

Improving the quality of education in South African schools: the case of orphaned learners

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Aim of Study



To explore conceptualisations of education quality in relation to the lived experiences of African orphaned learners

Research Questions

- What are the lived experiences of orphaned learners in relation to schooling?
- What possible indicators of the quality of education received may be inferred from lived experiences?

Findings

The extended family system

- Relatives act as surrogate parents
- Relatives assist with school related tasks
- Family cohesion

The role of the community

- Support for learning

Findings (cont)

Sibling-headed households

- Lack of food
- Unsafe home environment
- Lack of support for learning
- Absenteeism

Possible indicators of education quality inferred from the lived experiences of orphaned learners

FAMILY INPUTS:

- Having nutritious meals at school and at home
- Living in safe and secure homes
- Relatives who would provide the warmth and nurturing support to the child
- Relatives acting as surrogate parents who would ensure regular school attendance, who value education, motivate and instill positive attitudes in children

Possible indicators of quality education (cont)

SCHOOL INPUTS:

- Educators who have the knowledge and skill to respond appropriately to the needs of orphaned children
- Provisions of on-site guidance and counseling at school

COMMUNITY INPUTS:

- The local community and school community that can provide sustainable direct support to children's learning
- Peer groups with similar experiences who can provide the emotional support

Recommendations

- Appoint part-time Educational Psychologists and Social Workers to provide on-site pastoral support to learners
- Schools to identify older siblings in affected families who could be trained in counseling skills and support
- School Governing Bodies to work with members of the community to provide a safety network for orphans living in sibling-headed households
- School to draw on the positive supportive inputs of the community by identifying retired teachers and unemployed young adults to respond to the educational needs of orphaned learners from sibling-headed households.

Further Research

- Determine aspects of the extended family and that of the community that can contribute to education quality
- Explore the needs of sibling-headed households versus those of other types of households for special support
- Investigate how teachers experience teaching in the context of the increasing number of orphans