

Support services perceived necessary for learner relationships by Limpopo educators

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After more than a decade of democracy, based on rule of law and human rights in South Africa, some parts of the education system are still lagging far behind others. Following reports that the provincial departments of education are neglecting schools, especially in the far-flung rural areas of the country, a survey was undertaken on the core pedagogical function of educators. The survey focused on their perceptions of the need for creating and improving their relationships with their learners and the availability of support services to help them improve these relationships. A questionnaire was submitted to a sample of relatively experienced school managers and educators in Limpopo province. Most respondents felt the need to establish and improve such relationships, but a relatively large percentage also perceived such support services to be either non-existent or unavailable to them.

Introduction

The South African education system emerged in 1994 after a national history of three centuries of political fragmentation. Sixteen different geographically and ethnically based departments of education were merged into one system shortly after the advent of democracy in 1994. One of the most challenging tasks was to bring the education systems of the former semi-independent black 'national states' or 'homelands' (Bantustans) into the national fold.

These historically disadvantaged areas tend to lag behind the previously more advantaged areas. Matomela (2006:10) reports that in some cases learners still walk as far as 20 km to school and have to bring their own water. Among the teacher unions there is a general impression that the provincial departments of education are neglecting these schools. The departments of education supply little transport for the learners, they do not train members of governing bodies (Maluleka, 2008) for their tasks, the feeding schemes are inadequate or inconsistent, and the lack of infrastructure (such as electricity and new textbooks) at schools does not receive adequate attention. Renovation programmes are far behind schedule (Mbeki, 2006:5). Special efforts by the provincial departments are required because of the abject poverty still prevalent in the rural areas (Mbeki, 2006:5).

Conceptual framework and literature survey

Two key concepts in this research were 'education support services' and 'teachers' relationships with their learners'. What follows is a clarification of these two concepts and a brief discussion of the relation between them and the education system. The state of education support services in South Africa, and the lack of published research on this important component of the South

African education system, will also be touched upon.

According to Steyn (1997:68; 99), support services are specialized functions that are not typically educational themselves, but are aimed at improving teaching and learning in a particular education system. The compilers of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI, 1993:221) contended that support services in education covered all areas of difficulty experienced by those involved in the general education system (Mashau, 2000). According to Van Schalkwyk (1995:20), support services are organized in a system to help individual schools so that their education can be more effective. In Lazarus's (1997:2) opinion, education support services include all human and other resources that provide support to individual learners as well as to other aspects of the education system. While these services attempt to minimize and remove learning and development barriers, they also focus on the prevention of such barriers and on the development of a supporting learning environment for learners.

Taking all of the above into consideration, Steyn, Steyn, De Waal and Wolhuter (2002:106) concluded that "education support services (are services) aimed at achieving effective teaching and learning". The latest available definition (Steyn & Wolhuter, 2008:8), that "support services can be defined as the specialized non-educational services needed to improve the quality and effectiveness of educational activities" does not differ substantially from the previous definitions cited above. In this article the latter will be accepted as a working definition. According to Steyn and Wolhuter (2008:8-9), the support services differ from one education system to another according to the needs at a specific time and situation. Support services are of the following types:

- Support services to the educator: these include those non-educational services required to optimize the work of the educator and to help him/her solve problems that could impede his/her effectiveness as teacher/educator. The following are typical examples: subject advisory and professional services, educator research services, communication services and teacher associations.
- Support services to the learners: these include those non-educational services required to assist the learner to maximally gain from the available teaching and learning activities. The following are typical examples: school psychological services, school social work services, remedial/special education services, career counselling services, school transport services, school feeding schemes, medical and dentistry services, and accommodation services.
- Support services to the teaching activities and structures: these are non-educational services required to assist the provision of effective education. The following are typical examples: education media services and examination services.

According to the Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), as well as a White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995:40) (a policy document that preceded the promulgation of the National Education Policy Act of 1996),

education and training are basic human rights. The National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) states that the Minister of Education may determine national policy for education, including policy for the provision of support services in areas such as health, welfare, career and vocational development, and counseling and guidance. The different provincial departments of education should provide these services to learners and educators in order to ensure effective education and training as fulfilment of the basic human rights requirement.

The Department of Education's Policy of Whole-School Evaluation provided a framework for the provision of support services. On 26 July 2001, the Minister of Education announced the Policy on Whole-School Evaluation (South Africa, 2001). The Policy is aimed at improving the overall quality of education in South African schools. Whole-school evaluation is not an end in itself, but the first step in the process of school improvement and quality enhancement. The first intent is to redress the unbalanced and inequitable distribution of education services, and secondly to develop a world-class education system suitable to meet the needs of the 21st century. Among the aims of whole-school evaluation is strengthening the support given to schools by different professional support services. The whole-school evaluation cycle includes pre-evaluation surveys/visits, school self-evaluation, detailed on-site evaluation, post-evaluation reporting and post-evaluation support. The Policy statement makes provision for provincial supervisory units (Section 3.3) which will carry out evaluations as well as district support services (Section 3.4) which will, among other things (Section 3.4.3), co-ordinate staff development programmes in response to educators' individual professional needs, the findings of whole-school evaluation, and the requirements of provincial and national policies and initiatives.

Provincial education departments drafted policies on Whole-School Development in executing the policy of whole-school evaluation. For example, Circular 25/2008 of the Gauteng Department of Education makes provision for such Institutional Planning and Development (Gauteng Department of Education, 2008). All Gauteng schools are required to draft School Development Plans, covering all aspects of the school, including teaching and learning in the classroom, curricular and extracurricular activities, management and governance, administration, community involvement, physical maintenance and development (Gauteng Department of Education, 2008). The Circular states (Section 8.1.3.) that the Institutional Development and Support Officer of the Department must continuously monitor the implementation of school development plans and provide the necessary support to principals, educators and School Governing Bodies to ensure the achievement of goals towards the delivery of quality education.

Steyn (2008:96-97) lists some of the support services provided for educators during the past decade:

- A new Assessment Policy for the General Education and Training Band approved and published in November 1998. This entails an extensive

campaign to familiarize educators, provincial officials and parents with the new assessment processes.

- A life skills and HIV/AIDS programme, implemented at the beginning of 1998 to inform learners, educators, and parents in general on the rights as well as the responsibilities of carriers of HIV/AIDS.
- The Culture of Learning and Teaching Service (COLTS), the aims of which include changing the mentality of educators who have strayed from their professional ethics and are performing below the expectations of communities.
- The Foundation for Education, Science and Technology (FEST) which publishes a number of cultural and scientific journals, some of which are designed to provide support for educators in the classroom.

A general problem in South African society is the lack of connection between rhetoric and reality, i.e. between official policy and implementation or delivery (cf. Xaba, 2006). This applies no less to the field of education. Mention was made, in the introductory paragraph, of the persistent lack of support services in previously disadvantaged areas. Cognisance should also be taken of Ndou's (1999: pers.comm., primary health-care co-ordinator, Limpopo) observations, that due to a lack of resources, professional services have been minimized or even terminated in urban South African areas while they have never existed in the rural areas. This is a disturbing conclusion in view of the generally acknowledged view that teachers should be supported by a wide range of professionals in the execution of their professional duties, including their relationships with their learners (Mashau, 2000:7). Support should provide valid information and assistance for dealing with practical problems (Westling *et al.*, 2006). In research in Scotland where more than 500 teachers from all types of schools across the country were interviewed, some of the key findings were: More than 75% of respondents stated that psychological stress at work had a knock-on effect on their physical well-being, whilst two-thirds of respondents reported personal problems which affected their work (Finlayson, 2006). In South Africa, Wolhuter and Van Staden (2008) found that stress related to learner discipline problems in schools caused 85% of educators to be sometimes or regularly unhappy in their work, sometimes or regularly caused tension in the family lives of 58% of teachers, and health problems in the case of 54% of the teachers.

In a certain sense, according to Oosthuizen (1997:72), teachers find themselves *in loco parentis*. This expression does not mean that they actually replace parents during school hours or that parents delegate their legal duties to the teacher, but rather that teachers should discharge their responsibilities towards the child during school hours as if they were themselves the child's parents (Potgieter, 2007:857).

The *in loco parentis* principle underscores several important aspects with respect to teachers' (pedagogical) relationships with their learners. Teachers should not only help the learners give meaning to their worlds and to their existence in society (Mclaren, 1994:224) but should also lead, guide, enable,

unfold and equip the learner towards mature adulthood (Van Dyk, 1993:155; Van Dyk, 1997:39). They should motivate their learners (Stipek, 1988:10), help those experiencing stress (Murelema, 1999; Conley & Woosley, 2000:180), supply occupational guidance to learners (Murelema, 1999; Lazarus, 1999:33), maintain discipline (Mabeba & Prinsloo, 2000:34; Rank, 2004:1), and promote a class atmosphere conducive to effective teaching and learning (Kruger, Oberholzer, Van Schalkwyk & Whittle, 1983:165).

We chose to focus on the provision of the services supporting these relationships because of their pedagogical significance. We concurred with Van Brummelen (1994:178) that good teachers recognize that their pedagogy profoundly affects their relationships with their learners. Good teachers build relationships that will bind their learners and themselves together in a common purpose. They take into account their knowledge of the learners' background and emotional needs, learning styles and development stages, and their relationships (Parcel, 2008:2). In other words, pedagogy involves more than processing content or going through the formal motions (such as being in the classroom or mechanically reading from a textbook).

As this project focused on support services relating to educator-learner relationships, we had to develop theory about teacher-learner relationships. There is as yet no standard view of what 'education' actually means or entails, nor has every aspect of it been empirically verified (Lagerweij & Lagerweij-Voogt, 2005:337; Van Crombrugge, 2006:12)). There are several theories about education and the educand (the person being educated), such as about the educand as needy, as essentially a spiritual being for whom adaptation to the prevailing circumstances is of secondary relevance, as a natural being to be assisted towards successful adaptation to the surroundings but (unlike an animal), also towards changing those surroundings, as a person subject to a norm- and value-horizon. All these theories (Böhm, 2005:398) share the notion of the educand as impressionable (even malleable). We preferred to use the 'participation', 'attachment relationship', and 'exemplary education' theories since, in our opinion, these did justice to the well-roundedness of both educator and educand as human beings.

Education is always two-way traffic, in which both educator and child have to search for the correct approach to the other (in terms of personality and temperament) (Ex, 2007:24). According to the participation theory, the educator has the duty of guiding the child/learner, but both of them are under way to some or other destination. To educate, says Ex (2007:59), is nothing more or less than creating the conditions that would facilitate the journey together (Van Crombrugge, 2006:13).

In Ex's (2007:24) opinion, the bond between educator and child/learner should also be 'an attachment relationship', in other words, an emotional bond. A caring and guiding relationship can pre-empt and/or alleviate stress in the child/learner. Well-attached children start life positively, they have more self-confidence, are socially more competent, better motivated, and more open to others' feelings. Good attachment with the educator influences those

deep emotions that are important for establishing and maintaining intimate relations for the rest of their lives (Ex, 2007:91).

In the context of the theory of 'exemplary education', Van der Hoeven (2007:11) contends that the educator should be trained to keep an eye on developing the skills of his/her learners, and to help and motivate the learners to learn. Apart from being a master of his or her subject, the teacher should also be a pedagogue, in other words, a mature person whose example can be followed (Buys, 2007:61). Teachers require guidance, support and ongoing information for understanding the role of setting an example to learners with moral or other problems.

Most teachers also require specific training and a constant supply of information about the primary functions of their occupation, such as teaching itself (creating a positive classroom climate, the value and means of positive disciplining, education in the broader sense of the word, planning, assessment and remedial work) (Böhm, 2005:398). Lessing and Dreyer (2007:120) furthermore contend that co-operation and enthusiasm will contribute to more disciplined behaviour in learners, and to their quality of teaching as well as of the attitudes and emotions of all involved. Teachers who focus on positive communication and interaction with the learners are more able to handle learners with problem behaviour, and therefore experience less disciplinary problems. This theory about educator-learner relationships is reflected in the second column of Tables 1 and 2.

Support services are, according to Steyn and Wolhuter (2008), one of the four basic components of any education system — the other three being education policy, administrative and organizational structure, and teaching structure, i.e. educational levels, educational institutions, curricula, methods, educators, learners, medium of instruction, examinations, and physical facilities. Research on post-1994 education in South Africa has concentrated up to now on these other three components (policy analysis, curriculum studies, etc.) leaving no less important support services as an un-researched field. We worked on the premise that the availability of education support services is a *sine qua non* for the establishment and maintenance of sound, quality, educational relationships between educator and learner. For example, when stress is found to hamper educators in establishing good relationships with their learners, the educators need psychological support.

Given the indications of the inadequate provision of education support services, especially in historically disadvantaged areas/schools, and the fact that support services are a largely un-researched component of the South African education system, given the importance of education relationships between educators and learners, and given the relation between the provision of education support services and educator-learner relationships, we decided to investigate the provision of those education support services that provide an underpinning for the establishment and maintenance of sound educator-learner relationships in Limpopo province, as a representative case of a historically disadvantaged area in South Africa.

We assumed that on the strength of their historical weight, the participants in the research being professionals, credibility could be given to their perceptions in this regard. The term 'perception' was taken to mean 'to come to comprehend or grasp' (Sinclair, 1999:1097), and 'to understand or think about something in a particular way' (Wehmeier, 2002:863).

Research problem

The following problem was investigated:

Which support services, according to the perceptions of educators, are needed in the historically disadvantaged Limpopo province to improve learner–educator relationships?

This problem statement narrowed the field to only one aspect of the 'support services complex' as discussed by Mashau (2000), namely, to those support services that would enhance the pedagogical quality of the relationships of the educators with their learners. Such support services would include the life skills and HIV/AIDS programme, the support services provided in accordance with the new assessment policy and with the whole-school development policy, the COLTS and the FEST programmes.

Delimitation of geographical area

It was mentioned above that, while there are indications of a general inadequate supply of education support services in South Africa, it is the historically disadvantaged areas that suffer most. Since the education system, according to Smith (1982:73) and Steyn (1997:14), should have the capacity to meet the requirements of the target group in a specific territory, attention was prioritized to these disadvantaged areas, i.e. the former homeland and far-flung rural areas.

The Limpopo province in northern South Africa, which now includes the former Venda and Leboa homelands, as well as a previous white area, was selected. The province covers an area of 123,910 km² and has a population of approximately five million. The province comprises poor communities and schools that are inadequately resourced (Lazarus, 1997:13), which in turn leads to high school-dropout levels, unemployment, alienation, and a psychology of defiance (McGurk, 1997:19; Simango, 2006). According to the latest available statistics, the educator–learner ratio in schools in the Limpopo Province is 35.3:1, compared with a national average of 33.6:1 and a ratio of 29.8:1 in the Free State province (Department of Education, 2005:15). In 2004 only 0.6% of matric learners who passed, passed with distinction, compared with a national average of 2.8%, and 6.6% in the Western Cape (Department of Education, 2005:23).

Research design

Aim of empirical instrument.

The aim in this investigation was to gather information regarding the perceived (by the participants) need and availability of education support services that would enhance teachers' pedagogical relationships with their learners.

Measuring instrument

A self-constructed questionnaire was administered. Interviews with all the participants in the sample would not have been feasible, given the geographical size of the province and the difficulties in arranging interviews.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In Part A, respondents were requested to furnish biographical information about the school and themselves (location of the school: urban, rural, farm; status of the school: public or independent; gender of the respondent; and years of experience as principal/deputy/head of department/teacher). This information was obtained in order to gain an impression of (a) the experience of respondents, i.e. their historical weight, and (b) the location of the schools.

Part B contained seven items pertaining to the relationship between educator and learner. The items in this part took the form of a four-point Likert scale where respondents could respond with:

1. No need for the service at all;
2. The service is needed to a lesser extent;
3. The service is needed to a fairly great extent; or
4. The service is definitely needed.

They could also respond with 'yes, the particular service is available' or 'no, the support service is not available' with respect to each of the seven items.

Sampling

A combination of what McMillan and Schumacher (2001:178-179) regard as purposeful, quota and random sampling was used. The Limpopo province was purposefully selected for reasons supplied above. From each of the six departmental regions making up the Limpopo province, a quota of 10 schools was selected randomly ($n = 60$). In each of the selected schools, the principal, the deputy, and a randomly selected educator or head of department were selected ($n = 180$). The sample included 60 principals, 58 deputies, and 62 teachers. Because one of the researchers visited the schools by appointment and administered the questionnaires personally, a 100% return was achieved. This method was combined with interviews in order to gain deeper insight into problems respondents were experiencing in their relationships with learners.

Validity and reliability

Construct validity was ensured by having three of the researchers intersubjectively involved in the construction of the questionnaire (Jaeger, 1988: 326), and by means of a pilot study. The pilot study entailed submission of the questionnaire to five experienced school principals for their comments. This study helped to test the instrument for feasibility, semantic problems, and stability, and thereby increased its agreement reliability (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:247).

Because of the sampling technique used, the findings could be substantively generalized, because the researchers were confident that they had met the criteria for this form of generalization (as formulated in Jaeger, 1988:326).

Processing of data

That Statistical Consultation Services of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, processed the data. This process yielded the frequencies and percentages required for the purposes of reporting.

Results

Biographical data of schools and respondents

Most of the questionnaires (135; 75%) were completed by respondents attached to schools in rural areas.

No principal had fewer than 5 years' experience, 27 (45%) had between 6 and 10 years experience, 14 (23.3%) had between 16 and 20 years, and 4 (6.6%) had 21 or more years' experience. Four (6.6%) did not report their experience.

None of the deputy principals or heads of department had less than 5 years experience, 34 (58.6%) had between 6 and 10 years' experience, and 24 (41.4%) had between 11 and 16 years' experience.

There were 8 (12.9%) teachers with less than 5 years' experience, 16 (25.8%) with between 6 and 10 years' experience, 11 (17.7%) with between 16 and 20 years' experience, and 12 (19.4%) with longer experience.

The relationship between the educator and the learner

Table 1 summarizes the finding on whether the respondents perceived the different relationships between the teacher (educator) and his/her learner to be needed.

The overwhelming majority of respondents perceived the seven educator–learner relationships to be essential.

The availability of the relevant support services

Table 2 presents the participants' perceptions as to the availability of support services necessary for the maintenance of the various educator–learner relationships.

Most respondents perceived the support services required for good educator–learner relationships to be present at or available to the schools in which they worked. Although incidences of perceived unavailability of services were higher than one would expect, the high incidence of the perceived unavailability of support services for helping learners with stress was conspicuous.

Discussion

Although a random sample was taken of schools in the six Limpopo education department regions, by far the greatest majority of the schools in the sample were found to be situated in rural areas. This confirmed our surmise that most of the schools in the province were in rural areas, and hence probably neglected.

As a group, the respondents were relatively well experienced. Despite poor working conditions (in terms of under-resourced schools), the majority per-

Table 1 Participants' perceived need for relationships between educator and his/her learner

Item number	Item (Pedagogical relationship)	No need at all (%)	Needed to a lesser extent (%)	Needed to a fairly greater extent (%)	Definitely needed (%)
1	Creates a positive relationship with his/her learners	3.4	2.9	17.7	76.0
2	Is responsible for the learners	3.4	4.0	23.9	68.8
3	Looks after the welfare of his/her learners	1.7	5.1	22.3	70.9
4	Understands how to motivate his/her learners	3.9	0.6	10.1	85.4
5	Helps his/her learners cope with stress	3.4	2.2	14.5	79.9
6	Gives occupational guidance to his/her learners	2.2	1.7	11.7	84.4
7	Maintains and promotes a positive classroom climate	3.9	3.4	8.4	84.4

severed; few had less than five years' experience. This was an indication of their tenacity and their commitment to the profession. It was also an indication of the 'historical weight' of the group: their views (perceptions) were probably credible.

As could be expected from educators with this level of practical experience, most of them thought that the seven facets of the relationship between an educator and his/her learners were important. What was disturbing from a pedagogical point of view, was that between approximately 4% and 7% of the respondents perceived the pedagogical relationships mentioned in the seven items to be 'not needed' or 'needed to a lesser extent'.

One possible explanation for this is inadequate initial teacher education as well as little in-service feedback from their superiors, including the Department of Education. Because teachers received inadequate support with respect to the discharge of their pedagogical duties in terms of these seven items (see Table 2), they may have begun to feel that even these relationships had lost value and significance.

Learners cannot learn effectively from a teacher (educator) who does not value a positive pedagogical relationship with them. During interviews about this and other problems with some of the respondents, it emerged that some school managers indeed ran their schools as 'closed units' with very little input from the learners or from other parties.

Table 2 Participants' perceptions as to the availability of support services necessary for maintenance of various educator–learner relationships

Item number	Educator–learner relationship	Yes: Support services required for this relationship available at/to school	No: Support services
1	Educator receives support to create a positive relationship with his/her learners	87.2	12.8
2	Educator receives support in the form of information regarding his/her responsibility to the learners	71.9	28.1
3	Educator receives support in building competence with respect to looking after the welfare of his/her learners	73.3	26.7
4	Educator receives support in understanding how to motivate his/her learners	78.2	21.8
5	Educator receives support to create a positive relationship with his/her learners	40.6	59.4
6	Educator receives support in the form of information regarding his/her responsibility to the learners	63.9	36.1
7	Educator receives support in building competence with respect to looking after the welfare of his/her learners	78.9	21.1

Although by far the majority of the respondents indicated that information regarding educators' responsibilities was indeed needed (Table 1), it seems that, in the case of nearly a third of the respondents, such information was perceived not to be available to them (Table 2). Interviews with respondents revealed that, in some cases, they indeed had access to such information but failed to make use of it. They could also have made use of their initial teacher-training textbooks and sought access to regular communications from the Department (unless great distances or inadequate postal services made the delivery of documentation, e.g. circulars, impossible).

Although the majority of the respondents felt the need for educators to be competent in looking after the welfare of the learners (Table 1, Item 3), nearly a third of them perceived that the support services required to maintain such a relationship were not available at/to their schools. This finding revealed that a minute percentage (1.7% of all respondents — Table 1) did not have insight into the *in loco parentis* position of the teacher. Table 2 (Item 3) revealed that

information and support with the purpose of helping teachers (educators) in this regard, were perceived by a third of respondents not to be available in and to the school.

The same applied to the need for motivating learners to achieve better at their tasks (Table 1). In this case, some respondents also perceived that the necessary support services were not available in their schools (Table 2). Teachers learn about motivating learners during their initial training but they need updated information and support about this important facet of their work. The fact, that some teachers did not seem to have access to this information and support services, can be ascribed to failure on their part to acquire the necessary documentation and services, *inter alia* by merely consulting their advisors.

As far as helping learners suffering from stress is concerned, the majority of the respondents reacted favourably because they thought that it was required from an educator (teacher) to be able to assist (Table 1). The fact that 5.6% of the respondents perceived that there was no support in helping learners with stress (Table 2) could be ascribed either to the fact that none of their learners ever experienced stress or that they were not competent enough to detect signs of stress in their learners. In the deep rural areas of Limpopo province there were hardly any schools with professional counsellors attached to the staff. This could be seen in the fact that 59.4% of the respondents perceived that support services of this nature were non-existent in their school(s).

Much the same can be concluded with respect to the task of giving occupational guidance to the learners. In this case, however, they could hardly argue that learners did not need any occupational guidance, as 4% of the respondents' indicated (Table 1). A disturbing fact was that a large percentage of them (36.1%) perceived support services in respect of providing such guidance not to be available to their school(s).

In the case of the maintenance of discipline, one could argue that 7.3% of the respondents (Table 1) saw no or little need for the maintenance of discipline in their schools because they had actually experienced no or few disciplinary problems. It is also possible, however, that they thought the behaviour of their learners was 'normal'. The fact, that 21.1% of the respondents thought that support services with regard to the maintenance of discipline were not available in their schools, was intriguing. It subsequently emerged during interviews that senior teachers in the school could or did not give support with respect to this, and that novice teachers coming from training institutions (universities) where they had received training in maintaining discipline could not impart any of their knowledge to the older hands.

Table 1 reveals a reasonably favourable picture. Only a relatively small percentage of teachers perceived the different aspects of relationships between teachers (educators) and their learners to be of no or little need. Table 2 paints a bleaker picture. The perceived unavailability of the support services to help the teacher cope with the requirements of the different pedagogical

relationships between teacher (educator) and learner is a serious obstacle in the way of effective education.

Recommendation

This survey revealed that Limpopo province is still a relatively backward rural area. Apart from only one relatively small city, its inhabitants live in smallish towns and far-flung rural areas. The random selection of schools from the six regions of the province yielded 75% rural schools. This fact alone poses a great challenge to the provincial department of education as the primary supplier of support services. The focus of this survey, *viz.* the perceived need among educators for certain pedagogical relationships between themselves and their learners and the perceived (non-)availability of the relevant support services to them, is vital to the professional work done in the schools. This survey supplied evidence that in this province of South Africa not everything is as it should be with respect to this core work.

Provincial departments of education should provide in the needs of their educators by supplying, among other things, better-equipped libraries and media services, also in the deep rural areas. Subject advice and refresher courses, with the purpose, *inter alia*, of showing teachers how to create and maintain pedagogical relationships with their learners, how to understand the *in loco parentis* status of the teacher and the (legal) responsibilities attached to this status, should form part of the service. In-service teacher training will also help teachers cope with learner stress. Schools should be provided with more and better administrative services, such as more, and more efficient, offices with capable officials who can respond professionally to telephone queries and supply the required information and pedagogical support.

Conclusion

The survey revealed that a relatively small percentage of teachers (educators) in a largely rural province of South Africa perceived certain indispensable pedagogical relationships not to be needed. Even more disturbing, after more than a decade of democratic rule in South Africa, is the fact that a relatively larger percentage of the respondents still perceived the support services that should help them create and maintain these relationships with their learners to be non-existent or unavailable. This problem should be urgently addressed in view of its relevance to the core business of schools and educators.

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