Orphans Rights in Accessing the Educational Support in Selected Public Secondary Schools in Lusaka, Zambia

Melody Ziile, Gistered Muleya and Francis Simui

University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia

Abstract: **This study explored Orphans Rights in accessing the educational support in selected public secondary schools in Lusaka district. The study was guided by qualitative research methodology and case study design under pinned by three objectives namely: (i) describe the awareness of the rights on Educational support by the orphans and teachers, (ii) explore challenges faced by orphans' in accessing education and (iii) explore strategies that should be put in place in order to allow them have access to education. .Emergent findings indicated that very feel learners were knowledgeable about the support system existing for them as orphans. Some teachers were aware of the educational support to be given to orphans but they were not sure if there was a policy in Zambia supporting such rights. The study revealed that orphans faced a lot of challenges in accessing education such as lack of sponsorship, Social stigma and Corruption in sponsorship awards. Among the measure to ensure that the orphans have access to education included, increased financial support system, enhancing collaboration among stakeholders, empowering orphans with diverse skills, and motivation ventures for well performing orphans. Thus, there is need for the relevant authority to coordinate organizations that look into the plight of orphans to come on board for support.**

Key Words: **Orphans, Education Support, Access. Rights, Lusaka, Zambia**

I. INTRODUCTION

This study is an extract from the lead researcher's Masters Dissertation pursued at the University in Zambia. The thrust of the study focused on orphan's rights in accessing the educational support in selected public secondary schools in Lusaka district. The right to education is a very important right and key component of a child's survival, protection and development because it promotes individual freedom, enables individuals to participate in democratic processes and empowers the marginalized to participate in development activities (Coombe, 2002). This is particularly important with regard to Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVCs). It is for this reason that international human rights law encapsulated in, among others, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC) and Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), maintain that states have an obligation to promote, fulfil and protect the right to basic education. Zambia is not only a

signatory to all these human rights instruments but has gone further to integrate international law through its novel constitutional dispensation which came into force in 2010.

Education being a right of every child whether disabled or non-disabled orphaned or vulnerable, it equips children to meet the challenges of the life (Mwoma and Pillay, 2015). Additionally, the call for civic knowledge and civic awareness becomes significant in so far as meeting their educational needs is concerned. This statement is consistent with the arguments made by Muleya (2017a; 2017b; 2018a; 2018b; 2018c; 2019); Bergersen & Muleya (2019); Machila et al (2018); Magasu, Muleya & Mweemba (2020); Mupeta & Muleya (2019); Habanyati, Simui, Kanyamuna, & Muleya (2020); Mupeta, Muleya, Kanyamuna & Simui (2020); Mwanangombe, Mundende, Muzata, Muleya, Kanyamuna & Simui (2020). Therefore, education involves growing up knowing the environment in which children live in and has immense power to transform the environment in which children live, as it is a powerful instrument of social change and often initiates upward movement in the social structure. In order to make education for all a reality, every child must have access to quality education. However, millions of children continue to experience exclusion within and from education systems across the world due to the effects of illness, poverty, conflict, disease and accidents (USAID, 2004). Therefore, this study investigated orphans' rights in accessing educational support in secondary schools in Lusaka District.

Statement of the problem

Worldwide, the importance of basic education has been recognized and this prompted a number of countries to ensure that their general populaces have access to education. However, there was inadequate information on orphans' rights in accessing educational support, a knowledge gap that this study sought to address. It was important to note that without proper research to assess the rights' of orphans in accessing educational support, Government efforts to have a universal and free access to basic education would be in vain as no clear documentation of literature shows the rights of orphans in accessing the educational support which are essential for successful implementation of the education programme.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore the orphans' Rights in accessing educational support in three selected public secondary schools in Lusaka District.

Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

  i. Describe the awareness of the rights on Educational support by the orphans and teachers.
  ii. Explore challenges faced by orphans' in accessing education,. And
  iii. Explore strategies that should be put in place in order to allow orphans have access to education.

Theoretical framework

This study was anchored on socialist theory propounded by Halsy, 1980. This theory holds that education as a public right and that the primary task of the state is to ensure the economic and social well-being of the community through government intervention and regulation (Dieter, 2005). Socialist theory on the other hand recognizes that individuals have claims to basic welfare services against the state and education is viewed as one of these welfare entitlements. The socialist theory of education has three main claims: first, basic education is viewed as a traditional creator of social inequality and social stratification (Heath, 2000). Secondly, basic education is a major contributor towards the ability of a human being to participate in the social, economic and political life of a nation. And thirdly, the easiest way to attain social health and order is through the acquisition of basic education. The relevance of this theory is that it addresses who between the state and the private sector should provide basic education to the orphaned or vulnerable children in societies. This study draws inspiration from social theory as it demonstrates the need for the adoption of measures that ensure realization of the right to basic education for Orphans and vulnerable children.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Awareness of Educational Support for Orphans Children

A study by Mondal and Mete (2015) found among other challenges faced by the orphans as lack of Awareness about Facilities. The Government of India has many schemes, policies, programmes for children with different disabilities but such facilities do not reach many families especially those who stay in villages or remote areas. Even many regular and special schools are not fully aware about the facilities and they could not provide adequate guidance to the parents. Many of the parents are unaware about the admissions, educational aids, vocational training, exam concessions, etc. That lack of awareness of educational facilities prevents parents from giving better education to their children with disabilities. People including parents and school are not aware of funding available to include students with disabilities in regular schools.

Challenges Encountered by Orphans in accessing educational support in schools

Mondal and Mete (2015) also brought out issues of social stigma as one of the challenges faced by children with disabilities and orphans Children with disabilities in India face stigma since birth due to several socio-religious beliefs. The stigma comes from the influence of mythology and religious belief. In Hindu mythology, a person with disability is wicked and useless; and it is better to avoid such people in order to protect non-disabled people. Any attempts to improve the life of a person with a disability may be considered as an interference with a person's "karma" or defiance of the will of Allah. Society looks down upon the disability and people with disability affecting the families who have children with disability, therefore the family attempts to deny, hide their child's disability-this is especially true when children have developmental disabilities, such as mental retardation, autism, multiple disabilities.

Strategies used to ameliorate the challenges encountered by Orphans

In order to mitigate the challenges related to support from parents/guardians, the following strategies are inevitable: first, government through the educational system and in schools to organise workshops and seminars for parents/guardians with a view to equipping them with skills and knowledge on the importance of caring for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, as one educator had this to say: "guardians must have [sic] a workshop in taking care of the orphans since they are under their care" (educator, School F). Workshops and seminars would also provide parents with an opportunity to understand the reasons why OVC should be supported, to complete schooling without dropping out of school to attain their full potential. They also need to be sensitized regarding the importance of the best interest of the child, by supporting children, even when they divorce or separate, as one educator from School G commented: "parents need to be educated and sensitized on the need to educate their children as this is each and every child's right. In Zambia, it is not known whether or not children who are orphaned or become vulnerable due to parent divorce or separate or as a result of death, the more reason for the current study to establish whether the educational rights of the orphans are still respected or adhered to even after they have been left by their parents.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research approach

The researcher used a qualitative approach. Kombo and Tromp (2006) indicates that a qualitative approach involves interpretation and description; it seeks to interpret, describe and analyses the culture and behaviour of humans by collecting verbatim statements from participants in view of the fact that open-ended questions allow participants to offer responses within their unique context, and the value of the information provided can be exceptionally high. This approach was appropriate for this study because it seeks

information on the rights of orphans in accessing the educational support in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District.

Sample Size

The researcher selected (24) participants to constitute the sample size for this study. This sample comprised (9) teachers, (5) per school and (5) Grade 10 learners who are orphans, (5) from each of the three participating public secondary schools in Lusaka District.

Sampling Techniques

The study employed purposive sampling for choosing participants and schools which involves purposely handpicking individuals from the population based on the researcher's knowledge and judgment (Msabila and Nalaila, 2013). The study used typical sampling among other types of purposive sampling because the study sample involved teachers and children who are potentially familiar with their rights to accessing education as a fundamental basic human right in schools.

Data Analysis

The data that was collected from the field through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion on teachers and children regarding their rights in accessing the educational support was qualitatively analyzed using thematic method. The method is especially useful when one is concerned with the complexity, process and novelty of a phenomenon; in this regard the rights of orphans to accessing education as a basic human need in the education system.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were highly upheld in the study. First and foremost, the researcher sought consent from the University of Zambia ethical committee, District Education Board Secretary (DEBS), school managers from the respective secondary schools in Lusaka District, and participants to find out whether they were willing to participate in the study. The researcher ensured that participation by the teachers and children was voluntary. This was done by explaining to them the procedure, relevance and purpose of the study. Participants were also assured that data to be collected was to be kept confidential and only be used for research purposes. Furthermore, the researcher assured the participants that names and personal details would not be revealed or published and that the names of schools and participants was to be represented by certain codes and this was to ensure anonymity. Ultimately, the researcher took full responsibility for the study and any unforeseen consequences it would have attracted.

Lack of sponsorship

The study revealed that lack of sponsorship has been a major challenges faced by most of the participants in accessing education. It was reported that after the orphans lost their

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Awareness of the Rights on Educational support

The first objective in this study was to assess awareness of the rights on Educational support by the orphans and teachers. Various responses were given and the following themes emerged: (i) Limited awareness from the orphans and (ii) Teachers ignorance on the existing policies. The study revealed that most of the orphans did not know about these rights on educational support. In view of this, participant Pupil -1 narrated that:

I understand that my education is the foundation of everything, But I don't know where to go when I need help, the teachers tell us that they only pick on a few children not everyone because the government has no money to help everyone who is in need. I understand that I have the right to be educated and not to be abused by people, and that I need to be supported to go to school and being supported with the things that I want (P-1, 2020)

Teacher's ignorance on the existing policies

The study established teachers were aware of the rights to education support by the orphans but the majorities were not sure if there is a policy supporting such. One teacher explained that**:**

Yes we are aware of these rights to education, but we are not aware of the orphan's rights or the policy document that talks about these orphans. We are also aware that they are institutions that support the orphans though not everyone is supported; only these pupils who have been spotted are given the support (T-1, 2020).

Challenges faced by orphans' in accessing education

The second objective in this study was to describe challenges faced by orphans' in accessing education support. Participants gave similar and divergent views. From the responses given, the following key themes emerged; Lack of sponsorship; Social stigma and Corruption in sponsorship awards.

parents, very few people could come on board to support them academically. In view of this, one participant stated that:

I was supported by a certain organization from grade 2 to 9, but I failed grade 9 twice and they stopped paying for me. I have been having challenges to pay for my schools fees

because of finances. My parents died and did not leave any money for me. Even those who are keeping me they are facing a lot of financial challenges (P-3, 2020).

Social stigma

The study reported social stigma as one of the challenges that orphans faced in accessing education support. Most of them could not come out in open to state their level of vulnerability.

To support this trend, one teacher echoed that:

The children usually isolate themselves, so once you notice such a child you call them, talk to them encourage them, because many are the times when you found that this child is quite intelligent but because of the challenges that this child is passing through they tend to withdraw, then you as a teacher or a mother because when we are here we are the second parents, their parents surrender their children to us, such that when they are in our hands it is our duty to see to it that these children get what they need to get or we encourage them to understand or accept they situation and focus on education because this is the only way they could be independent in life by working hard. Based on what I have said, it has been a challenge for them to access the sponsorship because they do not open up (T-5, 2020).

Corruption in sponsorship awards.

The study revealed that even if there were some organizations that could come on board to support orphans who were unable to access education, elements of corruption existed in the way sponsorship were awarded. It was reported that sponsorship were given based on who you know. To simply this, one orphan explained that:

Corruption is another challenge that we face, because the same people from the organizations may want only their Increased financial support system and awareness

Based on the challenges described, financial support was seen to be lacking among vulnerable orphans. In the light of this, it was highlighted that government could increase the financial support on orphans. The participants indicted that financial support could also cater for other needs that could help orphans have access to Education. To demonstrate this, one teacher highlighted that:

In as much as the education sector cannot afford to provide for everyone they try to supply what they can afford, the community should be informed on the support that is out there, because you find that they are people who have passed grade 7 but they don't know where to get sponsorship. Forms should be given to us fill in in order for them to get our details about where we come from and who is helping us with school issues The school should organize extra lessons for those who can't afford in order for them to do well at grade 12 . I know of one girl she is now a mother, she passed grade 7 very well but couldn't go back to school because of lack of sponsorship , so we could sensitize the community on were these

children to be supported, some are bribed and their children or relatives will be the first ones to be given the support. Even getting a school place in the morning its difficult some places are given to those who pay a bribe or know the head teacher those who do not know someone are pushed to APU classes (T-6, 2020).

Strategies needed in order to allow orphans have access to education

The third objective of this study was to highlight strategies that should be put in place in order to allow orphans have access to education. Participants were asked to share on what could be feasible on supporting education of orphans. From the responses given, the following themes emerged:Increased financial support system, Strengthen collaboration, Empower orphans with diverse skills, and Motivate well performing orphans.

government sponsorship are found many people could be educated (T-7, 2020).

In reference to the increased sponsorship, another pupil added that:

This aid is very good but they should extend it up to university because they are many people pass with good grades and you found that they get stuck in the society because they do not have people to push for them, the government can come in were by they can and put everyone who pass well on sponsorship (P-6, 2020).

More collaborate facets

The study revealed that there was need for well-wishers to collaborate with the government and the already existing organizations in sponsoring the education of the vulnerable orphans. It was indicated that more sponsors coming on board would lessen the responsibility on the government. In view of this, one teacher commented that:

We also need to engage other partners that can help us support these children all the way to university because you find that some children can go up to grade 12 and pass well

but fail to proceed to the next level due to funds. There must also be a record keeping so that any help that would come will be able to pick from the list (T-8, 2020).

Similar to the above sentiment, another teacher added that:

We need more organizations to come on board and help these orphans. We have so many orphans who are not accessing the help, so if a number of partners could come on board it can be a good thing. Orphans really need the support so that they can realize their potential just like any other pupil with parents (T-4, 2020).

Empowering orphans with diverse skills

The study revealed that empowering orphans with diverse skills could help them at a later stage to find means of sponsoring themselves as education does not just end at grade secondary level. This suggestion came about as a result of struggles that most of the orphans have gone through even in the face of sponsoring boards. To elaborate more on this, one teacher stated that:

I look at the right to education in terms of giving these children the survival skills and also social skills. The survival skills given to these pupils are those that can help them survive in the society after school, skills such as gardening, first aid, how to keep animals and baking is of the skills being taught. These skills help them to survive in the society in case of any challenges they may come across (T-2, 2020).

In view of the diverse skills, one Teacher commented that:

I think times have changed. You see there are lot of people who are educated but they are not doing anything. For me I feel giving these orphans sponsorship alone is not enough. We also need to teach them diverse skills so that when they are done with their education they can have were to start from. However, the issue of sponsorship is important but there is more to that my sister (T-6, 2020).

Motivation ventures for well performing orphans

The study revealed that awarding well performing orphans would give them the morale to work hard as it was revealed in the study that organizations that supported orphans would withdraw their sponsorship in an event orphans could not perform well. One teacher gave the following views:

There is need to award performing orphan so that others can be encouraged to work hard. Am not saying other pupils should not be awarded but there is more to do with these orphans. For instance schools can come up with orphan's award just specifically for the orphans so that they can be motivated to work hard. At the moment, when they fail, the organizations that are sponsoring them have been withdrawing the support (T-9, 2020).

V. DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Awareness of the rights on Educational support by the orphans and teachers

Limited awareness from the orphans

The responses from majority of the pupils that participated in the study indicates that there is limited awareness were the issue of sponsorship is concerned. The study revealed that these orphans know that they are supposed to be assisted on how to access the education. The position is that education is the right to every child hence there is no child who should be left behind especially those who have lost their parents. This finding is a confirmation of the policy document on educating our future by MOE (1996) which possess that Zambia is also committed to ensuring the right to education and must see to it that all regardless of their status or disposition have access to quality and relevant education.

That lack of awareness of educational facilities prevents parents from giving better education to their children with disabilities. People including parents and school are not aware of funding available to include students with disabilities in regular schools

Teacher's ignorance on the existing policies

The study revealed that teachers who participated in the study were knowledgeable of the organizations that sponsor orphans. However, participants showed ignorance on the policies that specifically support the move to sponsor the orphans. The other worrying thing which was revealed in the study is that in spite these teachers knowledgeable of existing sponsorship by various organizations; they hardly shared it with the learners in class. Some indicated that they were busy to start talking about such as it was not their role to start sensitizing people about the sponsorship for the orphans.

Challenges faced by orphans' in accessing education support

Lack of sponsorship

The study revealed a number of challenges that these orphans are facing in accessing education support. Lack of sponsorship was among key challenges faced the orphans. This was revealed after engaging the learners to have an understanding on what challenges they faced in the quest to complete their education. The position that they gave is that, since the time they lost their parents, they have been having challenges to meet school expenses. It was revealed that for the majority when their parents died, they did not leave enough funds to help them meet school expenses a situation that made it hard for them to access education. Some of them indicted that even the remaining guardians could not help them meet school expenses as they had a lot of things to attend too. To those who had a privilege of being sponsored by certain organizations for instance family legacy and the Seventh Adventist Church (SDA), they appreciated the gesture shown by these organizations. However, the majority were worried that in an event a pupil failed, some organizations would withdraw their support.

Social stigma

The study revealed that social stigma was another challenge that the orphans faced in accessing education support. This came to light when teachers as the second parents were engaged to describe what was on the ground were the issue of orphanage is concerned.it was reported that some orphans could not open up to make their wishes known to the teachers a situation that have been leading for them being denied the access to the available opportunities.

To validate the finding above, Mondal and Mete (2015) also brought out issues of social stigma as one of the challenges faced by children with disabilities and orphans. Social stigma is related to what Simui (2018) and others refers to as negative disablers in the education of the vulnerable persons (Simui, 2018; Simui, Kasonde-Ngandu, Cheyeka, Simwinga and Ndhlovu, 2018; Simui, Kasonde-Ngandu and Nyaruwata, 2017 and Simui, Mhone and Nkhuwa, 2011).

Relying on this finding, results of the study on social stigma showed that some orphans appears to be in the same category as children with disability who may fear to be laughed at by friends. The implication for social stigma denies the majority of learners to complete their education especially those from rural places were these issues are more pronounced.

Corruption in sponsorship awards

Responses from pupils suggest that corruption in awarding sponsorship in supporting the education of the vulnerable children was on the rise. It was reported that some organizations awarded sponsorship to non-deserving pupils just because they knew someone or they have been bribed. The implication for this is that, awarding sponsorship to non-deserving pupils may increase inequality in society and expose a lot of children to circles of poverty which at the end steals the future of these children. In light of this, most of the participants were worried of the criteria which some of these organizations were using to hence demanded for clear criteria when awarding sponsorship.

Strategies needed to enable orphans have access to education

Increased financial support system

The finding of this study suggests that increased financial support to orphans would enable them to complete their education. It was noted in the study that the current support rendered to orphans is not enough. Some orphans have been left behind. In as much as the participants appreciated the partners who have come on board to support these vulnerable children and the reduction in the feels by the government, the need to increase support system is still cardinal. Based on the responses, it was suggested that these organizations that sponsor vulnerable children should expand their base.

More collaborate facets

This finding implies that since the numbers of vulnerable children have increased, the caring and support should just left to the government alone and those few organizations that have been in existence for a long period of time. The study revealed that more organizations are needed to come on board and supplement the efforts of the government and those who have been showing the gesture of helping the orphans.

This support could be financial, social, spiritual and emotional support as some the learners are believed to have been going through trauma after losing their parents.

Empowering orphans with diverse skills

This finding implies that empowering orphans with diverse skills could help them at a later stage to find means of sponsoring themselves as education does not just end at grade secondary level. It was revealed that society is facing high level of unemployment especially among the youths. This has made it difficult for most of them to find means of surviving after completing grade 12. Empowering them with diverse skills is hoped to assist them earn a living through other means like gardening, business ventures, carpentry among others. The study reported that some of the organizations could not continue supporting the orphans up to the tertiary level hence the need to empower them with necessary skills so that one day they can manage to support themselves to that level.

Motivation ventures for well performing orphans

The implication for awarding well performing orphans is to motivate them to work hard. It was revealed in the study that some organizations have been withdrawing the support in an event a child they sponsoring failed. Hence, giving them awards would in one way or the other help them to protect the scholarship. However, it should be made clear that the response from the field does not suggest that other students who are not orphans should not be awarded. All learners deserve equal treatment but the fact that the wellbeing of the orphans have been affected in so many ways ranging from emotional, socially and financially due to the loss of their parents hence the call for a special treatment as a way of helping them getting back on the track.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted issues surrounding the education of orphans. It has been discussed that the majority of the orphans lack information on the available education support. Teachers as second parents in the community have been reported to have fragmented information about the organizations supporting the orphans but hardly share with them. The study has also highlighted that teachers are ignorant of the existing policies specifically for the orphans. The study has further discussed that lack of sponsorship, social stigma and corruption in awarding sponsorship impedes the success of the orphans in educational lines. Based on the challenges described, it has been discussed that there is need for holistic approach from all stakeholders in ensuring that orphans are provided with the quality education for the betterment of their lives.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

i. There is need to formulate a deliberate policy by the ministry of sports, youth and child development that is going to look into the affairs of orphans in society.

ii. There is need to have a mechanism in schools that stipulates clearly what support to render to the orphans.

iii. There is need for the relevant authority to coordinate other organizations that look into the plights of orphans to come on board for support

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