

Learners' experiences of learning support in selected Western Cape schools

Olaniyi Bojuwoye, Mokgadi Moletsane, Sindiswa Stofile, Nadeen Moolla and Fredrick Sylvester

Department of Educational Psychology, University of the Western Cape, South Africa
mmoletsane@uwc.ac.za

The study explored Western Cape primary and secondary school learners' experiences regarding the provision and utilization of support services for improving learning. A qualitative interpretive approach was adopted and data gathered through focus group interviews involving 90 learners. Results revealed that learners received and utilized various forms of learning support from their schools, teachers, and peers. The learning support assisted in meeting learners' academic, social and emotional needs by addressing barriers to learning, creating conducive learning environments, enhancing learners' self-esteem and improving learners' academic performance.

Keywords: academic needs; academic performance; barriers to learning; experiences; institutional actions; learners; learning support; schools; social and emotional needs; Western Cape

Introduction

Several challenges characterize education in South Africa. However, many factors are responsible for these challenges including those associated with learners, schools, and families (Ngidi & Qwabe, 2006). Many learners lack a proper foundation of knowledge such as basic numeracy and literacy (De Villiers, 1997). Poor work ethic, poor study habits, misconduct and developmental disorders, also constitute as learning barriers (Mashau, 2000).

Home-related factors presenting as barriers to learning include poor socio-economic backgrounds of parents, inadequate housing and lack of parental support for education (De Villiers, 1997). School-related factors associated with learning difficulties and underachievement include poor school management, inadequate staffing of schools (Mashau, 2000), uncommitted and poorly trained educators and other unprofessional behaviours of teachers (De Villiers, 1997).

Mashau (2000) asserts that schools have a responsibility to promote effective learning by creating a conducive and supportive learning environment within which learners feel appreciated, curriculum and teaching strategies complement learners' educational readiness, and educators understand the uniqueness of every learner. To ensure learner success education support services must be strengthened and placed at the centre of teaching-learning relations as key strategy for addressing challenges to teaching and barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2001). Providing support

services, for teaching, learning and school management, is an important strategy for building schools' capacities to recognize and address several learning difficulties, and for creating a conducive learning environment for effective teaching to enhance learners' academic performance, social and psychological well-being.

Literature

Support has become a buzz word that carries many meanings and overtones. Within education settings, support is something additional to what is already there such as provision of extra money, extra equipment or additional staff (Mittler, 2006). Support comprises specialized functions aimed at improving teaching and learning, although these may not be typically educational in themselves (Steyn, 1997). Education support comprises non-educational services for improving the quality and effectiveness of educational activities (Steyn & Wolhuter, 2008). These services are aimed at preventing, minimizing and eradicating learning barriers and for developing conducive and supportive learning environments (Mashau, Steyn, Van der Walt & Wolhuter, 2008).

Education support may be human, material or other resources (Department of Education, 1997) and may be directed to learners, educators or teaching activities and structures within the school (Steyn & Wolhuter, 2008). For the purposes of this study education support services directed to learners are referred to as learning support. According to Mashau et al. (2008) learning support includes supplementary, remedial or extra class instructions, curriculum advice, academic mentoring, assisting students to work in groups, developing study and note-taking skills, school psychological services, medical and social work services, feeding scheme, and all other services for meeting special needs of learners and for preventing learning difficulties. Learning support may also take the form of technical assistance as in reading, writing and numeracy or assisting learners in infusing technology to make learning more interesting and effective (Grösser, 2007). Thus in general, education support services are institutional strategies for overcoming barriers to learning and for promoting academic success (Department of Education, 2001). Successful learning is contingent upon strengthening education support services at various levels (national, provincial, district and institutional levels) through involving a host of role players and creation of streamlined and systemic implementation at all levels (Department of Education, 2001).

For a model of education support services, in terms of "what works" to ensure school success, Smith (2010:264) contends that this should be about **institutional actions** or educational practices that promote effective learning. Tinto and Pusser (2006) also argue that this is about what schools can do to promote effective learning rather than concentrate on learners' attributes. Although learner and family factors are important to learning success, these are beyond immediate control of schools (Tinto, 2006-2007). Institutions facilitating learning success focus on the conditions and environment within institutional control by developing effective policies and programmes for ensuring support for learners and educators (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). These authors

explain that the most important institutional actions for promoting learner success are education support services.

The focus of the study was on learning support services that maximize gains from available teaching and learning activities and remove barriers to learning. According to Mashau et al. (2008) institutional actions and practices that overcome barriers to learning, enhance learners' self-esteem, and promote acceptable social behaviours and academic success, are otherwise referred to as learning support services. Such services include supplementary, remedial or extra class instruction, academic mentoring and assisting learners to work in groups as well as psychological, medical and social work services, feeding schemes, and all other similar services. These learning support services (including support services for alleviating learner conditions due to poor health and parental socio-economic conditions) are all institutional actions connected to the environment in which learners learn and may be clustered into three main categories of academic, emotional and social support (Tinto, 2006-2007).

Support services directed to teachers to assist them to meet the academic needs of learners are not limited to pedagogy or teaching practices but include the employment of varied curricular, assessment and feedback and infusion of technology into teaching practices (Reyneke, Meyer & Nel, 2010). However, the reality of poverty has serious implications for learners' success, hence the importance of support directed to alleviate barriers to learning due to poor health and poor socio-economic conditions of families.

Wiseman (2012) asserts that poverty is the strongest significant predictor of academic success, even more than school factors. Ngidi and Qwabe (2006) also contend that lack of proper nutrition constitutes a very serious challenge to education. Maarman (2009) found that learners, from impoverished informal settlement communities, prioritized survival-related challenges over those related to academic success because they consider adoption of aspirations relevant to day-to-day survival (food and clothes) more important than education in the form of teaching and learning. Actions aimed at meeting basic needs such as catering for nutritional needs of learners are considered schools' obligation. Schools act on behalf of the state, especially where families are dysfunctional and cannot satisfy children's right to nutrition or nurturance (Bojuwoye & Sylvester, 2012).

Provision of support for effective learning in schools extends beyond the institution. However, Tinto (2006-2007) argues that support for learning is more the business of the school and teachers. Study findings on effective practice and educational innovations that shape classroom practice, found that the actions of teachers, especially in the classrooms, are key institutional efforts for enhancing learner success (Tinto, 2006-2007). Grösser (2007) and Pickens (2007) also note that teachers contribute most to educational activities by ensuring quality learning when learners are supported to become more reflective and more engaged in learning processes. Thus teachers provide support within a social systems model, by integrating learning support activities

and resources into the existing daily class routine (Coleman, 2001; Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002).

Providing learning support is consistent with theories of motivation and learning in terms of insight offered into the psychological traits of learners that foster greater academic engagement (Gasiewski, Eagan, Garcia, Hurtado & Chang, 2012). Learning support creates conducive learning environments, makes learners more confident and focuses on achieving grades and receiving recognition from teachers (Crombie, Pike, Silverthorn, Jones & Piccinin, 2003). Extrinsic motivation is also linked to educators' behaviour. Students are motivated when they sense that educators care about them and when their responses are validated and affirmed by the educators (Crombie et al., 2003). Mutual respect, an environment that values student contributions and encourages participation promotes greater engagement and academic success (Dallimore, Hertenstein & Platt, 2004; Pickens, 2007).

Although, institutional actions are important in helping learners to succeed, family influences cannot be under-estimated. Understanding the family context helps institutions to effectively configure support programmes for diverse learner situations and populations (Tinto, 2006-2007). Ngidi and Qwabe (2006) assert that parental involvement or school-community partnership can help create a culture of teaching and learning in schools. School-community partnerships enable parents to play many roles including governance and support. However, these roles must be properly fulfilled and managed.

The study

The assumption in this study was that institutional actions or classroom practices constitute various forms of learning support in schools in the Western Cape. The aim of the study, therefore, was to explore the experiences of learners with regard to these school practices in order to understand the provision and utilization of these learning support services for improving the quality of learning from the perspectives of the learners. To gain an understanding of these school practices an asset-based approach was adopted. The asset-based approach is based on the premise that it is important to first recognize the existing strengths or current positive actions and practices of schools in order to ensure effective learning (Tinto, 2006-2007). Eloff and Ebersöhn (2001) also assert that the asset-based approach is an acknowledgement that every school has some resources for promoting learning and for intervening in learning problems or for addressing learning barriers. In this regard, the study sought information from those who are most affected and often at the centre of school actions constituting learning support – the learners. The study specifically addressed the following questions:

1. What forms of learning support were received by learners in the selected schools in the Western Cape?
2. What impact did these learning support have on learners?

3. What other additional learning support did the learners indicate as needed to improve the quality of their learning?
4. What challenges did the learners experience in accessing and utilizing the support they received?

Research design

The study adopted a qualitative approach which facilitated an exploratory study in order to gain insight into the participants' comprehension of the phenomenon investigated (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The study investigated learning support provision and utilization from the perspectives of learners in selected schools in Western Cape. Qualitative approach helped researchers to describe and interpret participants' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and feelings relevant to their experiences of learning support received and used for improving the quality of their learning (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Adoption of a qualitative approach helped to place study participants at the centre as their actions, ideas, values and meanings of participants constituted the critical information needed for the study (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). Data gathering involved interactions among participants permitting the qualification of ideas, values, and meanings through the eyes of the participants rather than quantification through the eyes of outside observers (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989).

Participants

Learners in Western Cape public primary and secondary schools constituted the population for the study. Learners are major role-players or beneficiaries of any school action intended to facilitate effective learning and academic success (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). There is a deficit of research, both nationally and internationally, that includes learners as participants as well as paucity of literature on perspectives of learners on educational issues (Mashau et al., 2008; Ngidi & Qwabe, 2006, Rudduck & Flutter, 2000).

Convenience sampling was adopted in selecting schools that were involved in the study, although these selected schools were fairly distributed across three education circuits in the Western Cape. According to Explorable.com (2009) convenience sampling is a non-probability technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to researcher. It is further contended that many researchers prefer this sampling technique because it is quick, inexpensive, easy, and subjects are chosen because they are easy to recruit (Explorable.com, 2009). Moreover, Breakwell, Hammond and Fife-Shaw (1994) also assert that convenience sampling is appropriate when populations are difficult to access due to bureaucratic public service regulations as was the case in this study. Previous contact with the schools allowed for easier access to the schools in the phase of negotiating entry. Four primary and four high schools were involved in the study with the principals of these schools facilitating the selection of participants. A total of 90 participants (60 primary and 30 high school learners) aged 12 to 18 years from Grades 6, 7, 10 and 11, volunteered to

participate in the study. This distribution was also influenced by the nature of the school programme where the tendency seemed to be that primary school learners were more available than high school learners.

Data collection

The study collected qualitative information on personal experiences of primary and high school learners, regarding learning support received and utilized for improving the quality of their learning. Focus group interviews were employed in the data generation process. According to Basch (1987) the focus group interview is a qualitative approach to learning about a population with respect to conscious, semi-conscious and unconscious psychological and sociological characteristics and processes. Focus group interviews are carefully planned discussions for obtaining perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Furthermore, focus group interviews are good for gathering rich data through direct interactions between researcher and participants and it is relatively inexpensive and effective with groups of lower literacy levels especially for young children with English as a second language as were the participants involved in this study.

In terms of size of a focus group both Basch (1987) and Krueger (1988) contend that a focus group is usually between 4 and 12 participants. Krueger and Casey (2000), however, are of the view that the ideal size of a focus group should be between six and eight participants. Three of the selected schools for this study had 10 learners each volunteering to participate in the study. In each of these three schools one focus group, with all 10 learners, was conducted. In each of the other schools with more than 10 participants volunteering for the study, two focus groups of between five and eight participants were conducted. Smaller focus groups were conducted with high school learners as they are more mature participants who present lengthier descriptions of their experiences on the topic of discussion, often because they felt strongly about their experiences and had a lot to share (Krueger & Casey, 2000). What the primary school participants lacked in experience was made up for in their larger focus group sizes which also meant that maximum range of experiences were accommodated in these group discussions.

Each focus group lasted for between 20 and 30 minutes featuring semi-structured interviews aimed at increasing the internal validity and contextual understanding, which are useful in revealing processes leading to specific outcomes (Merriam, 1998). All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by professional transcribers.

Procedure for data collection

Ethical clearance was obtained from University of the Western Cape Senate Research Ethics Committee. Further clearance to conduct the study in schools of Western Cape was obtained from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and from

principals of schools selected for the study.

Prior to focus group interviews and with the assistance of each school principal, prospective participants were recruited and assembled in a classroom and were provided with both oral and written information about the purpose of the study and conditions for participation. The process of data gathering was further framed within ethical principles of assurance of confidentiality and anonymity of participants' responses, voluntary participation, informed consent, consent to electronic recording of the interview and permission to withdraw at any stage of the study. Parental consent was obtained since learners were minors. Those whose parents completed and signed the consent forms were finally involved in the study. The focus groups were conducted at school after school hours.

Data analysis

Data analysis was started by engaging in multiple readings of interview transcriptions and reviewing of data to facilitate initial interpretation of participants' responses. This was followed by identification of emerging patterns in participants' responses, to interview questions which corresponded with institutional actions, services, facilities and teacher behaviours that support learning and influence learner success (Prebble, Hargraves, Leach, Naidoo, Suddaby & Zepke, 2004). These participants' response patterns formed themes which were clustered into the following categories:

- Institutional actions, services, facilities and teacher behaviours supporting academic needs of learners;
- Institutional actions, services, facilities and teacher behaviours supporting social and emotional needs of learners;
- Peer support;
- Effects of support received on participants' learning;
- Challenges experienced by participants in accessing and utilizing the support;
- Additional learning support participants (the learners) wished to receive.

Data analysis was thematic and consistent with methods for identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researchers were involved in data analysis as they collaboratively coded, reviewed, and refined data and cross-checked for agreement on the identified themes ensuring that these related to categories that emerged.

Results

The results of the data analysis are presented below in terms of themes that emerged, with supporting quotations from interview transcriptions. The categories of themes identified correspond with the research questions and each category provided information for answering the corresponding question.

Data analysis revealed institutional actions, services, facilities and teacher behaviours supporting learning in schools in the Western Cape, reported by participants as meeting their academic, social and emotional needs. Institutional actions, services,

facilities and teacher behaviours reported by participants as supporting their academic needs include: supplementary or extra class instructions, additional or extra notes, additional learning time for numeracy and literacy subjects, assistance in accessing information from books and other learning materials, assistance in developing study skills, peer mentoring or study groups and teacher behaviours that support effective learning. Excerpts from interview transcripts on support for addressing academic needs were:

Provision of textbooks and assistance to access information from books

“we are given books here at school and textbooks to learn.”

“we don’t pay school fees and we get books from school.”

Teacher behaviour

“...the teachers make sure we understand what we learn.”

“...our teachers always encourage us to ask if we don’t understand something so that they can explain it again”

“...I ask my teacher what I don’t understand”

Supplementary or extra class instruction

“we have extra classes...mostly for people...struggling...”

Peer mentoring and study groups

“...our teacher moves us next to people who struggle...and if she knows you very well and your school work, and then she will move you next to a friend to help them...”

“...like a buddy system and then like a person next to you, you can help with mathematics...”

Institutional actions, services, facilities and teacher behaviours constituting support for meeting social and or emotional needs reported by participants included counselling or psychological services, medical services, nutrition services, teacher accessibility and encouragement. Excerpts from interview transcripts on support for meeting social or emotional needs were as follows:

Nutrition services

“...our school have feeding scheme”

“...learners eat from the feeding scheme”

Psychological services

“...we like psychologists for emotional help...”

“...a social worker comes to our school sometime...”

Teacher behaviours

“...our teachers encourage us...[they] will not chase you away to do the work on your own...”

“...if your teacher gave you some homework during the week...and if your mother or your father are working late you can ask your teacher...[to explain] if you don't understand...”

Participants reported receiving support from fellow learners mainly for meeting social and emotional needs. This category of support focused on advice, information and encouragement from peers (“buddy system”). Peer support that addresses academic needs includes study groups and peer mentoring. Excerpts from interview transcripts on support learners received from each other were:

“...like a buddy system or like a person next to you, ...you can help with mathematics”

“right before test...we test each other and we help each other”

“we do study groups after school... . That helps us a lot especially in exam period”

The participants described the effectiveness of the support services they received in various ways such as that support made their school or academic work easier, improved their understanding of subjects, motivated them, lifted their spirits or improved their self-esteem, made them work harder, spend more time, did more work, assisted them to prepare for examination and helped them to achieve better results. Excerpts from interview transcripts, in this regard, follow:

“...it helps when we begin to ask for explanations during the course of the year so that by the time we write exams we already know the work”

“it [support received] motivates me to do better”

“I think it [support received] helps us to work harder at school”

“...sometimes also strengthening you on whatever you do and it's also giving you hope and it push you to the right side so if you are striving enough then you get someone motivating you, you get that inspiration so it's the one that help you...”

Challenges associated with receiving and utilizing support common to participants revolved around learners' fear of asking for assistance from their teachers and teachers' negative perceptions and mistrust of learners. Learners' fears of teachers were found to be related to many factors such as teachers' negative responses to requests for support, learners' perception of teachers as too busy to spare time for them and previous experiences of some teachers' impatience and dismissive behaviours. Participants also reported experiencing being teased or ridiculed by teachers for asking for help especially because of difficulties with speaking in English. Learners feared that teachers could report learners' poor academic progress to parents. A fear of being identified as a weak learner and teased by peers prevented learners from accessing the school feeding scheme. Excerpts from interview transcripts on these challenges were:

“being ashamed, embarrassed or somebody is going to laugh at you [because] you really aren't good at speaking English...[and] want to ask teacher...a question and it's difficult to speak”

“sometimes at school you don't get enough support because when you ask something then she [teacher] shout at you”

“some learners ridicule you that you eat from the feeding scheme”

Additional support indicated as necessary to improve learning included: additional extra classes for every subject, improved learning and teaching support materials, parental involvement and support, sports activities and coaches, security guards at schools and more school-based psychologists and social workers to address their emotional needs or solve personal problems.

“I would like teachers to spend more time with learners especially after school and especially for subjects like mathematics and accounting subjects that learners are facing problems with”

“some of us need extra time at school because when we go home we do house chores...we don't get chance to do home works”

“we need labs because not all of us have access to the library or anything there”
“there is need for security guards at the school”

Results also revealed apparent differences in the reported institutional actions and teacher behaviours between primary and secondary schools participants. Primary school learners' reported major sources of support as teachers and peers. Support received included extra class instruction, advice and information for meeting their social, emotional and academic needs. Nutrition services were the only support reported as coming from school. Interestingly, teachers were also reported as presenting as a challenge to the provision and utilization of support particularly the latter's attitudes and sensitivity to learners' needs. Teachers were reported to be abusive, sarcastic and rude when learners requested assistance. In terms of additional support primary school participants reported needing a school context characterized by caring teachers and parental involvement.

High school participants' emphasised institutional actions rather than teacher behaviour in support provision and they referred mostly to textbooks, library and peer support while support from teachers seemed less significant. Major challenges to high school participants' receipt and utilization of support revolved around their inability to gain access to additional reading materials, textbooks, library, extra-class instruction and computer software. Additional support provision from the Department of Education (or government) was indicated although they also indicated the need for extra class instruction in subjects like mathematics and natural sciences.

Discussion

The study explored learners' experiences with receiving and utilising support for improving their learning. The assumption of the study was that many institutional actions or practices and teacher behaviour supporting learning exist in Western Cape schools. This assumption is confirmed by the findings which revealed school actions, classroom practices, and teacher and learner behaviours supporting and facilitating effective learning. These forms of support were reported to have met learners' academic, social and emotional needs by addressing barriers to learning, enhanced learners' self-esteem and consequently improved learners' academic performance and social relations.

The study adopted an asset-based approach. This approach emphasises the im-

portance of affirming and acknowledging current positive actions and practices of schools in order to build on what is available in schools rather than what is missing (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). It is internally focused and problem-solving from within (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001). Tinto's (2006-2007) assertion is that it is most important for learning success to first recognize what schools can do with what is available and within their control and how a school context can be made conducive for learning. Eloff (2006) also states that recognizing capacities, skills, behaviours and assets within a social system is the best strategy for mobilization and maintenance of these resources for effective learning. The findings indicate that even in contexts that are not necessarily well-resourced, learners experience the teachers and school as able to assist on multiple levels and to support them holistically in order to improve the quality of their learning. This is evident in learners' reports of structures, resources and relationships within the school that support their learning. Although instructional support is highlighted, participants also emphasised teacher and peer behaviours and attitudes as strengths upon which they could rely.

Learning support has the potential to facilitate effective learning by enhancing learners' psychological traits for fostering greater academic engagement (Gasiewski et al., 2012). Enhancing learners' psychological traits is consistent with motivation in all areas of learning (Printrich & Schunk, 2002). There is a strong relationship between motivation and academic achievement as motivation not only correlates with academic performance, it links to mastery, understanding, high achievement and personal responsibility (Pickens, 2007). Various forms of support including learning resources were reported to have helped meet learners' academic, social and emotional needs, addressed barriers to learning, and created a positive learning environment. An essential strategy for motivating students to learn is the creation of a motivational learning environment (Druger, 2000; Crombie et al., 2003). Teachers who know the impact of motivation on learning spend more time and energy creating positive environments inside and outside of the classroom to promote development of attitudes, perceptions and feelings that enhance student motivation (McCombs & Whisler, 1997).

Greater components of motivation in schools are teacher behaviours such as teacher accessibility or availability and encouragement. Assistance in organizing peer mentoring and study groups, as reported by participants in the study, also supported effective learning. Helping learners to engage in meaningful discussions among themselves in group work motivates and enhances meaningful learning, social and personal development of students (Pickens, 2007). Teacher enthusiasm is also one of the most important motivation strategies which makes learning more enjoyable while giving students the impression that mastering concepts is achievable (Coleman, 2001). This study revealed that when teachers exhibit enthusiasm by being accessible or available to students, the teachers not only communicate confidence in their own abilities but also confidence in the abilities of the students to learn, thus concurring with Wiseman and Hunt (2001). This study also revealed that teachers' caring attitudes are very im-

portant, especially at lower school level (primary schools) than at high school level. This explains primary school participants' reported challenges to learning support as emanating mainly from teachers where there was the perception of absence of attitudes of care from teachers who are expected to play loco parentis role. For the high school participants, however, reports of their peers as major sources of support may be a reflection of their search for independence from adults (parents, teachers), a position characteristic of their developmental stage, and may not mean that teachers are unimportant for their learning success.

Learning support strategies not directly meeting academic needs but for alleviating poor health and socio-economic conditions were reported. These forms of support, including feeding scheme, psychological, and transport services, were reported to have significantly helped to address barriers to learning and to create a conducive school environment which consequently enhances learners' self-esteem. Teacher and peer behaviours as forms of support were also reported as encouraging learners to work in groups or "buddy system" which motivated and enhanced learners' self-esteem and improved academic performance. School actions including educator and learner behaviours supporting learners to meet social and emotional needs helped learners to gain confidence to engage positively in an academic domain.

Generally a very important dimension of support is its implications for interconnectedness of various components of the social system (Eloff, 2006). Reasoning from bio-ecological perspectives, Donald et al. (2002) note that barriers to learning go beyond learners to the whole social system including peers, educators, the education system, and society at large. Donald et al. (2002) further argue that support system for learning success is one that considers multiple interventions at various levels of the social system in order to eliminate a re-occurrence of a problem at a different level than where it is being solved.

Conclusion

The study revealed evidence of the existence of many institutional actions, classroom practices, teacher and learner behaviours that constitute support for meeting learners' academic, social and emotional needs, helping learners to succeed in schools. Such support systems need to be nurtured and encouraged by school authorities and Department of Education officials at district and provincial level.

As regards challenges associated with receiving and utilising support, learners highlighted fear of ridicule by teachers and peers. When the environment is not conducive to accessing support, learners explained that they struggled. The recommendation here is for the teachers to evolve classroom behaviour that ensures a tension-free environment. Perceptions regarding additional support needed, differed between primary and high school learners. Primary school learners tended to emphasize the need for nurturance including safety, nutrition and emotional support from teachers and parents. High school learners expressed the need for greater structural and infrastructural support such as extra classes, textbook and other resources. Parental involve-

ment in support provision and the provision of security guards for schools are also indicated. The researchers strongly feel that parental involvement, safe and secure learning environments are very central to effective provision and utilization of learning support and learner success. The results also point to how provision of support clearly highlights the interconnectedness of learners' needs (academic, social and emotional) as well as the interconnectedness of various levels of social system in the provision of support to meet these needs. This certainly has implication for the recognition, as important education stakeholders, of every sector or member at every level of society, for the much needed multi-sectoral provision of learning support and interventions in barriers to learning to ensure learner and school success.

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