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

by

Judith Wanene Kamau

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies

Faculty of Education

University of Pretoria

SOUTH AFRICA

Supervisor:	**Professor M Nkomo**
Co-Supervisor:	**Dr J Hendrikz**

September 2012

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.

Acknowledgment

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Background and context of the study

Chapter Two: Literature review

Chapter Three: Research design

Chapter Four: Findings

Chapter Five: Conclusions and recommendations

List of tables

List of Figures

List of appendices and definitions

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.