop was extremely positive as it helped the lecturers in identifying the risk areas which they need to focus on to be able to manage at-risk students.

Caine (2000), reinforces the fact that a careful consideration of students' needs can help lecturers to select and implement the appropriate instructional methods, which will enable them to understand and help the students by lowering helplessness, creating self-confidence and developing self-efficacy with the students. The approach a lecturer uses can benefit students from stressful environments and help them to prepare for assessments. In this case, Caine (2000) was referring to the creative rehearsal approach (cited in Caine & Caine, 1997), which is the implementation of the most basic level of active processing. Caine (2000) applied this method in

her classroom and could help students in terms of self-confidence and self-efficacy. Byers (2009) emphasises the fact that the use of continuous diagnostic and formative assessments will assist both the lecturer and student to develop positive relationships and to improve student self-concept. He refers to an intervention programme which is based on direct, constructivist and contextually- based instruction, which is developed to meet the specific needs of at-risk students. According to Byers (2009), this programme focusses on helping at-risk students with problem-solving tasks and address memory and recall difficulties experienced by these students.

Heisserer (2002) proposes that lecturers should make huge efforts with their developmental plans to support at-risk students. The author also states that it is necessary for these lecturers to get proper training related to at-risk students. In this process, a needs assessment is done, which identifies the gaps and include the existing knowledge of lecturers. This is used to identify the relevant topics which is then included in a workshop for lecturers. Topics such as basic skill development, intervention programmes, student support, study groups, developing coping skills for problem solving and peer tutoring are included in these workshops. The purpose of this workshop is to provide the lecturers with the necessary tools to support and manage at-risk students, so that they can enhance their academic performance.

b. Key definitions related to the research

The following key definitions are related to this research and provide a better understanding of the key concepts on which this research study is based.

Throughput rate

The number of students in a programme who passed as a percentage of the total number of students who registered, including those students who did not obtain access into the final examinations (Reddy, 2002).

Training Intervention

A process such as a workshop where change is introduced into the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of people such as lecturers (Wright, n.d.).

Supporting at-risk students

Helping at-risk students to succeed in passing and reducing the probability for them to fail or drop-out (DeAngelis, 2012).

Managing at-risk students

Identifying and implementing specific classroom management strategies and structures that support at-risk students (Gonzalez et al, n.d.).

4. Research Methodology

a. Applicable research paradigm/ world view

The paradigm identified as most applicable to this research was post-positivism, as this approach allows for more interaction between the researcher and the participants (Willis, 2007). This approach is also based on survey research (Creswell, 2008). In this research, a workshop will be conducted with the lecturers, which will enable more interaction with them, where after they will be expected to complete a questionnaire, which is the survey method used.

According to Cook and Campbell (1979), post-positivism assumes that any part of the research is affected by several well-developed theories, including the one that is being tested. Post-positivism accepts quantitative research as a valid way of finding information on social life (Niglas, 2001). This approach develops objective knowledge about social patterns and the quality standards of this paradigm are objectivity, validity and reliability (Taylor and Milton, 2013), which are applicable to this study.

b. Quantitative research as the best option for the research

The quantitative research approach was applied, which is based on standardised methods to collect quantitative data and present it through statistical analysis as numerical data (Ary et al, 2006). The data was obtained from a selected subgroup or population (Maree et al., 2007). According to Harwell (2010) quantitative research is based on the approach where the researcher tries to optimise objectivity, reliability and generalizability. Maree et al. (2007) views that the three most important factors to take into consideration are objectivity, numerical data and generalisability. For the purposes of this research a quantitative approach was used to explore a specific problem and generalisability has been excluded as this was an exploratory study.

According to Davis in du Plooy-Cilliers et al (2014), exploratory research is based on obtaining new insights, identifying key concepts and key participants, to prioritise certain needs, identifying consequences of the research problem, confirming assumptions and to become familiar with unknown conditions. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) state that the purpose of exploratory study is to identify themes and ideas that can be used to design a quantitative component such as a questionnaire which is applicable to this study. Furthermore, the quantitative research design for this study was a non-experimental design, which explains things that have already happened, as well as to examine the relationships between them (Cohen et al, 2007). In this study, a training intervention such as workshop was explored to determine how this workshop could assist lecturers to support and manage at-risk students by means of a questionnaire.

c. Research design applicable to your research and a motivation for selecting this research design

The purpose of the survey design type is to select samples and to assess the status, opinions, beliefs and attitudes through a questionnaire from a known population (Cohen et al, 2001 cited in Maree (2007)). This applied to this research as it assessed the opinions, attitudes and beliefs of the lecturers teaching the at-risk students in a higher certificate programme. The survey design applicable in in this research was a cross-sectional survey design. According to du Plooy-Cilliers et al (2014) this design is best suited for determining the relevance of a problem by using a cross-section of the population as respondents. Maree (2007), states that this design is used to create an overall picture of the problem at the time of the study. In this study, the data was collected from the respondents once through a questionnaire that was completed at a specific point in time. A cross-sectional survey design approach was there for applied. This was the only time that data was collected from the lecturers.

d. Questionnaire as a data collection method including the structure and content to be included in the questionnaire

The data collection method that was used in this research was group administration of questionnaires. This method is applied where the researcher waits while a whole group of respondents from the sample complete the questionnaire. There are several advantages in using this method, such as a huge number of respondents can complete the questionnaire in a short period of time, it is relatively cheap and easy to do (Maree et al, 2007).

The type of questions that were selected for this research were a combination of open (unstructured) questions, closed (structured) questions and Likert scale questions. The open questions provided space for a comment by the respondents. According to Maree et al (2007), the advantages of this type of questions are getting honest and detailed answers from respondents. It also reveals their thinking process, which is relevant to this research as it will be significant to determine the thinking process of the lecturers.

The biggest disadvantage of this on the other hand is the high difficulty level of the statistical analysis of this type of questions. The closed questions provide for a set of answers from which the respondents can choose either one or more of the given options on the questionnaire. The advantage to these types of questions is the data obtained from the respondents is easier to analyse (Maree et al, 2007). According to Bell (2005), cited in Maree et al (2007) there are six different types of closed questions to choose from, which are list, ranking category, quantity, grid and scale. The Likert scale is based on questions asking the respondents if they agree or disagree with a given statements and measures their attitude and strength of feeling (Bell, 2005, cited in Maree et al, 2007). The advantage of these types of questions is that the respondents are forced to either agree or disagree with a given statement (Maree et al, 2007). For this study a combination of open (unstructured) questions, closed (structured) questions and Likert scale questions were used in the questionnaire (Annexure A).

e. Data analysis method

According to Mayan (2001), cited in Maree (2007) data analysis can be described as the process of observing trends in data, questioning those trends, speculating or making assumptions based on those trends, collecting data from selected participants, confirming the speculations or assumptions made, continue with the analysis, ask more questions, look for more data and then analyse further by sorting, questioning, thinking, constructing and testing speculations or assumptions made. Data analysis in this research happens within the quantitative approach, based on numerical values. After all the data has been collected, captured and results summarised, the data will be interpreted (Creswell, 2003 cited in Maree, 2007).

In this study, the data was collected through a questionnaire (group administration of questionnaires) as indicated previously. The quantitative data was then coded and divided into different categories to enable the final processing of the data. The quantitative data was captured on a computer system using Microsoft EXCEL. The data was then analysed, where after the researcher obtained descriptive statistics from the data. According to Maree (2007) these

descriptive statistics are used to organise and summarise data in such a way to make interpretation of the properties of the quantitative data easier. These statistics were used to answer the proposed research questions in this study.

5. Description of the population and sampling

a. Population that the research is aimed at

According to Wiid and Diggines (2013), cited in du Plooy-Cilliers et al (2014) a population is the total group of respondents from whom information is required. In this study, the target population refers to lecturers teaching on Higher Certificate (NQF Level 5) programmes at a private higher education institution and the accessible population consists of the lecturers teaching on a specific programme that has been identified due to a high number of students who have a high probability of failing or dropping out from the programme. The population is also referred to as the sampling unit in this research, where the sample is the group that has been chosen from the target population from whom the data was collected, in this case the selected number of lecturers (six in total) teaching on the Higher Certificate programme.

These lecturers, ages between 25 and 55, are teaching on the same Higher Certificate (NQF Level 5) programme on different modules at a specific campus of the IIE. These lecturers are all qualified with at least a NQF level 6 qualification or higher and the most of them are independent contractors, lecturing at different educational institutions and comes with a lot of industry experience due to their active involvement in industry. The measurements on observations made on the sample units are called the variables (dependant and independent). The reliability refers to the consistency of a measure or instrument, such as a questionnaire that will be used in this research. (Maree et al, 2007).

b. Sampling method and size, including a motivation for selecting the specific sampling method and sampling size

The sampling method that will be used in this research is non-probability convenience sampling. This method does not make use of a random selection of population elements, but select the population elements based on availability which is easy and convenient (Maree et al, 2007). This sampling method is applicable to this research, as it is useful in exploratory research where the researcher is looking for a more affordable and quick way of obtaining information and because this research will only require a few respondents to test the questionnaire.

The sample size is relatively small and consist of the number of lecturers teaching in the Higher Certificate programme. The group is small enough to gather and analyse data in a limited time frame, which is applicable to this study the group will consisted of six lecturers in total.

6. Feasibility of the study and anticipated contribution

Bezuidenhout and Corne, in du Plooy-Cilliers et al (2014), state that any research done should be manageable by the researcher in terms of time, sample size and cost. Time allocation, relevant resources and technical requirements were considered for this study by the researcher. The time required to conduct the survey was less than an hour as the data collection method was done through a questionnaire with all the lecturers in one venue at a certain point in time and the data was only collected once from the participants. The sample size was also relatively small and consists of six lecturers in total that will participate in the study. This sample size was small enough to gather and obtain data from the entire group in a limited time frame. The data obtained was then analysed by the researcher to determine if the intervention was effective. Although the sample size was small, it was big enough to draw accurate results from. There were no other technical requirements for this study. There was also no additional budget required as the survey was done at the premises of the private higher education institute in a selected venue on campus. Therefore, this study was feasible and doable within a limited time frame.

Du Plooy-Cilliers et al (2014), states that the anticipated contribution of a research study refers to the value that the study might have to the discipline body of knowledge. This study has contributed towards the lecturers, enabling them to manage the problem currently experienced in a Higher Certificate programme, as well as supporting at-risk students within this programme. This research also enabled the researcher to obtain a better understanding of the current problem and has identified ways to assist and support the lecturers, enabling them to better manage and support at-risk students.

7. Ethical considerations, Reliability and Validity

According to Stringer (2008), ethical considerations play a key role in research especially in higher education institutions and should protect the well-being and interests of the participants. The researcher ensured that no harm was done to the participants in this study. In this study lecturers should know that they will be taking part and they need to be formally informed of the process so

that there is a clear understanding of what is expected and required from them from the start. In this case there was no need for their identities to be protected, as the study did not deal with any sensitive information.

What was explained to the lecturers is how the results of this research study will be used or applied. This information will be put in writing and each of the lecturers participating will sign their consent. This will be kept on record by the researcher for future reference. The researcher also needs to ensure that the organisation of the survey is well arranged. In this study, the questionnaire was structured in such a way that it contained fifteen questions, ensuring that the period for completing the survey was minimal and did not waste the time of the lecturers. The information obtained from this study was treated as confidential as it was only used for the purposes of this study.

According to The Writing Studio (2014), reliability is synonymous with the consistency of the measuring instrument, which in this study was a survey. This is important to the research study as the reliability is linked to the findings of the research (Koonin in du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The researcher needs to determine whether the data collection tool, which in this study was a questionnaire, was reliable.

Validity of the research study refers to the degree to which that specific study measures what it is supposed to measure. According to Koonin in du-Plooy-Cilliers et al (2014), the researcher needs to take both internal and external validity into consideration. In this study, the internal validity refers to whether the research method, which was the survey design did answer the research questions of this study. The researcher needs to ensure that there are no errors in such a design by having the questionnaire reviewed by experts (Maree, 2007).

8. Limitations of the study

According to Enslin in du Plooy-Cilliers (2014), limitations of a research study are the constraints or limits which are out of the researcher's control, such as time, financial resources and access to information. This study had a limited period in which it had to be completed and therefore there was a limit to the amount of information that could be collected. There were not any budget constraints or financial limitations in this study as the survey was conducted on campus at the private higher institution in a selected venue at a given time with only six participants. Accessibility to information can be a limitation as not all the participants selected for the survey in this study might be available or arrive on the day of the survey. This might limit the amount of information

than could be collected. All six participants were available and able to complete the questionnaires.

9. Results and findings of the research, including detail related to the findings of each question included in the questionnaire

The type of questions used in the questionnaire (Annexure A) included Likert scale questions, closed (structured) questions and open (unstructured) questions. The results and findings of each question were analysed and is presented below.

9.1 Question 1: Goals and Objectives of the Workshop

Question 1 is a closed question and the aim of this question was to determine how well the key goals and objectives of the workshop have been achieved. Respondents were asked to comment on various key sub-questions pertaining to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the workshop. Sub-question one asked respondents whether they felt that they obtained additional knowledge of learning skills related to at-risk students. All respondents who participated in the workshop indicated that they have obtained the additional knowledge. Sub-question two asked the respondents whether they have obtained an understanding of how attitudes of these students can be changed. All respondents indicated they have obtained such an understanding from the workshop. Sub-question three, asked the respondents if they have obtained knowledge and understanding of how problem-solving skills of at-risk students can be improved, all respondents indicated that they have obtained this knowledge and understanding. Sub-question four asked the respondents whether they have obtained any practical experience as to how reflective and critical thinking skills of at-risk students can be improved. Eighty three percent (83%) of respondents indicated that they have obtained the experience. Sub-question five asked the respondents if they have obtained additional knowledge on different teaching interventions and methods, whereby all respondents indicated that they have obtained the additional knowledge. Sub-question six asked respondents whether they feel that the workshop created awareness on how to manage and support at-risk students, which all of them indicated that this was achieved. In conclusion, based on the analysis of this data, the key goals and objectives of the workshop have been achieved.

9.2 Question 2: Methods supporting the achievement of workshop objectives

Question 2 is also a closed question, comprising of various options that respondents could select. The focus of the question is to determine which methods respondents were exposed to in the workshop were found to be useful in meeting the objectives of the workshop. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the respondents found the brief presentation followed by questions useful. Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents found the reading of material during the workshop with a discussion session after useful. Only 17% of the respondents found brainstorming with other participants useful in meeting the objectives of the workshop. Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents found structured problem scenario with a discussion session after, useful. Thirty-three percent (33%) of the respondents found spontaneous interventions during the workshop useful. In conclusion, most of the methods were found useful in meeting the objectives of the workshop, where as the method found most useful was the brief presentation followed by questions, which was selected by four out of the six respondents.

9.3 Question 3: Most effective learning aids

Question 3 is another closed question aimed at finding out which of the teaching aids were found most effective during the workshop. Fifty percent (50%) of respondents found written materials such as the worksheets and the study guide most effective. Thirty-three percent (33%) of the respondents found the audio-visual material such as videos, as well as the computer aided instruction such as the on-line case studies most effective. In conclusion, fifty percent (50%) of the respondents preferred the written materials and study guides to the other teaching aids as being most effective during this workshop.

9.4 Question 4: Methods promoting active participation and interaction

Question 4 is a closed question and was set to determine whether the methods used in the workshop promoted active participation and interaction between the lecturers. The conclusion is that 100% of the respondents believe that the methods used in the workshop promoted active participation and interaction between themselves.

9.5 Question 5: Equipped to manage and support at-risk students

Question 5 is a Likert scale questions set to determine whether the respondents believe they were better equipped to manage and support at-risk students after completing the workshop. The

conclusion is that 17% of the respondents strongly agree and 66% agree that they are now better equipped to manage and support at-risk students as per the pie chart below.

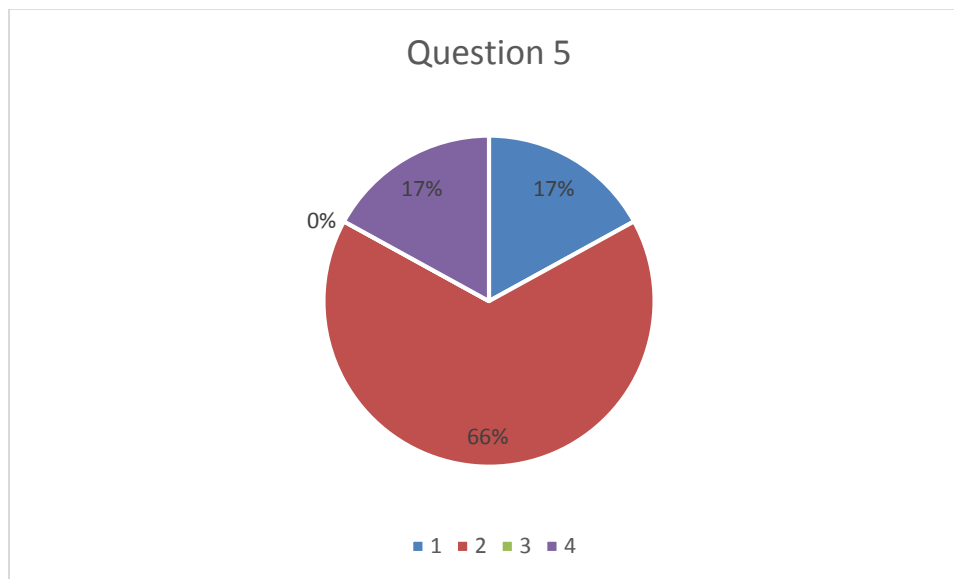


Chart indicators:
1 Strongly Agree
2 Agree
3 Disagree
4 Strongly Disagree

This means that a total of 84% of the respondents feel that they are better equipped to manage and support these students after completion the workshop.

9.6 Question 6: Implementation of strategies

Question 6 is also a Likert scale question and was set to determine if the respondents are now able to implement any of the strategies covered in the workshop to manage at-risk students. As per the pie chart below, the conclusion is that 33% of the respondents strongly agreed and 50% agreed that they are now able to implement these strategies. Seventeen percent (17%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that they can implement any of these strategies.

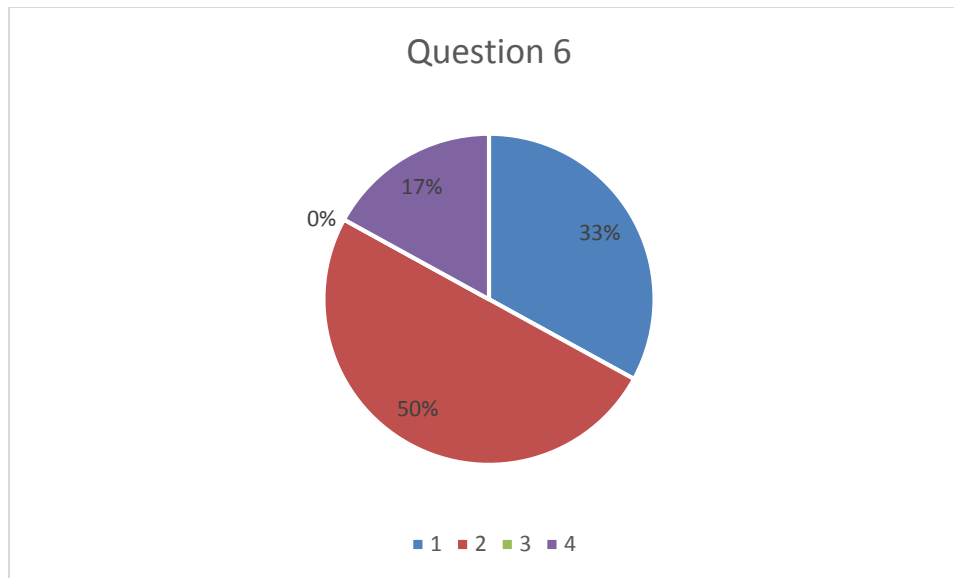


Chart indicators:
 1 Strongly Agree
 2 Agree
 3 Disagree
 4 Strongly Disagree

This means that a total of 83% of the respondents can implement these strategies after completion of the workshop.

9.7 Question 7: Strategies covered in the workshop

Question 7 is a closed question aimed at finding out which strategies the respondents would include in their approach to manage and support at-risk students. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the respondents would include small group work and computer assisted instruction. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the respondents would include case studies and peer tutoring. Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents would include role play, problem-solving, direct instruction and cognitively orientated instruction. In conclusion the highest percentage of the respondents would include small group work and computer aided instruction in their approach to manage and support at-risk students.

9.8 Question 8: Addressing learning needs of at-risk students

Like question 7, this question offered respondents various options to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the strategies that can be applied to address learning needs of at-risk students. Suggestions that respondents could select included small group work, role play, case studies,

problem-solving, peer-tutoring, computer assisted instruction, direct instruction and cognitively instruction. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the respondents think small group work, peer tutoring and computer assisted instruction would address the needs. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the respondents chose role play and problem-solving. Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents chose case studies and 33% of the respondents think direct instruction and cognitive oriented instruction would address the needs. In conclusion most of the respondents think that small group work, peer tutoring and computer assisted training would address the learning needs of their at-risk students.

9.9 Question 9: Selection of strategies

Question 9 is an open question and a follow-up question on question 8. The respondents selected the options as they believe these strategies are relevant to the module they lecture in and that these strategies would benefit the at-risk students in their classrooms and enhance their learning and performance. One respondent mentioned that: *"I think students feel more comfortable with their peers and small group learning and peer tutoring will foster positive interaction between peers and make learning more accessible."* Another respondent replied: *"In my opinion students want to interact with their peers, but have the supervision of a tutor or of their lecturer to guide them and ask questions on their progress."*

9.10 Question 10: Interaction with other participants during the workshop

Question 10 is a closed question set to determine what the participants have learned through the interaction with the others during the workshop. Eighty-three percent 83% of the respondents indicated the need for having a proactive and inclusive approach to support at-risk students. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the respondents indicated encouraging students to attend their classes. Thirty-three percent Thirty-three percent 33% of respondents indicated maximising effective strategies to manage at-risk students and sharing of resources with other lecturers to assist with student welfare. Only 17% of the respondents indicated assisting with the process of putting policies in place to help students. In conclusion, most of the respondents indicated that they have learned about the need for having a proactive and inclusive approach to support at-risk students.

9.11 Questions 11 & 12: Recommending the workshop

Question 11 is another closed question to set to determine whether the respondents would recommend the workshop to other lecturers. The conclusion is that 100% of the respondents would recommend the workshop to other lecturers.

Question 12 is an open question and follow-up question on question 11. All the respondents recommend the workshop to other lecturers due to the importance of such workshops in assisting them to manage and support at-risk students. The respondents had to elaborate on their answer selected in Question 11. One of the respondents mentioned that: *“At-risk intervention should be high up on all lecturers’ lists as our end goal is to see our students graduate. The more lecturers that are exposed to intervention strategies and the need and method behind them, the more these strategies can be implemented.”* This was confirmed by another respondent who replied that: *“The workshop is enlightening and is well equipped with strategies to improve those students at-risk.”* Another respondent mentioned: *“The importance of managing and assisting at-risk students must form part of your daily teaching and learning. The involvement and participation of all lecturers involved with a specific student’s performance are critical for the success of a student.”* Another respondent said that: *“In my opinion lecturers might need some guidance on how to approach at-risk students and the way forward in assisting students.”* These are some of the reasons given by the respondents on why they would recommend the workshop to other lecturers.

9.12 Question 13 Workshop contribution

Question 13 is a Likert scale question set to determine whether the workshop was useful to the respondents and benefit their teaching and learning strategies in the future. Based on the analysis of the data, the conclusion is that 50% of the respondents strongly agreed and 33% agreed that the workshop was useful as indicated on the pie chart below.

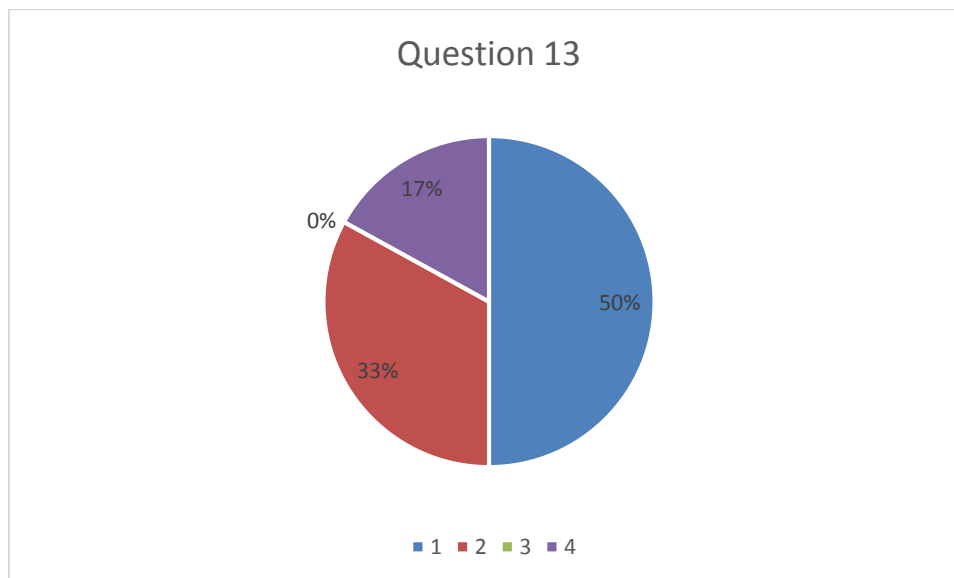


Chart indicators:
1 Strongly Agree

- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

This means that overall 83% of the respondents feels that the workshop was useful and will benefit their teaching and learning strategies.

9.13 Experience of the workshop and suggestions

Question 14 is an open question aimed at finding out what the respondents might do differently following the workshop and asked them to share their experience and suggestions. Responses from the respondents varied on this question. One respondent indicated that the workshop was highly beneficial and would not do anything different following the workshop. One respondent had a problem with allocating sufficient time to manage and support at-risk students, whilst having to complete the syllabus on time. Three of the six respondents had similar suggestions, which include the importance of early identification of at-risk students, preplanning and preparing lessons in different styles and implementation of an at-risk tracker to identify these students. One of these respondents mentioned that: *“Following this workshop I will use my existing tracker on a weekly basis to monitor the at-risk students. After identifying the at-risk I will implement interventions to enable the students to demonstrate understanding of the identified at-risk areas.”*

9.14 Question 15: Possible teaching interventions and strategies

Question 15 is also an open question and the final question in the questionnaire. The aim of this question is to obtain input and suggestions from the respondents on any other possible strategies that could add value to this workshop. Various responses were received from the respondents on this question. In summary, the respondents indicated that external intervention is required to assist them in the classroom and that more of these workshops are needed, especially in the beginning of a semester. Other recommended strategies to be included in these workshops are in-class tests and quizzes, as well as more lecture and student engagement activities. One of the respondents suggested that: *“Class tests of previous completed learning units can be used to assist students’ participation. The utilisation of in-class quizzes is a very effective way of ensuring a broad participation.”* Another respondent replied: *“I do not have any suggestions on possible improvement, but I would like to see these types of workshops being held in the beginning of a semester for all lecturers, old hands, as well as new lecturers.”*

In summary it is evident from the analysis of the data collected that there is a definite need for such workshops to assist lecturers in obtaining knowledge on different strategies on how to manage and support at-risk students. Such a workshop can provide lecturers with the knowledge to support at-risk students through the presentation of various teaching strategies, as well as interaction with other lecturers during the workshop. Lecturers would benefit from a training intervention such as a workshop as this would equip them with the necessary tools to manage at-risk students.

10. Recommendations

Based on the finding of the research, exposing lecturers to interventions such as workshops, provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to manage and support at-risk students. It is therefore recommended that more of these workshops be conducted and that more lecturers are exposed to such workshops. These workshops should be conducted in the beginning of the academic semester to enable lecturers to be sufficiently prepared to manage and support at-risk student in their classrooms, and for them to be able to identify at-risk students much earlier and introduce intervention strategies much sooner. It is also evident from the findings that the key goals and objectives of the workshop have been achieved. It is also evident that the lecturers who participated in the workshop are now better equipped to manage and support at-risk students and can implement the strategies that were covered in the workshop. They also found the workshop useful and beneficial for their own teaching and learning strategies going forward. It is clear from these findings that the use of workshops is necessary for educator support development.

11. Conclusion

It is evident from the information gathered from the institution, as well as evidence gathered from the literature that there is a need for a training intervention such as a workshop to explore ways in which to empower lecturers to manage at-risk students better. The training intervention will have to include classroom strategies, which can assist the lecturers in helping the students performing better. The intervention also needs to identify problem areas experienced by the at-risk students and identify ways on how the lecturers can handle these problems. In conclusion, the outcome of this research confirms the importance of exploring the use of workshops for Educator Support Development.

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Annexure A: Questionnaire

Questionnaire for lecturers of a Higher Education Programme

Dear Respondent

My name is Adolph Kirsten and I am currently busy with a research study exploring the use of workshops for educator support development.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore how a training intervention such as a workshop can assist you as a lecturer to support and manage the at-risk students in the Higher Certificate programme that you are currently lecturing at a private higher education institution.

The questionnaire contains fifteen (15) questions which are a combination of open questions (unstructured), closed questions (structured) and Likert scale questions. The period for completing the survey is minimal and should take no longer than thirty minutes of your time.

Your answers to this questionnaire will be treated as confidential as it will only be used for the purposes of this study. Please answer all the questions accurately and honestly. Note that you can withdraw from the research at any time without being penalised.

Should you need additional information on this study or the questionnaire and if you would like to obtain feedback on the results of this research, please feel free to contact me on my e-mail address at 14009045@iieconnect.co.za

Thank you for your time and participation.

It is important that you answer all the questions as honestly as possible.

Answer each question by ticking the appropriate shaded box or by writing your answer in the shaded space provided.

Question 1

Please rate your views on how well the following key goals and objectives of the workshop have been achieved:

Tick the relevant box for each one below:

	Achieved	Neutral	Not achieved
a) Obtained additional knowledge of learning skills related to at-risk students.			
b) Obtained understanding of how attitudes of at-risk students can be changed.			
c) Obtained knowledge and understanding of how problem-solving skills of at-risk students can be improved.			
d) Obtained practical experience as to how reflective and critical thinking skills of at-risk students can be improved.			
e) Obtained additional knowledge on different teaching interventions and methods.			
f) Creation of awareness on how to manage and support at-risk students.			

Question 2

Which of the following methods did you find useful in meeting the objectives of the workshop?

Select one or more of the options listed below:

	Tick the relevant boxes
The brief presentation followed by questions	
Reading of material during the workshop with a discussion session after	
Brainstorming with other participants	
Structured problem scenario with a discussion session after	
Spontaneous interventions during the workshop	

Question 3

Which of the following teaching aids did you find most effective during the workshop?

Select the option that is most relevant to how you like to be taught:

	Tick ONE option only
Written materials such as the worksheets and study guide	
Audio-visual material such as the videos	
Computer-aided instruction such as the on-line case studies	

Question 4

In your opinion, did the methods used in this workshop promote active participation and interaction between the lecturers?

	Tick the relevant box
Yes	
No	

Question 5

Indicate your view related to the following statement in the table given below:

After completion of the workshop I am now better equipped to manage and support at-risk students.

Tick the relevant box below:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 6

Indicate your view related to the following statement in the table below:

I am able to implement any of the strategies covered in the workshop to manage and support at-risk students.

Tick the relevant box below:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 7

Choose one or more of the following strategies covered in the workshop that you would include in your approach to manage and support at-risk students:

	Tick the relevant boxes
Small group work	
Role Play	
Case Studies	
Problem Solving	
Peer tutoring	
Computer assisted instruction	
Direct instruction	
Cognitively orientated instruction	

Question 8

Which of these strategies covered in the workshop do you think would address the learning needs of your at-risk students' best?

	Tick the relevant boxes
Small group work	
Role Play	
Case Studies	
Problem Solving	
Peer tutoring	
Computer assisted instruction	
Direct Instruction	
Cognitively orientated instruction	

Question 9:

Why do you think the options you have selected in Question 8 are relevant? Please elaborate on your answer.

Question 10

What are the things that you have learned through the interaction with the other participants during this workshop?

Select ONE of the options below:

	Tick the relevant box
The need for having a proactive and inclusive approach to support at-risk students	
Sharing resources with other lecturers to assist with student welfare	
Assisting with the process of putting policies in place to help students	
Maximising effective strategies to manage at-risk students	
Encouraging students to attend their classes	

Question 11

Would you recommend this workshop to other lecturers?

	Tick the relevant box
Yes	
No	

Question 12:

Please elaborate on your answer selected in Question 11.

Question 13

Indicate your view related to the followings statement in the table given below:

The workshop was useful and will benefit my teaching and learning strategies in the future.

Tick the relevant box below:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 14

What, if anything, might you do differently following this workshop? Please share your experience and suggestions.

Question 15

Please provide your input or suggestions on any other possible teaching interventions or strategies that could add value to this workshop so that other lectures can be assisted in managing and supporting at-risk students.

Thank you for your time and input.