

Monitoring and Evaluation of Peer Leader Training Programmes: A Strategy to Enhance Provision of Psychosocial Support to Vulnerable Learners in South African Schools

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ABSTRACT Monitoring and evaluation of peer led group training programmes is critical in ensuring that peer leaders are equipped with the necessary skills in the provision of psychosocial support to vulnerable learners. This study aimed to investigate the practice of monitoring and evaluation of peer led group training programmes. A qualitative approach and a case study research design were used. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Four secondary schools and 38 participants were purposively selected. Data were analysed using a thematic approach. The major finding was that peer led group training programmes were not effectively being monitored and evaluated due to limited funding for the programme, lack of monitoring and evaluation technical skills, too much reliance on self-monitoring and evaluation which raises loyalty issues thereby compromising the effectiveness of peer led group training programmes. The study recommends that there must be regular monitoring and evaluation for these training programmes and the need for the provision of adequate financial resources.

INTRODUCTION

Monitoring and evaluation of training programmes is not a new phenomenon in the management of educational interventions as it serves to ensure that resources are put to good use (Cadet 2019). In the absence of effective monitoring and evaluation of peer leader training programmes, it would be difficult to determine the extent to which peer leaders have been imparted with the necessary skills (Maticka-Tyndale and Barnett 2010). It is argued that good planning and training designs alone, do not ensure the effectiveness of the programme, rather, the progress towards achieving the intended goals need to be regularly and timeously monitored and evaluated (Phillips and Phillips 2016). Thus, this paper investigated the effectiveness of the processes of monitoring and evaluation of the peer leader training programmes in Amathole West Education District, Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Background to the Study

Globally, monitoring and evaluation has a critical component of strategic planning for programmes within the education system and are a revered process (Courtney 2008; Wals 2012). The role of monitoring and evaluation in the education system is of critical importance, just like the policies, action plans and implementation processes as it assists in checking the progress of a programme towards meeting its objectives (Mertens and Wilson 2018). According to Ruel-Bergeron et al. (2019), monitoring and evaluation of training programmes is particularly important given the amount of resources that are expended on these programmes including time, efforts and financial resources. Scholars across the globe have highlighted that monitoring and evaluation of training programmes in the education systems is conducted for various reasons and these may include; ensuring that the curriculum being used is appropriate for peer education; that all competencies for the trainee peer leaders are assessed in order to influence the quality of the results of the training programme (Morrison et al. 2019; Ruel-Bergeron et al. 2019). Thus, as observed by Phillips and

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Phillips (2016), the purpose of conducting monitoring and evaluation of training programmes is not merely to determine whether it was a good investment, but should also be aimed at determining whether the participants benefitted from the training as was intended in the first place.

Several studies indicate that countries have various strategies for monitoring and evaluation of care and support for teaching and learning programmes such as peer led training programmes (Govender 2001; Scheerens et al. 2003; Paulo et al. 2012; Siddiqui et al. 2020). Across a number of countries, several initiatives and interventions were introduced in the education system in order to help institutionalise and entrench monitoring and evaluation of peer led training programmes (Chen et al. 2007). These included the development of guidelines to establish the basis for minimum standards of monitoring and evaluation, however it has been noted quite often, although this is not unique to South Africa alone, that results from monitoring and evaluations undertaken are not usually used (Jenkinson et al. 2017).

When conducting monitoring and evaluation on peer led group training programmes, the aim should be to determine the extent to which training has impacted on, for example; soft-skills on the part of peer leaders and the extent to which the training has resulted in positive behavioural changes within the school environments (World Bank 2011). In the context of this study, this could include evidence of the reduction in incidences of substance abuses, school fights, carrying of weapons to school and increased levels of the general tolerance among learners both in classes and outside (Beard et al. 2019).

Research has shown that one of the factors that leads to poor quality monitoring and evaluation of training programmes is the lack of resources and the use of unskilled personnel (Ssentamu and Sajjabi 2020; Hughes et al. 2019). Effective and quality monitoring and evaluation of training programmes requires enough financial resources and skilled staff with the necessary statistical and analytical skills, particularly at the planning stage of the training programme (Alemu 2019; Morrison et al. 2019). The authors also argue that human resources requirements and the programme's overall costs for monitoring and evaluation process should

be considered from the beginning in order for the training programme to produce intended results and they should not come on as additional costs to the training programme.

Over the years, concerns have been raised over most monitoring and evaluation practices of some educational programmes such as the peer led group training programme by most education systems (Govender 2001; Abera 2019; Jacobs 2019). Studies by these scholars have observed that even though monitoring and evaluation systems form a part of every education system, many of them suffer from lack of or poor policy design and weak implementation. In support of this viewpoint, UNESCO (2016) and Grey and Joiner (2020) also noted that the precision, effectiveness and efficiency of the monitoring and evaluation systems have been questionable in a number of ways for various reasons. Hung (2010) noted that while this phase was critical for determining the effectiveness of a training programme it has however, in most cases remained more theoretical than practical. Hung added that, in most instances, for example, intended goals have not been achieved because inappropriate methods are used. According to Griffin (2010), other barriers to the effectiveness of this process have ranged from the lack of both financial and materials resources, lack of expertise, less interest from top management, costs, time constraints and insufficient evaluation systems.

Rouse (2011) further identifies the Kirkpatrick model as one of the most commonly used methods to effectively monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training programmes. In this model, the reaction level is used to gauge how the participants react or respond to the training and this can be achieved by asking participants to complete a short survey which will assist in the identification of whether the conditions for learning during training were present (Rouse 2011). The learning stage is used to gauge what participants learned from the training and the short quizzes or practical tests are the common tools used for the evaluations, one before the training and the other one afterwards (Phillips and Phillips 2016). The behaviour stage allows for the evaluation of participants a while after the training through the use of various assessment methods to find out whether participants were imple-

menting what they had learnt into practice. According to Snead and Freiberg (2019), one such method that can be used is by asking participants to complete self-assessment forms or ask their supervisors to formally assess them. The results stage evaluates whether the training met the stakeholders' expectations (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick 2016).

As observed by several studies in most developing countries, South Africa included, while efforts are regularly made to try and mitigate prior problems of monitoring and evaluation, a number of factors always affect the effectiveness of the process (Govender 2001; Phetla 2019). Common challenges which often affect the process include among others: poor planning, delays in monitoring and evaluations in some cases, including reluctance on the part of management to conduct monitoring and evaluation processes with less positive results (Zall et al. 2004; Scudder 2019). Abera (2019) also noted that most monitoring and evaluation processes are conducted by individuals with limited capacity in terms of skills which might lead to poor quality results making them less credible and difficult to verify. Charoensap-Kelly et al. (2016) also warn that if there is no goodwill and support from an organization's top management, the monitoring and evaluation process will perform poorly leading to ineffectiveness of any programme being undertaken. In Portugal, for example, Paulo et al. (2012), noted that although a policy exists in the country's education system, the current monitoring and evaluation system has been criticised for being narrow as it does not allow a broad enough assessment of the extent to which objectives of school programmes such as peer led training programmes are being achieved.

A similar overview on the South African education system has noted that while there are policies that provide the framework in which monitoring and evaluation of education programmes, for example, peer led group training programmes, it has, however been observed that the implementation part is often lacking due to a number of reasons. Phetla (2017) noted that the general challenges in government sectors including that of education, were lack of capacity to implement monitoring and evaluation of the programmes. The scholar also identified oth-

er general challenges to include: lack of methodologies to facilitate monitoring and evaluation processes, integration of the process with policy, budgeting and planning, participation by appropriate stakeholders, and lastly the baseline information that supports the process (Phetla 2017). Further concerns in South Africa were, for example, raised by Govender, as early as in 2001, when it was noted that there was lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of peer led group training programmes resulting from limited skills on the part of those tasked to perform the task. School coordinators of the programme had no requisite skills to effectively use the data collection templates.

According to the DBE (2010), peer led group programmes in South Africa are guided by the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) Conceptual Framework which advocates for proper monitoring, evaluation and reporting of such programmes. These processes are critical in order to track the impact on educational outcomes, to monitor efficacy and to justify the expenditure as well as to motivate for their continual existence in the country's education systems. However, the DBE (2010) recommends that, where possible, monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems for CSTL should not operate in isolation instead they should be aligned with the existing monitoring and evaluation system within the education department. For that reason, efforts should be made to align data collection tools and processes with the normal operating procedures in schools and to integrate data analysis and reporting within existing DBE monitoring and evaluation processes (DBE South Africa 2010). However, there has been limited research on monitoring and evaluation of peer led training programmes in schools in Amathole Education District where this study was conducted. Thus this study sought to cover the gap by investigating the monitoring and evaluation of the peer led training programmes secondary schools in Amathole West Education District.

Conceptualising Monitoring and Evaluation

Alemu (2019) defines monitoring as an ongoing process by which stakeholders obtain regular feedback on the progress being made towards goals and objectives adding that it is an

important source of information for program evaluation. Bush and Glover (2016) define monitoring as the regular collection and analysis of information which is then used to guide a particular project, regarding whether to continue on its course or change direction. According to Williams and McClure (2010) monitoring is the on-going assessments of progress during project or program implementation, it checks progress, take remedial actions and enable the updating of plans. In their study, Kanyamuna and Phiri (2019) observed that the major role of monitoring is to determine the acquired levels of knowledge, skills or understanding, to diagnose problems that trainees may be encountering, to make decisions about the next instructional steps to be taken, and to evaluate the learning that has taken place in the trainees. This study adopts the definitions by Bush and Glover (2016) and Sarkar (2016) who define monitoring as a regular collection and analysis of information which is an on-going assessment of the training programme's progress which in turn enables the taking of remedial actions and updating of plans. The study also adopts the role of monitoring as provided by Kanyamuna and Phiri (2019) that it is to determine the level of acquired knowledge, skills or understanding by trainees and to diagnose problems they may be facing in order to make decisions about the next instructional steps to be taken including finding out what learning has taken place.

Evaluation is also an essential part of the training cycle which helps the trainer to know how those who have attended the training feel about the training and what they say they have learnt (Phetla 2017). Phetla's study observed that evaluation gives the trainer an opportunity to follow up with any individuals, if there is a need, or to make changes in the future training programmes. Furthermore, evaluation provides information about the selection criteria of peer leaders, peer education, and curriculum including the methods used to train them (Beard et al. 2019; Wanzer 2019; Bodner and Elmas 2020). This study therefore adopts the definition of evaluation by Patton (2017) who defines evaluation as the systematic collection of information to make judgements, improve programme effectiveness or generate knowledge to inform decisions about the future of peer led training programmes.

Literature Review

An empirical study of the training evaluation decision-making model carried by Hung (2010) in Taiwan revealed that in practice, only a handful of institutions undertake monitoring and evaluations of their training programmes because these activities are considered to be costly. Griffin (2010), in his study on effective training evaluation also discovered that there is often a mismatch between organizations' desire to evaluate training and the extent and effectiveness of the actual evaluation that actually takes place at the end. Thus, it is advised that the evaluation of peer led training programmes in schools should focus on determining the extent to which training has responded to the needs for which it was conducted and its translation in terms of the impact it has had on both the learners as individuals and the school environment (Pineda 2010). However, according to Hashim (2011), failure to evaluate a training programme or learning process which has taken place results in the training and learning being misunderstood by all stakeholders.

Studies advise that as part of the evaluation process, training participants may complete the measurement, pre-test, base-line information questionnaire on the first day of the training (Phetla 2017). In America, for the follow-up test, participants may be mailed copies of the questionnaire survey with a self-addressed return envelope, at least a year after the training had been completed (Wray 2019). These questionnaires should be anonymously completed by each participant and they should be given to the trainers who would make corrections in future programmes. Similarly, evaluations should also be conducted through workshops and fieldwork and feedback of the results of the evaluation should be given to the participants (Wang et al. 2008).

In the United States of America, the education system is made up of both internal and external evaluation done under the state's developments of education (Martin and Rallis 2014). The use of external evaluators is based on the government's assumption that the evaluators do not have relationship to the school and can be more objective (Martin and Rallis 2014). During external evaluation, for example, the evalua-

tors collect evidence about a school performance by reading and analysing school documents about a particular programme to make an assessment (Szanto 2005). It is believed that external monitoring and evaluation is frequently used for accountability (Wang et al. 2008) on the part of the leaders of the programmes. They argue that accountability will depend on the competency of the supervisors in analysing the documents that will enable them to gain insight about the peer led training programmes' performance (Wang et al. 2008). However, Setlalentoa (2014) concurs that not all supervisors are trained and accredited to effectively monitor and evaluate school programmes.

In Bangladesh, monitoring and evaluation implementation is assigned to the ministry's field education staff and is carried out during regular school visits (Ben and Murundu 2019). However, monitoring and evaluation by inspectors is in some instances found problematic and in effectual for a range of reasons, including difficulties in getting to more distant schools, inaccurate reporting owing to head teachers influencing field staff's reports, a lack of familiarity among field staff with particular programmes among other things (UNESCO 2015). School visits are used to determine whether school programmes are being conducted according to policy and to ascertain the difficulties and successes of these programmes.

In Romania, one of the most common methods used to monitor and evaluate peer led group training programmes is through a collaboration between the ministry and private organisations such as the Family Life Education Project (FLEP) (Pompili et al. 2020). The latter provides regular opportunities for peer educators and receive feedback from the fellow peer educators and Programme Coordinators. Weekly meetings are held in which the peer educators lead activities in front of the staff on various issues that they may choose to organise and develop (Varma-Nelson and Cracolice 2020). They recommend that such meetings provide opportunities for improving their facilitation of the training programmes, communication skills, updating their knowledge and formulating the attitudes depending on the results of the evaluation. Tested and usable monitoring and evaluation tools which include questionnaires, diaries and track-

ing forms are used to produce both qualitative and quantitative information which shades light on reasons and conditions under which interventions can occur (Van-Nelson et al. 2004). The scholars, however noted that while it was a common practice that peer educators may need to monitor their activities themselves, the issue of loyalty may need to be addressed first as this may entail friends being asked to assess their colleagues.

A study by USAID (2010) in Haiti, Tanzania and Guyana found out that methods used for monitoring and evaluation of peer led group training programmes include the use of pre and post-test evaluation forms after each training session. These were found to be most appropriate as they assist monitors and evaluators to get feedback from participants about which topics were particularly relevant to them as well as finding out which topics were not adequately covered. In support, Kodwani and Prashar (2019) also noted that best practices require that monitoring and evaluation of peer led training programmes be conducted at different stages, namely; pre-training, end of the training and post-training period. Both studies revealed that participants fill out monitoring forms which are also referred to as Reporting Diaries which capture information such as; attendance, topics covered and any challenges they would have encountered in the process. Similar studies conducted in both developed and developing countries, including South Africa, found out that post-training evaluations served to determine whether the training had a positive impact both in schools and on peer leaders and individual learners in general (MacPherson et al. 2019).

The study by USAID (2010) also noted that there was use of technology when, for example, training programme coordinators used software to analyse changes in knowledge, attitudes and skills on a per question basis, cross tabulated by gender, age group, scholarly level and peer educators' experiences. Hence, monitors and evaluators of programmes needed to possess multiple skills. Similar findings were observed by Abera (2019) who revealed that it was important to recognise that evaluators require far more technically oriented skills to be able to monitor and evaluate training programmes, adding that it was impossible to acquire these skills in just

one workshop. The scholar thus, recommended the use of both formal and on-the-job experiences when developing evaluators while at the same time emphasising that the two key competencies for evaluators are cognitive capacity and communication skills (Abera 2019).

A study carried by Paulo et al. (2012) in Portugal on monitoring and evaluation of school programmes revealed that the ministry of education is responsible for the overall monitoring and evaluation of the education systems including support systems such as peer led group training programmes. The country's basic law of education system is clearly stipulates in the Education Policy Framework that evaluation and monitoring of education systems should be undertaken on a permanent basis through collection of annual statistical data from schools to develop educational indicators. Thus, results from the monitoring and evaluation exercise are used to inform future policy direction in terms of resource allocation and capacity building initiatives for staff (Paulo et al. 2012)

According to Chirwa (2014), evaluations of the effectiveness of training programmes can be done through the use of observations. Grissom and Bartanen (2019) describe observations as those activities involving the day-to-day observations in a real setting in order for evaluators to build up a continuous record of on-going events, experiences including significant remarks. Picciotto (2020) however, highlights that in order for this to be effective; the evaluators need sufficient time to acquaint themselves with the participants in order to make natural and unobtrusive observations. In addition, Weng and Clark (2017) posit that evaluators should use interviews to get information from facilitators and trainees and these interviews alongside observations; are most suitable during the illuminative evaluation phase in order to obtain emic accounts and descriptions. However, Chirwa (2014) argues that critics have raised objections about the qualitative approach to evaluation; which the use of interviews and observations tend to take in illuminative evaluation citing the lack of objectivity and scientific approach to gaining information about the training programme.

According to Suskie (2018), oral examinations may also be used to evaluate training programmes although these may at times tend to be more suitable in some settings, for example; those which include hands-on training activities. Oral

examinations are best used as evaluation methods to measure and assess soft skills such as; communication skills, attitudes as well as knowledge levels (Beard et al. 2019). Similarly, performance examinations are also used to measure the same elements including measuring the actual performance to role specific criteria (McDavid et al. 2018). Evaluations can also be used in the form of measurements which do not only include testing, but also other types of measurements that produces quantitative data, such as learners' attendances, records, questionnaires, teachers rating of learners, peers rating trainees (Mendelson et al. 2020).

A successful study in which both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of peer led training programmes in the Rock Island Illinois School System in USA. For instance, the study revealed that schools had registered among other things; reductions in incidences of violence including fights, substance abuse, reduced hatred amongst and had communication amongst learners had been enhanced, reduced hatred amongst peers, and a 40 percent reduction in truancy rates in schools (Robinson 2019).

In the context of South Africa, peer led group programmes are guided by the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) Conceptual Framework which advocates for proper the monitoring, evaluation and reporting on such programmes Department of Basic Education South Africa (DBE, South Africa 2010). These processes are critical in order to track the impact on educational outcomes, to monitor efficacy and to justify the expenditure as well as to motivate for their continual existence in the country's education systems. However, the DBE, South Africa (2010) argues that, where possible, monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems for CSTL should be aligned with the existing monitoring and evaluation system within the department. This study sought to investigate the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation processes on peer led group training programmes in the Amathole West Education District.

Objectives

The main objective of this paper was to investigate the effectiveness of the methods used to monitor and evaluate peer leadership training offered to peer leaders to enhance the provision

of psychosocial support to vulnerable learners in schools in South Africa.

METHODOLOGY

The paper employed an interpretivist paradigm, hence; a qualitative approach and a case study research design. The study used semi-structured interviews, which are often used in qualitative research to generate in-depth information from participants (Harris and Brown 2010).

Research Instruments

This paper used face-to-face semi-structured interviews with LO teachers, School principals LSAs, DOs and the training officer. Focus group discussions were conducted with peer leaders in order to triangulate the data (Rowley 2012). The use of semi-structured interview questions enabled the researchers to probe in order to get in-depth information on the effectiveness of the peer led group training programme (Saunders et al. 2014).

Participants

The Education District chosen for this study was made up of 48 high schools and four high schools were purposively selected on the basis that they had functional peer led group programmes and accessibility. A sample size of 38 participants was purposively selected comprising of 4 School Principals (SP), 4 LO teachers (LOT), 1 District Official (DO), 1 Training Officer (TO), 4 Learner Support Agents (LSAs) and 24 Peer Leaders. The participants were purposively selected from the 4 secondary schools, based on roles, qualifications and experience to mirror the present peer leader training programme monitoring and evaluation experiences in schools (Gillham 2010).

Procedure

Permission for data collection was sought at the Provincial Department of Education and from each principal of the sampled high schools. The researchers also obtained Ethical Clearance from

the University of Fort Hare, Reference No. REM271SCH101. A digital voice recorder was used to record the interviews which the researchers had with all the participants, and their consent to be part of the research study and to be recorded using a tape recorder was sought before the commencement of the interviews and recording. Each participant was given a consent form to sign to show their voluntary involvement and participation in the study. It was clearly stated in the consent form that participants could withdraw from participating in the study and opt out at any stage of the study. The researchers also took some notes from all the interview schedules which were merged together with the recorded responses of the interviewees for data analysis. Credibility and trustworthiness were taken into account through inclusion of member checking, verifying, confirming and validating the research findings by providing the participants draft copy of the interview transcript to ensure that the findings of the study were not biased and to also determine whether these participants felt that they were precise (Harris and Brown 2010).

RESULTS

This study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation processes on peer led group training programmes in the Amathole West Education District, Eastern Cape, South Africa. The study also sought to identify the methods used to evaluate these training programmes and their effectiveness in enhancing the provision of psychosocial support to vulnerable learners in schools. Participants were abbreviated as follows: School Principals: SP, LO teachers: LOT, District Official: DO, Training Officer: TO, Learner Support Agent: LSA, and Peer Leader Focus Groups: PLFG. The results are presented below based on the major themes that emerged from the interviews and focus group discussions used in this study.

Methods Used to Monitor and Evaluate Peer Leader Training Programme

This study first sought to find out from participants the methods that were being used to monitor and evaluate peer leader training pro-

grammes. The findings of the study revealed that a number of monitoring and evaluation methods were being used. The methods included among others: participant observations during counselling sessions, peer interactions, and during group meetings, regular liaisons between School Principals and Learner Support Agents, peer reviews, interviews, questionnaires, self-assessments, and feedback from stakeholders. One School Principal responded:

The school uses a variety of methods to monitor and evaluate the impact of the peer leader training programme such observations, interviews, peer reviews and questionnaires.

Another School Principal also confirmed almost the same:

In my school, I request all my teachers to monitor and evaluate these peer leaders in their various classes to check whether they have gained any new skills in terms of their communication, listening skills, humour and team-working, for example.

The other principal confirmed:

Through observations, we often get to find out what skills the peer leaders have gained from the training with regards to attitudes, tolerance, critical thinking, empathy, accessibility, humour and communication skills. This method has enabled us to see if other learners now had more access to them and that they are treated with respect and tolerance.

Most LOTs revealed that they monitored and evaluated the peer leaders' training through various methods. While observation was the most commonly used method, it was found out that other methods included interviews, peer reviews and regular feedback from LSAs who mostly work with peer leaders. For example, one LOT stated:

We evaluate them through observing them while they interact with identified vulnerable learners, particularly their message targeting skills. We look at their approach ... and how they empathise with them including communication skills and attitude through how they tolerate the differences in others.

LOT1 also revealed:

The school encourages that all teachers find time to observe these peer leaders, each time they get an opportunity including in their classes and in playgrounds.

LOT4 stated:

We use reports that are compiled by the LSA apart from the regular observations that we make during group discussions and feedbacks from both teachers and their peers.

LOT2 also added:

The school uses observations, peer reviews and interviews to monitor and evaluate the peer leader training programme to find out if by undergoing this training they have gained something they could use to bring some positive change in the school environment.

In response, LSAs highlighted that they use multiple methods to monitor and evaluate the peer leader training programmes such as; observations, questionnaires, feedback from both teachers and peers including peer reviews. For example, LSA2 highlighted:

In our school we have adopted the use of interviews, peer reviews, observations, questionnaires and feedback from teachers and peer leaders' peers among other evaluating methods.

LSA3 added:

Our school mostly use observations, for example to observe peer leaders as they conduct counselling sessions or interact in group settings or how they react to their peers' responses.

FG3 also concurred:

Our school programme co-ordinators use observations and at times ask us to make peer reviews to assess how much we would have gained in terms of skills. We also complete questionnaires.

FG2 agreed:

Our school uses simple observations, interviews, group meetings, peer reviews and questionnaires to evaluate the peer leader training programme.

Responding to the same question, the DO responded:

We ask schools to employ different methods to evaluate the peer leaders' skills after undergoing initial training. For instance, schools are provided with Questionnaires which they should be completed by peer leaders.

The TO also explained at length that:

The peer leader training programme is monitored and evaluated in schools through various methods such as questionnaires, interviews, observations, peer reviews and feedbacks from all stakeholders in the school community.

The above responses from participants revealed that all the schools used a variety of methods for monitoring and evaluating peer leader training programmes. It emerged that the most commonly used methods included; observations, interviews, peer reviews, self-assessments and questionnaires. Participants were quite comfortable with these methods.

Effectiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation of Peer Leader Training Programme

The researchers also sought to find out if participants perceived the on-going monitoring and evaluation processes of the peer led training programmes were effective. Participants confirmed that the evaluation was effective. SP2 echoed these sentiments:

I think the monitoring and evaluation processes on the peer led group training programme are being effective. The LOTs and LSA in my school are doing a great job to ensure that this investment by the DoE does not go to waste.

SP1 also concurred:

Judging from the positive results that we are now seeing since the implementation of the programme, it's fair to say the evaluation processes are being effective.

SP3 also revealed:

The training programme is being adequately monitored and evaluated although much more can still be done, for example, to give more skills to LOTs and LSAs who are the chief evaluators of the programme at school level.

LOTs also expressed similar views that the current monitoring and evaluation systems were proving to be effective, although they felt that they can be improved. For instance, they were able to observe individual skills that had been acquired by peer leaders such as; team-working skills, message targeting skills, listening skills, self-confidence, negotiation skills, sensitivity, diplomacy, liaison skills and self-awareness. For instance, LOT4 responded:

Yes, the monitoring and evaluation of the peer leader training is being effective. Peer leaders' works are being monitored every day and we use various methods which I think have been very effective so far.

LOT1 also added:

True, the systems currently in place to monitor and evaluate the peer leader training programme are effective, but these can be improved should the co-ordinators get some additional training. This is a technical area which is influenced by the school environment and only someone with the requisite technical skills can make a more effective evaluation of the impact of the training.

The sentiments of LOTs were also echoed by almost all the LSAs who felt that the monitoring and evaluating exercises had the potential to increase their effectiveness particularly if the DoE addressed the issue of training for evaluators and conduct follow-up training workshops in schools. LSA2 responded:

Indeed, the evaluation processes of these peer led training programmes have been quite effective, but like any process, there is room for improvement. As you might be aware mam, the DoE is unable to fund for follow-up training workshops in schools. In the absence of these, the effectiveness of the evaluation process would always be lacking.

During focus group discussions, peer leaders also confirmed that current systems of monitoring and evaluation of the training programmes which were effective. FG2 stated that:

Yes, the monitoring and evaluation is being effective.

FG1 however said the systems need some improvements:

Although the current monitoring and evaluation process is effective, we however feel that the department should organise follow-up training workshops at schools to give us an opportunity to ask them questions emanating from the ground which our co-ordinators at times cannot answer.

In responding to the question, the DO confirmed that the current monitoring and evaluation processes of the peer leader training programmes were quite effective as the results were showing that it was a worthy investment of resources by the DoE. However, the DO acknowledged some shortcomings of the current process. The DO commented:

The monitoring and evaluation systems for the peer leader training programmes that we have put in place have worked well so far. We, however, will keep improving the system, for ex-

ample, by conducting follow-up training workshops for peer leaders and equip LOTs and LSAs with technical skills for effective evaluating.

TO also concurred:

The current systems being used to monitor and evaluate peer leader training programmes are effective. LSAs and LOTs are managing the processes well in schools and they produce regular comprehensive monthly reports which gives us a picture of the situation in schools. However, the current monitoring and evaluation processes can still be improved.

The above responses showed that while all participants acknowledged the fact that monitoring and evaluation of training programmes for peer leaders was taking place in schools, most of them felt the systems could be improved. Participants highlighted that such systems enhancement could come in the form of providing more training for LSAs and LOTs to equip them with the necessary skills and availability of adequate financial resources. The provision of adequate financial resources to enable the facilitation of follow-up training workshops in schools to ensure that peer leaders, LSAs and LOTs put into practice the theoretical knowledge gained during orientation training.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the methods used in monitoring and evaluation of peer led training programmes in order to determine their effectiveness. The use of varied and appropriate methods of evaluation was found to be critical in bringing out accurate training outcomes. Research participants identified written reports, observations, peer reviews, regular liaisons, feedback forums, interviews, and questionnaires as the most commonly used methods in monitoring and evaluating peer leader training programmes in schools. These findings replicate those of Beatty et al. (2019) who also found out that these methods were the most commonly used when monitoring and evaluating training programmes. The findings also concurred with those of Donia et al. (2018) who concluded that vulnerable learners can be effective evaluators of a peer led group training programmes by giving informative feedback after observing or ex-

periencing the performances of peer leaders after training.

The findings also revealed that the use of questionnaires and interviews as methods of monitoring and evaluation enabled schools to collect both quantitative and qualitative data (Harris and Brown 2010). For example, the use of questionnaires enabled evaluators to collect quantitative data while interviews and discussion forums enabled the collection of qualitative data, such as perceptions, attitudes and feelings. These findings agree with Gaffney et al. (2019) who averred that the use of more than one method of evaluating was found to be effective in enabling evaluators to adequately measure the success of the training programmes. Similarly, the findings of this study correspond with those of Donia et al. (2018) who observed that the use of questionnaires enabled the collection of quantitative data such as; attendance rates, records, teachers rating of learners and peers' rating trainees. Consequently, the use of these methods by all schools would improve the quality of training of peer leaders.

The study also exposed that the DoE was not conducting follow-up training workshops for peer leaders despite the fact that these were quite necessary. The findings align with those of Wang et al. (2008) who advised that follow-up workshops were necessary as they constituted a continuous peer education training process needed in updating knowledge, developing skills, bringing about attitudinal and behavioural changes, and improving the capability of peer leaders to perform their tasks efficiently and effectively in schools. More so, the authors added that follow-up workshops helped to improve and retain peer leaders' knowledge through immediate reinforcement of learning. Hence, if follow-up workshops were being conducted in schools, it would improve the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation of the training programmes.

The study also revealed that the methods used for monitoring and evaluations were appropriate as they provided a comprehensive evaluation and feedback about the training programme. These findings of the paper are in accordance with Gaffney et al. (2019) who also noted that the feedback on the training programme was critical as this helped both trainees

and trainers to identify their limitations and areas of strengths. They further advised that feedbacks may become another mechanism through which trainers were to monitor and evaluate and improve their own performances as they would be aware that they were being monitored and evaluated (Gaffney et al. 2019).

Furthermore, it emerged that the use of interviews as one of the evaluating tools which enabled the assessment of the skills acquired by the peer leaders, such as; communication skills, negotiation skills, interpersonal skills, liaison skills, diplomacy including self-awareness. These findings support those of Brown (1995) who observed that oral examinations were best used as evaluation methods to measure and assess soft skills such as; communication skills, attitudes as well as knowledge levels.

The study also discovered that evaluations of the peer training programmes were only conducted after the training when peer leaders had gone back to their schools. This meant that the initial period of the training was not being evaluated. Thus, UNESCO (2015) advised that in order to be effective, the evaluation of peer led training programmes should be conducted at different stages, such as; pre-training, end of the training and post-training period.

The study also revealed that the current monitoring and evaluation processes of the peer leader training programmes were being conducted by LSAs, LOTs, other school teachers and peers in schools. These findings agree with those of Chirwa (2014) who found out that in order for monitoring and evaluation of a training programme to be effective, the evaluators would need sufficient time to acquaint themselves with the participants in order to make natural and unobtrusive observations which produce emic accounts and descriptions of training results.

The findings also suggested that although the current methods could be regarded as being effective, there was room for improvement through the following: provision of tailor-made training workshops for evaluators, sourcing funding to conduct follow-up training workshops in schools, and including written assessment at the end of each initial training session. These findings support those of Wagner et al. (2005) who observed that one of the factors that leads

to poor quality monitoring and evaluation of training programmes is the inadequate of resources that are usually allocated to the programme and the use of unskilled personnel for evaluation purposes. The authors also recommended that, in order to ensure effective and quality monitoring and evaluation of training programmes, it is critical to provide adequate financial resources and skilled personnel.

Lastly, it emerged from the study that monitoring and evaluation was being conducted at all the stages of the training, that is, from the initial training period, at school during practice and lastly at the end of the calendar year. These findings were in agreement with those of Richards (2001) and Kusek and Rist (2004) who stated that there are three common stages at which training programmes are to be evaluated, namely, the formative, illuminative and summative stages.

CONCLUSION

Though the current methods used for monitoring and evaluation processes are being perceived as effective, there is need to include other methods like pre and post training written tests to assess the change in knowledge acquired by peer leaders. Furthermore, the study revealed that LSAs and LOTs were not given additional training to effectively use these tools to evaluate the training on peer leaders. It is critical that LSAs and LOTs be given this training so that the evaluation becomes more valid because of the technical qualification. The study also revealed that there were no follow-up training workshops in schools which would enable the Training Officer to make informed evaluations on the ground and capture skills in area that future training programmes would need to focus on rather than relying on monthly reports from LSAs. Lastly, an increase to the current budget for the peer led training programme would ensure its success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings, it is recommended that more methods of evaluating peer leader training programmes should be used to enhance the evaluation process. School Evalu-

ators, LSAs and LOTs should undergo the relevant training to enable them to attain the skills to effectively perform this role. Lastly, it is recommended that funding for this programme should be increased to allow the conducting of follow-up training workshops in order to enable training officers to assess peer leaders in their school environments while actually performing their roles.

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