

THE MARGINALISED AND VOICELESS CHILDREN: AN IN-DEPTH LOOK INTO PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS

Ntshuntshe, Z. & Mathwasa, J.

ABSTRACT

The death of a parent is a traumatic event that has far-reaching consequences for children's lives. Worldwide the number of orphans and vulnerable children has increased, as well as the adversities confronting them. Besides children's learning schools have become essential for basic human rights. However, recent years have seen an increased emphasis on the provision of psychosocial support for the wellbeing of all children due to the serious consequences orphans and vulnerable children face causing them to miss out on learning. Tertiary institutions in various countries train teachers in Educational Psychology so that they are empowered to give psychosocial support so that they can respond appropriately to the unique challenges faced by vulnerable children in their setting. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the psychosocial support provided to orphans and vulnerable learners in schools. The study used an interpretivist paradigm within a qualitative approach, with semi-structured interviews conducted with four Life Orientation (LO) teachers, two school principals, and two district managers. The data was analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that teachers lacked understanding and expertise in dealing with orphaned learners and were dismissive of the concept of orphaned learners' vulnerability. The study concluded that a variety of factors contributed to the dissonance of support actions, including a lack of coordination and cooperation in the delivery of support to learners. As a result, the study recommends that teachers be trained in how to support orphaned and vulnerable learners and calls for a multi-sectoral integration of stakeholders in the provision of psychosocial support to orphaned and vulnerable learners.

Keywords: bereavement, counselling psychosocial support, Behavioural and emotional problems

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this study was to find out how teachers in secondary schools in King William's Town District provided psychosocial support to orphans. Because of the growing number of orphans and vulnerable children, as well as other challenges confronting our schools and communities today, the concept of psychosocial support has become a global phenomenon. Parents and primary caregivers play an important role in the development and support systems of children by increasing their self-esteem, spiritual growth, material well-being, and education (Bokhorst, Sumter & Westenberg, 2010; Chitiyo, Changara & Chitiyo, 2008; & Piko, Luszczynska; & Fitzpatrick, 2013). The loss of a parent disrupts a child's social structure and social ties, affecting his or her development and mental health (Cluver & Orkin, 2009). Tertiary institutions in various countries train teachers in psychosocial support so that they can respond appropriately to the unique challenges faced by vulnerable children in that country (UNESCO, 2010; UNICEF, 2011). Governments recognize that schools serve as places for children to learn

as well as places for them to cope with the psychological stress of an emergency. Furthermore, teacher psychosocial support training is based on the premise that education restores normalcy to distressed learners by providing a stable school environment, and the teachers provide a familiar, friendly, and trustworthy environment (INNE, 2007). As a result, school has evolved into an effective means of providing psychosocial support (Giese, Meintjies & Chamberlain, 2003; Dalton, Rapa & Stein 2020).

The literature has focused on preparing teachers to provide psychosocial support in schools during natural disasters, violent incidents, or wars (Priwitt, Diazz & Dayal, 2008). As a result of numerous challenges, such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has increased the number of orphans and vulnerable children in our schools, a gradual shift has begun. This shift compels the government to address the needs of orphans and vulnerable children through legislation such as White Paper 6, in South Africa which places expectations on schools and teachers to address the needs of orphans and vulnerable children.

Teachers must be trained in educational psychology, which is the sociocultural approach to learning. It emphasises the significance of interaction in the learning of children. Education psychologists study the social, emotional, and cognitive processes involved in learning and apply what they learn to improve the learning process. Some concentrate on the educational development of a specific population, such as orphans, vulnerable children, people with various types of impairment, and people with specific learning difficulties, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or dyslexia. Because Educational Psychology teaches them proven educational psychology theories, a teacher is empowered to become a true human being reaching their full potential.

Certain aspects of life endanger children. Being orphaned by the death of one or both parents, living on the street, in poverty, with a disability, affected by armed conflicts, abused by parents or other family members and caregivers, being HIV positive and affected by HIV and AIDS, being marginalized, stigmatized, and even discriminated against, being child laborers including domes (UNICEF, UNAIDS, PEPFAR, 2006; UNICEF, 2007). Orphans are among the most vulnerable children because the majority of them have few opportunities in life (Skinner & Davids, 2006; Chin et al, 2020). While the scourge of HIV/AIDS appears to have subsided, Covid19 arrived with a bang, upending economies and severely affecting the livelihoods of the world's children. Despite the fact that they have lost their parents, their learning has been disrupted and they have been denied the psychosocial support that they would normally receive from schools.

A vulnerable child is one who is under the age of 18 and is at a high risk of not receiving adequate care and protection (UNAIDS, 2006; UNICEF, 2008). Orphans face psychological and emotional issues both before and after the death of their parents, making it difficult for them to cope and adjust in school and social settings (UNAIDS 2007; Turliuc et al. 2013). When a child loses a parent to whom he or she has formed an attachment, it has a psychological impact. Some are forced to watch their parents' illnesses progress and, eventually, prepare for their parents' deaths. Covid19 has the most devastating effect on children, as some lose parents after a brief or insignificant illness, and death strikes before they realize what has happened. Children have limited access to socialization, physical contact through play, and learning in the current context of lockdown and movement restrictions, all of which are critical for their psychosocial well-being and development. This could be too traumatic for them, and because it's been going on for so long, it could be interfering with their schoolwork. Tshoko (2007) and Ntshuntshe (2012) discovered that some orphans had memory gaps and could not recall what

was taught in class due to the trauma of losing parents. It can also lead to chronic absenteeism or, in the worst-case scenario, dropout from school (REPSSI, 2012).

It is thus expected that providing psychosocial support in schools will strengthen orphaned learners' well-being, social well-being, skills, knowledge, or competencies, resulting in a well-balanced individual. Despite efforts to improve our educational system, psychosocial support remains inadequate. As a result, schools must provide psychosocial support to these frequently marginalized and stigmatized learners. The goal of this paper was to look into how teachers provide psychosocial support to secondary school learners. This paper was also curious about the extent to which the current strategies resulted in positive change in the lives of learners.

IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

Identifying learners who require psychosocial support is a critical step that serves as the foundation for all subsequent support strategies that teachers may employ. Teachers, according to Pridmore and Yates (2005), can easily identify orphans in need of assistance because they interact directly with learners. External signs of vulnerability can be detected and reported by teachers, such as inadequate and torn uniforms, behavioural issues, absenteeism from school, poor nutrition, children displaying signs of abuse, impaired concentration, and others. Giese (2004) also claims that because they are closest to the children, teachers are in a unique position to act quickly. Teachers struggle to balance the already difficult demands of teaching and learning with the additional demands imposed by increased anxiety, limited concentration spans, the desire to maintain social distance, which affects teacher-learner interaction, and severe trauma (Christner, et al, 2021; Lee, 2020; Singh et al. 2020). Schools are closed during lockdown, as are legal and preventative services, which are not fully operational; children are ill-equipped to report violence, abuse, and harm, especially if they live in abusive homes (Cooper, 2020).

It is now widely acknowledged, according to Kirk and Winthrop (2007), that schools play an important role in supporting orphaned learners who have been affected by death, war, or displacement. In this context, teachers are at the forefront of providing critical support. Teachers were expected to serve as protective resources for care and support in the twentieth century, particularly during the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which orphaned many learners (Bhana, Morrell, Epstein, & Moletsane, 2006; UNICEF, 2006; Ardington & Leibbrandt, 2010). Teachers are also expected to provide psychosocial support not only in South Africa, but throughout the world. Countries ravaged by war, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Uganda, have been training teachers to respond to conflict situations (UNICEF, 2011). Teachers in China were taught to spot signs of distress or impaired daily functioning in their learners (UNICEF, 2011). Teachers in South Africa, like teachers in the United States, are expected to identify and assist learners.

This was exacerbated by the breakdown and disappearance of previous traditional support systems in which relatives could accept orphans after their parents died (Hepburn, 2005; Allen, Pfefferbaum, Cuccio & Jeanna, 2008). Attendance registers show that orphaned learners are frequently absent from school, and academic schedules show that they perform below average when compared to other learners in the same class. Using these records, teachers can identify orphaned learners who require psychosocial support. Teachers were able to identify and refer learners to health and other relevant centres located outside of schools,

according to Ebersohn and Ferreira (2011). Teachers developed and used systems to identify vulnerability based on behavioural changes such as drowsiness during learning sessions, withdrawal from activities, and expressions of anger, sadness, and anxiety, according to their findings.

Early identification of orphaned children in school and timely referral to appropriate treatment, according to Toros (2013), improves academic outcomes for many orphaned children. As a result, teachers must have the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully identify orphaned learners. Early identification of learners results in appropriate assistance in improving academic performance, obtaining financial assistance, improving behaviour, and providing learners with moral and emotional support. Early identification of orphaned children also provides them with access to various services such as social grants, school uniforms and food parcel structures, fee exemption, and regular and punctual attendance in school was achieved through school nutrition (DOSD, 2005; Magome, 2006; Ardington & Leibbrandt, 2010; Davids et al, 2006; Ntshuntshe, 2012). Furthermore, according to Giese (2004), schools should take an active role in identifying orphaned learners so that they can access services where teachers are at the forefront of providing support. In some schools, all teachers work with the LO teacher to identify orphaned learners in need of psychosocial support, though coordinated structures are required for maximum learner support.

TEACHERS' STRATEGIES FOR PROVIDING PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TO ORPHANED LEARNERS

Teachers can use strategies to help learners learn more effectively. As a result, strategies for assisting orphans and vulnerable learners may be included in their lesson plans. Thus, whatever strategy teachers may use, they should be guided by the goals that must be met for that specific purpose (National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 2005). The primary goal of school-based psychosocial support is to assist learners with any differences or challenges they may face. This goal is based on legally binding laws in White Paper 6, which state that assisting orphans and vulnerable children in school is a fundamental right (DOE, 1999). As a result, the Department of Basic Education and all schools are required to address the emotional, behavioural, social, and mental health and wellness needs of all learners and teachers (DOE, CSTL, 2011).

In terms of psychosocial support, White Paper 6 states that teachers in schools may choose programs (created by the Ministry of Education) that will, among other things, (I) coordinate support and care programs for learners and (II) establish referral procedures for educators to follow (DoE, 2011). As a result of these responsibilities, teachers must form community partnerships, refer learners to outside resources, and create support circles, friendship circles, and back-to-school programs. Against this backdrop, the study sought to learn about the strategies used by teachers in the King William's Town District to provide psychosocial support to orphaned learners. Teachers also counselled orphaned learners in order to better understand their issues and circumstances.

Furthermore, teachers sought sponsors and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to provide physical materials such as uniforms to orphaned learners. Again, teachers gave orphaned learners extra food from the school nutrition intervention program to ensure they had something to eat at home. They also utilized the health sector by referring learners to clinics, and orphaned learners were referred to social workers so that they could be further assisted in

obtaining social grants. Teachers contacted the police when they suspected abuse. Some teachers said they referred orphaned learners to school-based support teams, who then referred them to the appropriate offices.

This is good referral system practice, but these strategies needed to be tested to see if they were effective in order to determine if they benefited orphaned learners. Respondents also attested to the strategies' effectiveness in assisting learners in this regard. They were all in agreement that orphaned learners were receiving much-needed uniforms as well as social grants, a program that was initiated by the Non-governmental organisations (NGOs). According to studies, NGOs play an important role in the education of orphaned learners (Hepburn, 2001). According to these experts, NGOs can assist by providing much-needed assistance to children at a low cost. Ntshunshu stresses the importance of NGOs in assisting orphaned learners in schools (2012). During her research, she discovered that orphaned learners were given school uniforms as a form of assistance. According to Davids, NGOs also provide important services to schools in the form of food, clothing, and other forms of care (2006).

According to social workers, orphaned learners referred to social development offices were able to access social grants and other psychosocial support. In the year 2000, the government implemented policies and programs that allowed orphans and other vulnerable children to receive social grants as part of a poverty-reduction strategy. According to the study, orphaned learners needed the help of social workers to qualify for these grants. As a result, orphaned learners and caregivers were referred to social workers for assistance with social grants and other psychosocial needs. Skinner and Davids' (2006) and Ardington & Leibbrandt's (2010) studies have also highlighted the accomplishments of orphaned learners who received social grants.

According to the study, some child-headed families received assistance after contacting social workers and informing them of their children's situation. The police also assisted in the arrest of a relative who had been discovered abusing the orphaned children. Child-headed homes are not a new phenomenon in Sub-Saharan Africa, where many orphaned children have been seen becoming heads of homes at a young age (Barnett & Whiteside, 2002; Skinner & Davids, 2006). As previously stated, this is due to the breakdown of the African kinship fabric, which used to allow families and relatives to take in orphaned children. Orphaned children become vulnerable and exposed as a result of the absence of a parent or caregiver. In orphaned children, especially girls, the absence of a parent increases the risk of sexual abuse (Thurman, Brown, Richter, Maharaj & Magnani, 2006; UNICEF, 2006). In this regard, the efficiency with which the social workers and police handled the aforementioned case demonstrated the good practice of teachers, social workers, and police using the referral system.

The study, however, found no network or referral system between professional non-governmental organisations and schools. The researchers discovered that various organisations were operating independently. The researchers found no evidence of different people/sectors discussing cases, referrals, methods of support, and so on, in order to first build their own capacity and then come up with a simple systematic way of providing support that would involve everyone. As a result, one of the study's findings was that teachers were dissatisfied because some of the strategies they employed seemed ineffective. They claimed that while non-governmental organisations and social workers may provide food and uniforms to learners, they do not address the underlying causes of student problems or behaviour.

One respondent agreed, saying that while learners may be identified and given material items, the underlying psychosocial problem is frequently overlooked. As a result, the problem/behaviour may persist despite the assistance provided. Richter, Manegold, and Pather

all also made mention of it (2004). The researchers observed that many schools make the mistake of working as separate entities to the exclusion of other parties/sectors because, in this case, if the teachers saw that one strategy, such as providing learners with uniforms, was not working, they would have engaged the other partners/sectors to discuss/share views on the way forward on these cases. One respondent echoed this, saying that while learners may be identified and provided with material items, the underlying psychosocial problem is frequently ignored.

They may also be able to recognize gaps and see where other strategies fall short. This means that rather than each cluster working independently of the others, a multi-pronged approach is required. The collaborative efforts of various providers of psychosocial support can assist one another in producing the best results (Richter, Foster & Sherr, 2006). This is because all sectors/types of people have something to offer in terms of psychosocial support, i.e. caring for and supporting that child (REPSSI, 2012). This emphasizes the significance of integrating the psychosocial support provided to orphaned learners.

Second, if other strategies are ineffective, the lack of School Based Support Teams is another factor that could help to strengthen support. One of the responsibilities of the school-based support team, for example, is to develop an individual support plan and to follow up with a review to ensure that an alternative plan is in place if one strategy does not work. In such cases, such expertise from other parties/sectors would be beneficial. Surprisingly, one district official mentioned the formation of School Based Support Teams (SBST), as one of the strategies that teachers can use to help orphaned learners in school. The researchers were able to connect the orphaned learners discussion, in which district officials stated that if a school has an SBST, this structure informs the plans on how to manage the key aspect of psychosocial support in the school (SAIDE OER AFRICA, 2012). Unfortunately, the study's findings revealed that the selected high schools lacked SBSTs and that teachers were providing psychosocial support out of curiosity, which is unfortunate because the presence of this structure makes providing psychosocial support for orphaned learners much easier.

Another strategy that could help schools and improve student counselling was to use peers. Friendship and social support are two factors that help children cope with adversity while also contributing to the development of positive self-esteem (REPSSI, 2012). Adolescent attachment relationships are crucial for identity formation and self-esteem. The child, on the other hand, may not be able to reach out to other children on his or her own, which is where the teacher comes in. This is due to the teacher's primary "tool" role in facilitating this process (REPSSI, 2012). Personal qualities and the ability of a teacher to exude warmth and compassion to his or her learners can sometimes be transferred to the learners, creating a mood and atmosphere conducive to friendship formation. The significance of employing multiple strategies cannot be overstated, because in the absence of one, the others remain active (as support is a multi-layered structure) and can even run concurrently at times. Furthermore, the researchers speculate on what might happen if all of these strategies interact with one another to their full potential. This is also something that some of the teachers noticed and commented on, that there appeared to be no link between the various sectors due to a lack of follow-up on learner cases by either district officials or social workers.

District officials stated in this study that they believed the strategies were effective because they had examples of how one dyslexic learner was successfully assisted and was now doing well in a mainstream school. Another district official described the strategies as more effective, particularly when the teacher enlisted the assistance of people such as social workers, because social workers ensured that learners received social grants and followed up on cases

as far as their homes, if necessary, because some caregivers were prone to misusing the social grants. The district officials' report, however, contradicts what the principals observed. The principals insisted that the district office was taking too long to handle their cases. They cited two instances in which two learners in one school were unable to read or write, and the situation was reported to district officials. The principal stated that the cases had never been addressed and that he was still dealing with the problem. The other principal mentioned a similar situation in which he reported a case of a child who was failing academically.

The officials arrived and gave the child a test, but they never received any results or feedback. As a result, they were still faced with the same problem. Accordingly, the two reports appear to be contradictory. In fact, the principals' findings were consistent with other district officials' and social workers' findings of late responses. According to the literature, effective psychosocial support is multi-sectoral, and more collaboration is needed to ensure that all of the various people/professionals/sectors are involved/roped in to create that integration towards providing psychosocial support for orphaned learners in schools.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Erikson's (1965) psychosocial stages of development formed the basis for this research. According to Erikson's psychosocial theory, there are eight stages of development that occur from infancy to late adulthood (Mwoma & Pillay, 2015). Erikson's work focused on resolving various crises that could obstruct a child's development into a successful, whole person. According to the fourth stage, industry vs. inferiority, children develop a sense of pride and accomplishment in their schoolwork, sports, social activities, and family life, or they feel inferior and inadequate because they do not measure up. Children aged six to twelve who are still enrolled in junior secondary schools are included in this category.

According to Batra (2013), each individual's completeness is influenced by his or her family, school, peer group, and society as he or she grows. As a result, children of these ages continue to need proper guidance as well as the support of their parents and significant others (Tchombe, 2011). In the absence of a parent or other figure to provide such guidance and support, the affected children feel inferior, which leads to poor academic performance. As a result, they must be adored and acknowledged. To meet their psychosocial needs, children require recognition, love, guidance, counselling, and encouragement.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed methods approach based on the post-positivist paradigm, allowing for multiple methods and world views, as well as various forms of data collection and analysis (Maree, 2013). This method was chosen because it provides a complete picture and enables researchers to fully address a research problem by collecting, analysing, and interpreting both quantitative and qualitative data. The combination of the two approaches produced complementary strengths that neutralized the majority of the respective quantitative and qualitative methods' weaknesses and biases, resulting in trust in the research findings. Ten teachers from the circuit's ten secondary schools were chosen at random to complete the questionnaire, while four LO teachers and two principals were specifically chosen to participate in in-depth semi-structured interviews. The participants were thought to have a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (McMillan and Schumacher 2006).

Interviews were taped to improve the study's reliability and credibility (Creswell 2014). Member checks on transcripts and analysed texts were also used to ensure the data's credibility (Mouton and Babbie 2005; Rossouw 2003). Triangulation was used to analyse data because it allowed the researchers to reach more conclusive conclusions by combining quantitative and qualitative data, which provided a clear picture of the provision of psychosocial support to orphans in King William's Town District. The participants were assured that all of their rights, such as anonymity and confidentiality, avoiding harm, betrayal, and deception, maintaining privacy, and the right to withdraw from participation at any stage of the research, would be respected during the course of the study (Cohen et al. 2000).

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The lack of teacher qualifications and experience was identified as a major source of concern, as the study revealed that teachers were not trained to teach LO and thus lacked academic qualifications and competencies to fully teach the subject. Teacher qualifications and experience are the most important factors determining the quality of education learners will receive (Chung, 2005), especially since the Department of Education requires LO for all learners in the FET phase (DOE, 2008; RSA, 2008). In light of this, subject teachers' academic qualifications are regarded as an important factor because, in order for these teachers to successfully teach LO, they must have undergone training to equip them with the necessary skills to support orphaned learners in schools. Addressing learner issues, providing pastoral care, and teaching life skills are all examples of how this assistance could be provided. It was discovered that the vast majority of teachers did not work as field teachers. As a result, the vast majority of teachers lacked a LO specialisation.

Only 2.5 percent of teachers had specialised in LO, according to the data, while the rest had specialised in other areas of learning. This shows that only a few teachers specialised in LO. According to the interviews, the majority of the teachers taught LO as a "add on" subject after receiving allocations for the subjects in which they specialised. This finding supported what one school principal said, that with LO, they were simply filling in the gaps to meet each teacher's quota. It didn't matter what subject the teachers specialised into these principals; as long as the teacher had fewer periods, he or she was given LO to supplement his or her work quota. These teachers would then use the time set aside for teaching LO to teach and catch up on other subjects in which they were trained. This happened because they didn't know how to teach the content, so teachers used the time allotted to LO to teach other subjects. This is referred to as "out of field teaching." Out of field teaching occurs when qualified teachers teach subjects/learning areas and year levels for which they were not trained.

The study discovered that these out-of-field teachers lacked LO content knowledge, making them ineligible to teach LO; as a result, they resorted to teaching subjects in which they were completely conversant with curriculum requirements. This also demonstrates that the attitudes of some principals are not conducive to the successful implementation of LO in schools. According to the study, LO was regarded as a "added on" subject after teachers had already been allocated for the subjects in which they specialise (Christiaans, 2006). Again, this scholar claims that LO is sometimes taught by teachers who have not received any training in the learning area. This also implies that good teachers are frequently swapped and thrust with the task of teaching LO, as a result of which they develop an attitude toward it or become frustrated and underperform.

Furthermore, teachers who lack the necessary skills and experience may struggle to effectively carry out their responsibilities (Adewumi, 2012). It became clear that the very people who assigned LO teachers the subject were impeding their ability to provide psychosocial support to learners in schools. They are frustrated by a lack of training, and they are overwhelmed by learner problems for which they have not been adequately trained (including behavioural issues), despite the fact that they are expected to perform. To make matters worse, the allocation of LO by school principals demonstrates that there is no correlation between teacher and subject. All of this points to the fact that there is no link between the teacher and the type of work that they are expected to do, which is to provide psychosocial support to learners.

Thus, whatever assistance they were providing was discovered to be of poor quality. A Math/Science teacher, for example, may be given LO and expected to teach all aspects of LO, including providing psychosocial support to learners, with which he or she may be unfamiliar or even uncomfortable. However, LO teachers should have qualities such as counsellor, love and concern for learners, and friendliness for this subject (Gouws, 2004:8). The preceding discussion emphasised the importance of subject knowledge and experience for LO teachers, and it may be a problem if teachers are not trained to teach LO (Khulisa Management Services, 2000). Not only did these teachers lack the necessary LO training, but they also lacked LO experience, knowledge, and skills. This bolsters the argument that LO teachers require specialised knowledge and skills in order to make a positive contribution to their classrooms (Pillay, 2012).

Nonetheless, despite the aforementioned challenges, teachers use their experience, i.e. tried and tested teaching methods, and their skills in attending to learner problems, to (1) deliver lessons and (2) provide support to learners in need of psychosocial support at school. Some teachers also stated that LO was given solely based on the number of years they had spent as teachers, as they had been exposed to these types of situations for a long time. What the teachers are doing is similar to what Fullan (1991:41) observed: that there was a need for experienced teachers in order for them to carry out their duties effectively. As a result, older and more experienced teachers who were given LO to teach in the classroom fared better than new and inexperienced teachers. In fact, Fullan (1991:14) believes that long-serving teachers are familiar with a variety of teaching strategies and methods, as well as syllabus interpretation. As a result, despite the difficulties they encountered, the researchers observed good practices by teachers who provided psychosocial support to orphaned learners.

As a result of the absence of a parent or caregiver, orphaned children become vulnerable and exposed. The absence of a parent increases the risk of sexual abuse in orphaned children, particularly girls (Thurman, Brown, Richter, Maharaj & Magnani, 2006; UNICEF, 2006). In this regard, the efficiency with which the social workers and police handled the aforementioned cases demonstrated the good practice of using the referral system by the teachers, social workers, and police. However, the study did not uncover a network or referral system between professional non-governmental organisations and schools. The researchers noticed that different organisations were working independently. The researchers found no evidence of different people/sectors discussing cases, referrals, methods of support, and so on, in order to first build their own capacity and then come up with a simple systematic way of providing support that would involve all of them.

As a result, one of the study's findings was that teachers were dissatisfied because some of the strategies they used appeared to be ineffective. They claimed that while non-governmental organisations and social workers may provide learners with food and uniforms,

they do not address the underlying causes of learner problems or behaviour. The researchers observed that many schools make the mistake of working as separate entities to the exclusion of other parties/sectors because, in this case, if the teachers saw that one strategy, such as providing learners with uniforms, was not working, they would have engaged the other partners/sectors to discuss/share views on the way forward on these cases. They may also be able to recognize gaps and see where other strategies fall short. This means that rather than each cluster working independently of the others, a multi-pronged approach is required.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study discovered that teachers who provided psychosocial support lacked training, resulting in a lack of competencies to deal with learner problems and a lack of understanding of the critical need to provide support to learners. There was also a lack of coordination between the various sectors in the implementation of psychosocial duties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends that, There is a need for teachers to be trained in order to teach the subject LO and, secondly, to deal with learner problems in schools. Training would also broaden their understanding of effective support strategies. A collaborative effort by various sectors is required to achieve an integrated plan of action for psychosocial provision in the district. For example, various sectors must collaborate to achieve synergy in district operations.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

NTSHUNTSHE, Z

Sol Plaatje University, Education Department
William Pescod Campus, Scanlam Street, Kimberley, 8300
South Africa
Zntshuntshe@yahoo.com

MATHWASA, J. (CORRESPONDING AUTHOR)

Graduate School of Business
National University of Science and Technology (NUST) Bulawayo
Zimbabwe
jmathwasa1@gmail.com