

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES TO DISTANCE
LEARNERS IN A PRIMARY EDUCATION DIPLOMA: A CASE STUDY IN
BOTSWANA**

by

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DECLARATION

“I declare that the thesis which I hereby submit for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

**at the University of Pretoria, is my own work
and has not previously been submitted by me for
a degree at this or any other tertiary institution”.**

Judith Wanene Kamau

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late brother Mr James Muthike Karuri who persistently and consistently helped my parents to raise my school fees against very heavy odds until I finished my secondary education. Thank you my brother for your love for me. Without your foresight, I would not have gone beyond Form 2 level of secondary education. Please continue to rest in peace.

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: Background and context of the study

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Background to the DPE programme	2
1.2.1	Learner support in the DPE programme	3
1.2.2	The teaching-learning system	5
1.2.3	DPE programme implementation	6
1.3	ODL definitions and learner support services	10
1.4	Theoretical framework	11
1.5	Problem statement	14
1.6	Purpose and rationale of the study	15
1.7	Focus of the study	16
1.8	Research questions	17
1.9	Qualitative research design	18
1.9.1	Research sample	19
1.9.2	Data collection sites	19
1.9.3	Data collection methods	20
1.9.4	Data analysis and interpretation	21
1.10	Ethical issues	21
1.10.1	Informed consent	21
1.10.2	Anonymity and confidentiality	22
1.10.3	Credibility and dependability	22
1.11	Significance of the study	22
1.12	Limitations of the study	23
1.13	Conclusion and summary	24
1.14	Organization of the study	24

Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1	Introduction	26
2.2	Contextualizing learner support services in the ODL discipline	27
2.3	Meanings of learner support services	30
2.4	Development of ODL as a field of study	33
2.5	Theoretical underpinnings of ODL	35
2.5.1	Theory of independence and autonomy	36
2.5.2	Theory of interaction and communication	37
2.5.3	Theory of industrializations of teaching	38
2.5.4	Theory of distance education based on empathy	39
2.5.5	Constructivism and learner support services	40
2.6	Learner profiles as a basis for determining learning needs	42
2.6.1	Effects of learning challenges on programme completion in ODL	45
2.7	Role of learner support services in ODL programmes	48
2.7.1	Academic support in ODL	51
2.7.2	Counselling support in ODL	55
2.7.3	Administrative support and stakeholder involvement	56
2.8	ODL policies and the provision of effective learner support services	60
2.9	Role of technologies in the provision of learner support services	65
2.10	Some considerations about the provision of effective learner support services in ODL	67
2.10.1	Limitations in the implementation of effective learner support services	69
2.11	Conclusion	71

Chapter Three: Research design

3.1	Introduction	73
3.2	Research approaches	74
3.2.1	The case study	76
3.2.2	Role of the researcher	77
3.2.3	The research context	78
3.3	The research design	79
3.4	Sampling	82
3.4.1	Number of participants	82
3.4.2	Learner profiles at enrolment stage	85
3.4.3	Preparation for field work	88
3.5	Data collection methods	88
3.5.1	The interview method	89
3.5.2	Review of relevant documents	93
3.6	Research ethics	96
3.6.1	Voluntary participation and informed consent	96
3.6.2	Anonymity and confidentiality	96
3.7	Data analysis	97
3.7.1	Coding procedures	98
3.8	Trustworthiness, credibility and dependability	107
3.9	Limitations of the study	108
3.10	Conclusion	109

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1	Introduction	110
4.2	Distance learners' motivation for joining the DPE programme	111
4.3	Challenges encountered in the learning process	119
4.4	Participants' views about the effectiveness of learner support services	123
4.4.1	Facilitating learner-tutor interaction	135
4.4.2	Facilitating two-way communication	147
4.4.3	Facilitating access to learning resources	157
4.5	Addressing non-academic needs	166
4.6	Monitoring and supervision of learner support implementation	171
4.7	Stakeholder roles and responsibilities	174
4.7.1	Management processes and procedures	177
4.7.2	Policy guidelines and the implementation of learner support services	183
4.8	Implementation constraints	187
4.8.1	Payment as an incentive for services delivery	192
4.9	Opportunities for improvement	195
4.10	Need for empathetic learner support services	200
4.11	Discussion of the findings	201
4.11.1	Satisfaction with learner support services	201
4.11.2	Accessibility and responsiveness	205
4.11.3	ODL policy gap	207
4.12	Summary and conclusion	208
4.12.1	Distance learners' perceptions about the effectiveness of learner support services	209
4.12.2	Perceptions about strengths and weaknesses of learner support services	209
4.12.3	Perceptions about stakeholder roles and responsibilities	210
4.12.4	Barriers inhibiting implementation and opportunities for improvement	211
4.13	Conclusion	211

Chapter Five: Conclusions and recommendations

5.1	Introduction	213
5.2	Overview of the study	214
5.3	Data collection methods and analysis	218
5.4	Main findings and their implications	219
5.4.1	Contribution of learner support services to distance learners' progress	219
5.4.2	Perceptions about meeting learner needs	222
5.4.3	Perceptions about effectiveness of academic support	224
5.4.4	Perceptions about effectiveness of counselling support	227
5.4.5	Perceptions about access to learning resources	228
5.4.6	Perceptions about monitoring and supervision	229
5.5	Implementation barriers	232
5.6	Significance of the study	234
5.6.1	Contribution to the existing body of knowledge	235
5.7	Limitations of the study	237
5.8	Recommendations	238
5.8.1	Recommended structure for effective implementation of learner support services	240
5.8.2	Implications for tutors, policy makers and ODL institutions	244
5.8.3	Recommendations for decentralized learner support services	245
5.9	Emerging issues for future research	247
5.10	Conclusion	248

References	249
Appendices and definitions	284

List of tables

Table 1.1	Completion and non-completion rates for the 2002/2003 cohort	5
Table 1.2	DPE Programme Structure	6
Table 1.3	Criteria for effective learner support services	8
Table 1.4	Issues that guided the investigation in this study	12
Table 2.1	Intentions of the Distance Education Mainstreaming Policy of UB	63
Table 3.1	Rationale for the research design	81
Table 3.2	Number of participants	84
Table 3.3	Sample selection criteria	85
Table 3.4	Age range and work experience	86
Table 3.5	Previous academic backgrounds and subject combinations	87
Table 3.6	Document review	95
Table 3.7	Codes - Primary document table	99
Table 4.1	Distance learners' motivation for enrolling in the DPE programme	111
Table 4.2	Need for learner support services	123
Table 4.3	Stakeholder participation	174
Table 5.1	Structure for the provision of effective learner support services	241

List of Figures

Figure 4.1	Reasons for enrolling in the DPE programme	114
Figure 4.2	Benefits from the in-service programme	115
Figure 4.3	Challenges faced by distance learners	120
Figure 4.4	Responding to academic needs	127
Figure 4.5	Access to tutors	128
Figure 4.6	Facilitating learner-tutor interaction	136
Figure 4.7	Facilitating two-way communication	148

Figure 4.8	Access to learning resources	158
Figure 4.9	Addressing non-academic needs	167
Figure 4.10	Monitoring mechanisms	171
Figure 4.11	Stakeholder involvement	177
Figure 4.12	Roles and responsibilities	178
Figure 4.13	Implementation constraints	187
Figure 4.14	Opportunities for improvement	196
Figure 5.1	Proposed distribution of study centres	246

List of appendices and definitions

Appendix 1	Definitions of key terms	284
Appendix 2	Interview Schedule I: Distance learners	288
Appendix 3	Interview Schedule II: Tutors, and learner support coordinators	290
Appendix 4	Interview Schedule III: Decision makers	292
Appendix 5	Letter of Permission from the MoESD, in Botswana	294
Appendix 6:	Letter of informed consent for distance learners	295
Appendix 7	Letter of informed consent learner support providers	297
Appendix 8	Clearance Certificate from the University of Pretoria	299

Abbreviations and acronyms

AIOU	Alama Iqbal Open University
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
BGCSE	Botswana General Certificate of Education
BNLS	Botswana National Library Service
BOCODOL	Botswana College of Distance and Open learning
CAD	Centre for Academic Develoment
BODOLA	Botswana Distance and Open Learning Association
CCE	Centre for Continuing Education
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
DDE	Department of Distance Education
DE	Distance Education
DEASA	Distance Education Association of Southern Africa
DPE	Diploma in Primary Education by distance mode
EFA	Education for All
DVET	Department of Vocational Education and Training
HE	Higher education
ICCE	International Council for Correspondence Education
ICDE	International Council for Distance Education
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
LINC	Learning International Network Consortium
MoESD	Ministry of Education and Skills Development
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NADEOSA	National Association of Distance Education Organisation of South Africa
NAMCOL	Namibia College of Open Learning
n.d	no date
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
OUT	Open University of Tanzania
PL	Primary Lower
PU	Primary Upper
PTC	Primary Teacher Certificate holder
RNPE	Revised National Policy on Education of 1994
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
SMS	Short Messaging system
TT &D	Department of Teacher Training and Development
UBAI	Unified Board of Affiliated Institutions

UB	University of Botswana
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNISA	University of South Africa
ZOU	Zimbabwe Open University

Abstract

This study was motivated by my desire to understand participants' perceptions about the effectiveness of learner support services and their contribution to distance learners' progress and programme completion in the DPE programme in Botswana. The investigation was carried out to find out why despite the provision of learner support services, there were low completion rates and high incomplete rates in the final year (2002/2003 cohort) of the DPE programme. The study also intended to understand the strengths and weaknesses of learner support services and make recommendations for improvement. A qualitative case study research design was applied. Group and individual interviews were conducted with participants. Data were analysed using Atlas ti computer software which simplified the management of the large corpus of data generated during the fieldwork.

The study found that there was need for sustained learner-tutor and learner-learner interaction and regular communication with the supporting institution during the learning process. This would require planning and aligning learner support services to identified learner needs, access to learning resources including the existence and application of effective monitoring and supervision mechanisms for academic, counselling and administrative support in order to ensure commitment and accountability of learner support providers. In order to reduce isolation which is created by the physical separation between learners and service providers, the study recommended a structure for the provision of decentralized learner support services that are as close as possible to where distance learners live and work for ease of access.

The study further found that there is need for policy guidelines and management structures to facilitate the provision of effective learner support services for the benefit of distance learners.

Key words: Learner support, distance learners, diploma in primary education, academic, counselling support.