

Intervention Strategies for Challenges Experienced when Supporting Learners from Child-headed Households in Secondary Schools in South Africa



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ABSTRACT

The study reported here aimed to explore the Intervention strategies for challenges experienced when supporting learners from child-headed households in secondary schools. Children from child-headed households experience challenges that hinder them from receiving good quality education. It is, therefore important for schools to ensure that classroom teachers are aware of the challenges experienced by children from child-headed households. This study followed the qualitative approach to explore the intervention strategies to be used. The study consisted of 20 participants (principals, Departmental Heads, teachers and School Governing Bodies) in South Africa. Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The Bottom-up theory was the underpinning theory for our study. Thematical analysis was followed. This study revealed that children from child-headed households were not identified at schools. Therefore, schools do not have a database of children from child-headed households hence a lack of intervention strategies. We recommended that schools should establish the School Based Support Team and follow the collaborative model as an intervention to support children from child-headed households. The study provided insights on intervention strategies that schools and the Department of Education should implement for challenges experienced by schools when supporting learners from child-headed households.

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Publication History

Received: 23rd October, 2023

Accepted: 5th February, 2024

Published online:

22nd March, 2024

Keywords: Intervention Strategies, Collaborative Model, Child-Headed Household, Collaboration

INTRODUCTION

Children from child-headed households experience various challenges that cause barriers to learning. Schools should intervene by supporting children from child-headed households. However, it appears that schools are challenged by various factors that should be addressed to support children from child-headed households. The challenges experienced would make schools fail to support children from child-headed households. Ibebuike, Van Belkum and Maja refer to a child-headed household as a household where a child does not exceed the “teen years” and the child fully or partially finances, controls, plans and implements the immediate management of the activities that affect the occupants of the household.¹ In this study, a child-headed household will be referred to as a household led by a child attending school even above the age of 18, who is caring for his/her siblings and running all the responsibilities of parents. This may be a child who lost his/her parents, who was abandoned by parents or the parents are working away from home and leaving responsibilities to the child. Schools should intervene by

¹ Julia E Ibebuike, Corrien Van Belkum, and Todd M M Maja, “Lived Experiences and Needs of Children in Child Headed Households in Resource Poor Communities in Soshanguve, South Africa,” *Journal of Good Governance and Sustainable Development in Africa* 2, no. 1 (2014): 61–83.

supporting learners from child-headed households. However, it appears that schools are challenged by various restricting factors that should be addressed. The challenges experienced would make schools fail to support learners from child-headed households.

Literature indicates that urgent intervention is needed for learners from child-headed households. Mwoma and Pillay, studied the psychosocial support for orphans and vulnerable children where schools are unable to cater for learners' psychological needs.² Other researchers studied the accountability of stakeholders in ensuring orphaned learners' attendance.³ Ogina and Ramare concluded that all stakeholders should be accountable for learners' absence as it results in missing lessons that could negatively affect their academic performance.⁴ It is the responsibility of communities, teachers and peers to provide for child-headed households' needs. However, the literature shows no consensus on intervention strategies for challenges experienced when supporting learners from child-headed households in secondary schools. Hence the study of intervention strategies for challenges experienced by secondary schools.

The purpose of the study was to explore the intervention strategies to support children from child-headed households in secondary schools with a view of suggesting possible measures that schools should use to support child-headed households. This was achieved through the use of qualitative method, where a case study design was used to explore the intervention strategies. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used to answer the research question what are the intervention strategies implemented by schools to address the challenges experienced when supporting children from child-headed households? The subsequent sections cover the literature review; theoretical framework; results; discussion of findings; recommendations and conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Department of Education develops policies to advance quality teaching and learning for all learners in schools. Schools are informed by these policies to further develop policies to support child-headed households. However, some researchers argue that policies should be developed locally because the implementer is knowledgeable about the challenges experienced by the schools. This is supported by the theoretical framework of Bottom-up theory, where the street-level bureaucrats know about the experiences encountered by learners from child-headed households in the education system.⁵ This means that teachers experience the challenges of the learners daily which may stick in their hearts and become push-in teachers. On the other hand, Howe and Covell, argue that schools experience challenges of implementing the best interest principles due to inequality of opportunities.⁶ The challenges experienced are outlined as follows:

Teachers Lack Skills and Knowledge

Teachers lack skills and knowledge on how to support learners from child-headed households.⁷ Complementary to this, teachers believe that they are unable to develop measures to support child-headed households.⁸ This concurs with Masha, who states that schools lack expertise on how to support children from child-headed households.⁹ Therefore, teachers should acquire skills and knowledge to minimise bias when identifying learners with needs, to ensure that the learners are provided with quality support. As indicated, the Education White Paper 6 argues that members of the School Based Support Teams (SBST) should be experts in learning support and counselling.¹⁰ The SBST should indicate how individual learners' needs are addressed in their lesson plans to ensure support for all learners. In addition, Ebrahim, states that schools have policies that guide them about the support of child-headed households.¹¹ However, schools seem to be failing to develop policies to support children from child-headed

² Teresa Mwoma and Jace Pillay, "Psychosocial Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Public Primary Schools: Challenges and Intervention Strategies," *South African Journal of Education* 35 (2015).

³ Teresa A Ogina and Norman M Ramare, "Accountability of School Stakeholders in Ensuring Orphaned Children's School Attendance," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 9, no. 1 (2019): 1–11.

⁴ Ogina and Ramare, "Accountability of School Stakeholders in Ensuring Orphaned Children's School Attendance."

⁵ Chaval Chompucot, "Major Factors Affecting Educational Policy Implementation Effectiveness For The Three Southernmost Provinces Of Thailand As Perceived By School Director" (National Institute of Development Administration, 2011).

⁶ Robert Brian Howe and Katherine Covell, *Education in the Best Interests of the Child: A Children's Rights Perspective on Closing the Achievement Gap* (University of Toronto press, 2013).

⁷ Israel Lindokuhle Mkhuma, Nonhlanhla Desiree Maseko, and Lloyd Daniel Nkoli Tlale, "Challenges Teachers Face in Identifying Learners Who Experience Barriers to Learning: Reflection on Essential Support Structures," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 5, no. 27 P1 (2014): 444; Mwoma and Pillay, "Psychosocial Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Public Primary Schools: Challenges and Intervention Strategies."

⁸ Petra Engelbrecht et al., "The Idealism of Education Policies and the Realities in Schools: The Implementation of Inclusive Education in South Africa," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 20, no. 5 (2016): 520–35.

⁹ B.M. Masha, "The Role of School Management Teams and Parents in Learner Achievement" (University of Pretoria, 2017).

¹⁰ Department of Education, *White Paper 6. Special Needs Education. Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 2001), https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/educ61.pdf.

¹¹ Mashuda Ebrahim, "Perceptions of Support given to Learners from Child Headed Homes by Institutional Level Support Teams" (2015).

households.

Subsequent to the teachers' lack of skills and knowledge to support child-headed households, learners are restrained from fulfilling their needs.¹² Therefore, learners' welfare is threatened especially those who need more support. As a result, the learners may drop out of school if the education system fails in aiding them to achieve their goals. This present study is relevant to close the gap identified. The school system fails does not make children from child-headed households that have challenges with learning to realise their potential. Teachers should be equipped to support children from child-headed households as they spend most of their time at school. This means that the schools should utilise the bottom-up approach which could have positive effects in supporting child-headed households. However, teachers could not support learners effectively because they have records of child-headed households in books and not necessarily for supporting child-headed households. This constrains the support of teachers to address learners' challenges and would remain in the cycle of poverty.

According to Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document, the principal should ensure that the staff is developed through training programmes in achieving the educational needs of the school.¹³ The programmes should be school-based or school-focused to provide support to new teachers and inexperienced teachers.¹⁴ Teachers should know policies to support child-headed households.

Lack of Policies Specific for Child-headed Households

Schools do not have policies to support children from child-headed households. There are national policies such as White Paper 6 and Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS). These policies could guide schools in the development of policies to support child-headed households to meet their needs. The lack of policies in schools hinders child-headed households from receiving full support to realise their potential. The lack of policies based on child-headed households in schools is one of the hindrances in schools to support children from child-headed households.¹⁵ This corroborates the study of Ebrahim, which states that although teachers are aware of policies, there should be policies exclusively for children from child-headed households to enable them to offer full support.¹⁶ Despite all these, teachers are overloaded with work and the activities inside and outside the classrooms could constrain time.

Work Overload and Time Constraints

Teachers are believed to experience strenuous work daily as they are expected to teach and assist learners with learning barriers.¹⁷ Teachers spend more time on classroom activities and outside the classroom, such as sports practice, extra-mural activities, meetings, workshops and preparations.¹⁸ Mkhuma et al., support that teachers do not have adequate time to offer support to children from child-headed households.¹⁹ The policies that schools should implement to support learners from child-headed households require adequate time to screen, identify, assess and support children from child-headed households.²⁰ The paperwork required in the implementation process resulted in more workload that implicated unfairness in the identification process.

This is corroborated by Joorst,²¹ who states that time and resources pose a challenge to support children from child-headed households. Subsequently, teachers could not manage extra time for additional support to focus on individual learner needs as they should design an Individual Support Plan for each learner. To advance the

¹² R.H. Joorst, "Investigating the Implementation of Learning Support Strategies by Teachers in the Intermediate Phase of a School in the Western Cape" (University of the Western Cape, 2010); Babalwa Rulwa-Mnatwana, "School-Based Support Teams' Understandings and Experiences of Inclusive Education in the Western Cape," 2014; Sonia Anne Hess, "Teachers Perceptions Regarding the Implementation of the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) Policy in Mainstream Schools" (Stellenbosch University, 2020).

¹³ Department of Education, *Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM)* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 2014).

¹⁴ Department of Education, *Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM)*.

¹⁵ Newlin Marongwe, Reynold Sonn, and Mabel-Wendy N Mashologu, "Dealing with Children from Child-Headed Households: How Prepared Are the Teachers," *Journal of Social Sciences* 48, no. 1–2 (2016): 41–50.

¹⁶ Ebrahim, "Perceptions of Support given to Learners from Child Headed Homes by Institutional Level Support Teams."

¹⁷ Petra Engelbrecht et al., "Enacting Understanding of Inclusion in Complex Contexts: Classroom Practices of South African Teachers," *South African Journal of Education* 35, no. 3 (2015); G. Nel, "Teachers' Experiences Regarding Peer Support and Coaching in Creating an Inclusive School Environment" (University of Pretoria, 2018) .

¹⁸ Hess, "Teachers Perceptions Regarding the Implementation of the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) Policy in Mainstream Schools."

¹⁹ Mkhuma, Maseko, and Tlale, "Challenges Teachers Face in Identifying Learners Who Experience Barriers to Learning: Reflection on Essential Support Structures."

²⁰ Hess, "Teachers Perceptions Regarding the Implementation of the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) Policy in Mainstream Schools."

²¹ Joorst, "Investigating the Implementation of Learning Support Strategies by Teachers in the Intermediate Phase of a School in the Western Cape."

argument, Roberts and Hess argue that there is limited time in a lesson to support learners with needs.²² Even if teachers support learners with needs during the lesson, he/she will be involuntarily neglecting other learners. Yet, the National Curriculum Statement, Inclusive Learning Programmes, states that time allocation and weightings regarding learning outcomes and learning programmes should vary according to the learners' needs.²³ This may not be possible due to the workload that teachers have. The argument is further supported by Nel, that the workload restricts teachers from supporting learners with issues that affect their learning.²⁴ These constrain teachers from providing support to children from child-headed households.

Limited Resources

The other challenges experienced in supporting child-headed households are inadequate physical resources and human resources to provide education support to the schools.²⁵ In addition, Masango claims that principals could not provide teachers with resources to support child-headed households.²⁶ There is a general lack of resources, such as scientific calculators, desks and computers to support child-headed households. Teachers are seen as mediators of learning and designers of learning programmes and materials.²⁷ However, resources and the development capacity of teachers to support child-headed households is inadequate. Similarly, Osaghae and Irabor, in their study about Nigerian schools found that schools lack funds to capacitate teachers to support child-headed households.²⁸ This argument is advanced by Engelbrecht, et al., who mentioned that there is limited financial support from the Department of Education.²⁹ Moreover, for effective interventions, there should be financial resources for the schools. In line with the discussion above, Rulwa-Mnatwana revealed that schools lack appropriate instructional material to support learners.³⁰ On the other hand, teachers claim that principals could not provide them with resources to support child-headed households.³¹ Thus, the support provided is restrained. For example, there is limited available transport to be used to visit the schools. This study is important because it encourages principals to supply teachers with adequate resources to support learners from child-headed households. Inadequate resources such as funding and infrastructure could contribute to overcrowded classrooms.

Overcrowded Classrooms

According to Rulwa-Mnatwana, most public schools in South Africa are overcrowded.³² Basically, overcrowding is a challenge to teachers in maintaining control over the learners and teachers cannot offer individual attention to learners. It affects the time available for teachers for individual attention, in maintaining the diversity of learners and valuable dimensions of learners' social and intellectual growth.³³ The unmanageable overcrowded classrooms constrain the provision of support to learners. Eventually, it implicates excessive workload for teachers and limited opportunities to meet individual learner needs.³⁴ Furthermore, Mokala, found that overcrowding is the main challenge for teachers to support child-headed households.³⁵

²² J.J. Roberts, "Educators' Experiences of Their Training for the Implementation of Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support Strategy at a Full-Service School: A Case Study" (North-West University, 2011); Hess, "Teachers Perceptions Regarding the Implementation of the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) Policy in Mainstream Schools."

²³ Department of Education, *Revised National Curriculum Statement for Grade R- 9 (Schools)* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 2001).

²⁴ Nel, "Teachers' Experiences Regarding Peer Support and Coaching in Creating an Inclusive School Environment."

²⁵ Olubusayo Aduke Asikhia and Kesh Mohangi, "A Case Study of School Support and the Psychological, Emotional and Behavioural Consequences of HIV and AIDS on Adolescents," *SAHARA: Journal of Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS Research Alliance* 12, no. 1 (2015): 123-33.

²⁶ J.M. Masango, "The Roles of the Principal and the SBST in Supporting Teachers Teaching Inclusive Education" (University of Pretoria, 2013).

²⁷ Joost, "Investigating the Implementation of Learning Support Strategies by Teachers in the Intermediate Phase of a School in the Western Cape."

²⁸ R I Osarenren-Osaghae and Q O Irabor, "Educational Policies and Programmes Implementations: A Case Study of Education Funding, Universal Basic Education (UBE) and Teacher Education.," *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies* 10, no. 8 (2018): 91-102.

²⁹ Engelbrecht et al., "Enacting Understanding of Inclusion in Complex Contexts: Classroom Practices of South African Teachers."

³⁰ Rulwa-Mnatwana, "School-Based Support Teams' Understandings and Experiences of Inclusive Education in the Western Cape."

³¹ Masango, "The Roles of the Principal and the SBST in Supporting Teachers Teaching Inclusive Education."

³² Rulwa-Mnatwana, "School-Based Support Teams' Understandings and Experiences of Inclusive Education in the Western Cape."

³³ Joost, "Investigating the Implementation of Learning Support Strategies by Teachers in the Intermediate Phase of a School in the Western Cape."

³⁴ Nirashnee Muthusamy, "Teachers' Experiences with Overcrowded Classrooms in a Mainstream School." (2015); Hess, "Teachers Perceptions Regarding the Implementation of the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) Policy in Mainstream Schools."

³⁵ N.T. Mokala, "The Extent to Which Teachers at a Full-Service School in Soweto Understand and Practice the Principles of a Full-Service School" (University of the Witwatersrand, 2017).

Inadequate Professional Counselling Services

Teachers experience challenges in counselling child-headed households.³⁶ Inadequate counselling services prevail due to a lack of professionals in supporting child-headed households that are psychologically challenged by the death of parents. This corroborates the findings of Taukeni, who found that child-headed households do not receive one-on-one counselling due to a lack of counsellors and that teachers do not have adequate time for the learners.³⁷ On the other hand, there are few teachers trained to offer Life Orientation. Subsequently, teachers provide inadequate support for child-headed households. Contrary to this, Ebrahim, states that the schools identify child-headed households at the beginning of the year.³⁸ Despite teachers' support for learners' needs, this disadvantages learners who lose parents during the year. The challenges experienced when teachers support child-headed households should be mitigated. Schools should develop measures to support learners from child-headed households.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bottom-up Theory

The bottom-up theory argues that the local staff, which are the teachers, have knowledge about children from child-headed households.³⁹ These teachers are referred to as street-level bureaucrats. The challenges encountered by children from child-headed households in the education system are known to the teachers as they spend most of their time with the learners.⁴⁰ Therefore, the Bottom-up theory considers the teachers to be decision-makers in support of children from child-headed households. In this case, principals should honour the skills and knowledge of dedicated and committed teachers who can intervene to support learners from child-headed households. Teachers should respond to the challenges of children from child-headed households and establish strategies to support these learners. Teachers should construct a culture of effective support by developing schedules of working with others as a team and designing programmes to support child-headed households. On the other hand, teachers should partner with the district level and develop intervention programmes to support children from child-headed households. This theory is relevant to the study because involving teachers could encourage a passion for the support to offer learners from child-headed households.

Application of the Theory in this Study

The principal and teachers should develop strategies informed by governmental policies and the legislations to support children from child-headed households with clear objectives, as well as the rights of learners. Principals must have knowledge of Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) and the White Paper 6 policies to ensure that they guide and support teachers in the development of strategies to support children from child-headed households. Schools should develop a School Based Support Team (SBST) to support learners from child-headed households.

METHODOLOGY

This study followed the qualitative approach to explore the intervention strategies to be used. Interpretive paradigm was used to look at the day-to-day living of child-headed households and the challenges they experience. Creswell, states that a research paradigm is a set of assumptions that directs the way we do our research.⁴¹ With regard to research design, a case study was used. Exploratory case study was found useful as it offers an understanding of the nature of the phenomenon being studied, which are the intervention strategies for challenges experienced when supporting child-headed households.⁴² The population consisted of principals, departmental heads and members of School Governing Bodies to make a population of 200 participants from the Shiluvane circuit. Purposive sampling was used on 20 participants (principals, Departmental Heads, teachers and School Governing Bodies) in Shiluvane Circuit Limpopo Province who have experience dealing with children from child-headed households.

To address the issue of triangulation in this study, various data collection methods which are semi-structured interviews, questerviews and document analysis were used to retrieve in-depth knowledge of intervention strategies of challenges experienced when supporting learners from child-headed households. Thematic analysis

³⁶ Mwoma and Pillay, "Psychosocial Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Public Primary Schools: Challenges and Intervention Strategies."

³⁷ Simon George Taukeni, "Orphan Adolescents' Lifeworlds on School-Based Psychosocial Support," *Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine* 3, no. 1 (2015): 12–24.

³⁸ Ebrahim, "Perceptions of Support given to Learners from Child Headed Homes by Institutional Level Support Teams."

³⁹ A Bandura, *Principles of Behaviour Modification* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1969).

⁴⁰ Chompucot, "MAJOR FACTORS AFFECTING EDUCATIONAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION EFFECTIVENESS FOR THE THREE SOUTHERNMOST PROVINCES OF THAILAND AS PERCEIVED BY SCHOOL DIRECTOR."

⁴¹ John W Creswell, *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research* (SAGE publications, 2014).

⁴² M. Saunders, P. Lewis, and A. Thornhill, *Research Methods for Business Students*, 7th ed. (Edinburgh Gate Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2016).

was used to explore themes, or patterns, occurring across a data set.⁴³

RESULTS

This study focused on the intervention strategies to support children from child-headed households in secondary schools. We collected data to explore the intervention strategies to support children from child-headed households. The following sub-themes were raised: lack of skills and knowledge; work overload and overcrowded classrooms as well as inadequate professional support. The sub-themes and issues highlighted were used to guide the discussion below. The Bottom-up theory was used to reinforce the findings.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Lack of Skills and Knowledge

The study found that principals and teachers lack skills and knowledge pertaining to policies such as SIAS and Education White Paper 6. Subsequent to the teachers' lack of skills and knowledge regarding policies to support children from child-headed households with needs, restrain learners from fulfilling their needs.⁴⁴ Knowledge of educational policies is important in supporting child-headed households. According to SIAS (2014), schools should inform the district about the issues and programmes developed as intervention strategies to support child-headed households. The bottom-up theory should be implemented for schools to support child-headed households. However, principals and teachers lack skills and knowledge about policies to support child-headed households.

Therefore, the Department of Basic Education should capacitate principals and teachers with educational policies to support child-headed households. Moreover, teachers should attend professional development meetings, in-service training and workshops for intervention strategies to support child-headed households.⁴⁵ Despite all these, teachers should not be overburdened with work and should have a limited number of learners in class. Furthermore, the study revealed that work overload and overcrowding are great challenges to teachers in their efforts to support child-headed households.

Overloaded Work and Overcrowded Classrooms

One of the most important things that the study revealed is that teachers do not have adequate time to support children from child-headed households because of the work overload and overcrowded classrooms. In a similar context, Mkhuma et al., assert that teachers were overloaded with work and find it difficult to support children from child-headed households.⁴⁶ Furthermore, overcrowding is unmanageable, which then constrains the provision of support to child-headed learners. Eventually, it implicates excessive workload for teachers and limited opportunities to meet individual learner needs.⁴⁷

To advance the argument, Mokala found that overcrowding is the main challenge for teachers to support child-headed households.⁴⁸ The purpose of the intervention strategies is to support child-headed households to realise their potential. Schools should allocate duties according to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) as they will be able to perform their duties and responsibilities as required. In addition, the DBE should ensure that resources are adequate to ensure that the teacher-learner ratio is equally implemented in all schools. Moreover, the literature suggests that it is difficult for teachers to develop intervention strategies to support child-headed households and are restricted from supporting learners with issues that affect their learning due to overloaded work.⁴⁹

On the other side, this study revealed that teachers sacrifice their time and resources to support child-headed households despite their daily challenges of overloaded work and overcrowded classrooms. Therefore, teachers should be equipped with mechanisms on how to support child-headed households.⁵⁰ Notwithstanding all these, schools should receive professional support from various departments to support child-headed households. This

⁴³ Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, *Research Methods for Business Students*.

⁴⁴ Joorst, "Investigating the Implementation of Learning Support Strategies by Teachers in the Intermediate Phase of a School in the Western Cape"; Rulwa-Mnatwana, "School-Based Support Teams' Understandings and Experiences of Inclusive Education in the Western Cape"; Hess, "Teachers Perceptions Regarding the Implementation of the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) Policy in Mainstream Schools."

⁴⁵ Marongwe, Sonn, and Mashologu, "Dealing with Children from Child-Headed Households: How Prepared Are the Teachers?"

⁴⁶ Mkhuma, Maseko, and Tlale, "Challenges Teachers Face in Identifying Learners Who Experience Barriers to Learning: Reflection on Essential Support Structures."

⁴⁷ Muthusamy, "Teachers' Experiences with Overcrowded Classrooms in a Mainstream School."; Hess, "Teachers Perceptions Regarding the Implementation of the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) Policy in Mainstream Schools."

⁴⁸ Mokala, "The Extent to Which Teachers at a Full-Service School in Soweto Understand and Practice the Principles of a Full-Service School."

⁴⁹ Bongive Jacqueline Mpuzana, "The Implementation of the HIV/AIDS Policy at a High School in Pinetown District, Kwazulu-Natal Province" (MEd dissertation. Pretoria: University of South Africa.[Online] <http://hdl~...>, 2017).

⁵⁰ Muthusamy, "Teachers' Experiences with Overcrowded Classrooms in a Mainstream School."

should be one of the intervention strategies to support child-headed households.

The present study encourages schools to reduce the workload of teachers responsible for child-headed households to enable them time to support learners. Teachers should be given assistant teachers to support learners from child-headed households because they are overwhelmed with work and do not have sufficient time for learners' support. Despite all these, parents play a vital role in the education of children. Therefore, guardians of child-headed households should be involved in the education of their children.

Inadequate Professional Support

The study further revealed that there is inadequate professional support from social workers and psychologists in schools. Schools should have social workers or psychologists to support learners with barriers to learning, including child-headed households. However, rural schools do not have psychologists that attend to child-headed households in schools. Teachers are expected to support child-headed households in schools. However, teachers are not trained and do not have the skills to support child-headed households. Therefore, child-headed households are not supported by professionals. This shows that child-headed households are deprived of psycho-socially to receive support from schools, governmental departments and communities.⁵¹ Child-headed households are limited from access to among others health, education and social care. Schools should collaborate with other departments to support child-headed households. To add to this, the participants showed that some learners are free to expose their challenges to strangers unlike their teachers who are always available at school.

According to Blance and Panao, child-headed households are deprived of psycho-social support from individuals, institutions and communities.⁵² This means that schools and various departments do not offer support to child-headed households. It was clear from the findings that child-headed households are not supported by professionals as expected in the South African Constitution of 1994 Section 9 of the South African Children's Act 38 of 2005 states that in all actions concerning the care, protection and well-being of a child, the best interest of the child is of paramount importance, which should be applied.⁵³ This is confirmed by Coetzee and Mienie, who said that schools should promote and apply the best interests of child-headed households to realise their potential.⁵⁴ Reyneke, argues that schools should utilise a child-centered approach in all matters concerning the children.⁵⁵ This will ensure that all learners at schools are supported.

The present study is important because teachers should maintain the social and intellectual growth of child-headed households. Therefore, the Department of Education should develop interventions to support child-headed households in overcrowded classrooms. This means that schools should involve the Department of Education in addressing the challenges in support of child-headed households They should also collaborate with different stakeholders to support child-headed households with needs. households.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Programmes to develop teachers on policies: It is recommended that all teachers should undergo training in policies as it clearly shows from the findings that teachers do not have knowledge of SIAS policy and The White Paper 6. The policies could be useful as they can be used as one of the intervention strategies to support children from child-headed households.
- School Based Support Teams (SBST): It is recommended that all schools should formulate SBST. The SBST should be supported by the DBST to support child-headed households.
- The Department of Education: It is recommended that the Department of Education should ensure that overcrowded classrooms and teachers' work overload are limited.
- The Department of Education: The Department of Education should provide Schools with permanent Learner Support Agents.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the Intervention strategies for challenges experienced when supporting learners from child-headed households in secondary schools. We concluded that intervention strategies to support child-headed households are crucial in the education of every learner as it is their right to receive equal quality education. There

⁵¹ Dennis Vicencio Blanco and Rogelio Alicor Panao, "Caring for the Orphan in the Philippines: A Policy-Capacity Review," *Child & Youth Services* 40, no. 1 (2019): 65–92.

⁵² Blanco and Panao, "Caring for the Orphan in the Philippines: A Policy-Capacity Review."

⁵³ A. Moyo, "Reconceptualising 'the Paramountcy Principle': Beyond the Individualistic Construction of the Best Interests of the Child," *African Human Rights Law Journal* 12, no. 1 (2012): 142-177.

⁵⁴ Minette Coetzee, "Addressing the Skills Shortage of Computer-Aided Design Pattern-Making in the KwaZulu-Natal Clothing Industry" (Citeseer, 2014).

⁵⁵ Mariëtte Reyneke, "Realising the Child's Best Interests: Lessons from the Child Justice Act to Improve the South African Schools Act," *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal/Potchefstroomse Elektroniese Regsblad* 19, no. 1 (2016).

have been teachers who were willing to support child-headed households. However, schools should rather have strategies to support child-headed households than teachers voluntarily supporting these learners. What about schools where teachers are not willing to support due to various reasons? We concluded that the SIAS policy should be exposed to schools and effectively implemented to support child-headed households. It has been established that the SIAS policy is an important document which should be effectively implemented by schools to support child-headed households. School Based Support Team should implement such policies.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge and appreciate the voluntary participation of principals, Departmental Heads, teachers, School Governing Bodies and child-headed households in the Shiluvane Circuit of Mopani West District in this study. We thank them for their time and participation until the end of the study. We also thank the Circuit Manager and Limpopo Department of Education who gave us permission to conduct fieldwork at the school.

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