

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The educators, learners and schools need support services in order to provide effective education. Support services are one of the components of the education system (Steyn, 1997:14). According to Steyn (1997:14), an education system is the structure of effective teaching intended to meet the educational needs of the target group in a specific territory.

According to Smith (1982:73) education systems should adopt an attitude of education as a basic human right, strives for delivery rather than mere access, and consider all aspects of child development. Smith (1982:81) states further that the education system, whether formal, non-formal or informal should aim first at stimulating individual development. The target group of any education system should receive effective education to meet the needs and development of its territory as well as development of its human potential.

Education systems can be influenced by external and internal determinants. According to Steyn (1997:100) internal determinants imply the forces and factors in the education, where one component influences the other either positively or negatively. Malao (1985:202) defines internal determinants as those determinants that take their origin within the education system of a particular country. Steyn (1997:100) also states that internal determinants may be educative, historic, or interactive in character. On external determinants, Steyn (1997:101) argues that there are external forces and factors which influence the generality of the educational system to the uniqueness of its characteristics. Internal and external determinants are discussed in Chapter 3.

It is very important to investigate through both literature and empirical research the factors that hamper effective education and training, and to investigate the introduction of upgrading support services at secondary schools in the education system of the Northern Province, as the province is mainly rural and has poor infrastructure.

The necessity of support services has influenced the researcher to investigate the extent to which support services are offered in the education system of the Northern Province, and to make recommendations on additional support services that can be offered or introduced.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Steyn (1997:68) and Steyn *et al.* (1997:99) support services are specialised services that are not typically education services, but are aimed at improving teaching and learning. NEPI (1993:221) states that support services in education cover all areas of difficulty experienced by students within the general education system. Ruperti (as

quoted by Van Schalkwyk, 1995:20) describes support services as organised services to help individual schools so that their education should run smoothly.

Lazarus (1997:2) states that education support services include all human and other resources that provide support to individual learners and all aspects of the education system. He further states that, while these services attempt to minimise and remove learning and development barriers, they also focus on the prevention of barriers and on the development of a supportive learning environment for learners.

In terms of Section 3(4)(o) of the National Education Policy Act No. 27 of 1996, it is stated that the Education Minister may determine national policy for education support services, including areas like health, welfare, career and vocational development and counseling and guidance for educational institutions. These should hence, fall within the responsibility of the Department of Education. In this regard, the National Education Policy Act shows the importance of support services in the education system. To enhance the education system of South Africa, and the Northern Province in particular, support services must be provided for the learners and educators by the provincial Department of Education, businesses and non-governmental organisations in the Northern Province.

The White Paper on Education and Training (1995:40) states that education and training are basic human rights. In order for the Northern Province to offer effective education and training as a fulfillment of basic human rights, education should be enhanced by the necessary support services. The Kagisano Report as quoted by Smith (1982:127) states that becoming educated means acquiring confidence, skills, abilities and the capacity to persuade, organise and act, and also means developing an aesthetic and moral sense. Support services are aimed at providing support to the educator, the learner and the education activities and structure, to make effective education possible (Steyn, 1997:100).

According to Lazarus (1997:27), in South Africa there are a number of factors which contribute to a large percentage of learners regarded as being "at a risk". However despite the large number of such learners, services and facilities to support them are limited, and in some cases inappropriate and ineffective. Limited support services in the Northern Province education system according to Manenzhe (1999), has led to a high pupil/educator ratio, high matric failure rate, demotivated educators and educators who remain underqualified for years.

Ramathlodi (1999:1) states that there is an urgent need for libraries, laboratories, sporting facilities, furniture and learning materials at schools throughout the Northern Province.

The Northern Province is composed of poor communities. Lazarus (1997:13) states that poverty-stricken communities are also poorly resourced communities, which have been characterised by limited educational facilities, large classes with high pupil/educator ratios, inadequately trained staff and inadequate teaching and learning material. Mcgurk (1997:19) states that in poor communities marked by a high level of unemployment, there is little hope of schooling and students begin to contribute actively, but unwittingly to their own further alienation. As soon as the proportion of resentful learners is large

enough, a psychology of defiance begins to prevail, the teaching and learning process is disrupted, and learners become further disadvantaged.

To restore the culture of teaching, learning and management, The White Paper of Education and Training Act (1995:41) states that it is the duty of the Northern Province Department of Education to introduce mechanisms that will enable provision of support services to all educators, the learners and teaching activities and structures. Provision of support services in an education system can prevent learning breakdown and it is imperative that mechanisms are structured into the education system to break down existing barriers (Lazarus, 1997:19).

Given this background, the central problem that this research project attempts to answer revolves around the following question:

What support services are needed to make education and training more effective in the education system of the Northern Province?

1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the research project was to determine the needs and the significance of support services in the education system of the Northern Province.

Objectives of the research were:

- To investigate the theory regarding support services as component of the education system.
- To determine from the literature which internal and external factors underlie the needs of support services in secondary schools.
- To determine empirically which support services are needed to enhance education in the Northern Province.

1.4 DETERMINATION OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

The research project focuses on the ways and means of providing necessary support services in the education system of the Northern Province.

1.5 METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

The following research methods were used:

1.5.1 Literature study

A literature survey consisting of books, reports from appointed commissions of the Department of Education, legislation, journals, articles, newspapers, specialist reports, union conference papers and educational conference papers, was conducted.

1.5.2 Survey by means of a questionnaire

A survey was used to collect information, and the survey instrument was a questionnaire (Borg & Gall, 1989:415). Questionnaires were given to principals, deputy principals and/or heads of departments and educators. The aims of the questionnaire were to:

- determine whether there are existing support services offered to learners, educators and schools.
- determine the need for support services for educators, learners, and teaching activities and structures.
- determine ways in which educators, learners and schools can be assisted in teaching and learning through the provision of support services.

1.5.3 Population

A list of secondary schools was obtained from Region 3 of the Department of Education. No distinction was made between urban and rural schools because some of the urban areas are considered to be rural areas according to TLC demarcations (Mahlale, 1999).

Thirty questionnaires were taken to each of the six regions of the Northern Province. By means of a random sample, ten secondary schools were chosen per region. Only secondary schools were chosen due to the fact that the researcher is familiar with problems experienced by secondary schools as he is an educator at a rural secondary school in a remote area of the Northern Province. As such he is aware of the acute shortage of resources in these schools. Each of these schools received 3 questionnaires. Principals, the deputy principals and/or heads of department and educators were requested to complete the questionnaires. Sixty schools received 3 questionnaires each. A total of 180 questionnaires were completed.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

CHAPTER 1: Introduction.

CHAPTER 2: Theory regarding support services in education.

CHAPTER 3: Internal and external factors underlying the needs for support services in secondary schools.

CHAPTER 4: Empirical research.

CHAPTER 5: Summary, findings and recommendations.

1.7 FEASIBILITY OF THE STUDY

Sufficient material was available at the Ferdinand Postma, Makwarela and the University of Venda libraries. Documents were also obtained from the Northern Province Department of Education.