

Exploring ways of assisting Lesotho educators to offer care and support to children orphaned and rendered vulnerable by HIV and AIDS

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The HIV and AIDS pandemic has resulted in 14 million children being orphaned worldwide. In Lesotho alone, where this study was carried out, there are about 180 000 of these children (UNAIDS, 2007). Teachers, especially in Lesotho's primary schools need to be equipped to better deal with the challenges that result from having these children in their classrooms. At the Lesotho College of Education, where I have worked for 12 years as a teacher educator, pre-service and in-service student teachers are not trained to offer care and support to orphans and vulnerable children. They experience problems in the classroom emanating from the needs of these children.

This study followed an action research design to find ways to support teachers to better deal with the issues they face as a result of having orphans and vulnerable children in their classes. Using a qualitative approach, educators perceptions, feelings, attitudes and experiences in dealing with orphans and vulnerable children in their schools were identified, and it became apparent that educators were negatively affected on a personal and professional level. It was concluded that the development of resilience in educators would help them to better cope with orphans and vulnerable children in their classes. The chosen intervention Resilient Educators Programme (REds) was implemented and evaluated and findings revealed that it was beneficial in increasing educator resilience. Recommendations, based on the findings of the study, were made for future teacher education in this area.

Biography

Grace Makeletso Ntaote a teacher educator at The Lesotho College of Education and in the Department of Special Education. She has also written a paper on the impact of the HIV and AIDS on Primary school children in Lesotho.

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