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An investigation of learner pregnancy in three Namibian schools in the context of implementation of the learner pregnancy policy

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ABSTRACT

Pregnancies of learners between the ages of 14 and 18 years remain a great concern around the globe and in Namibia in particular. To address the learner pregnancies in schools and the corollary dropout of girls, Namibia embarked on the implementation of the Learner pregnancy policy drafted to respond to the problem. The policy's main goal is to improve the prevention and management of learner pregnancy, decrease the number of learner pregnancies and assist learner-parents to complete their high school education. A review of the literature on the current state of the research, reveals a lack of knowledge of learner pregnancy policies, mediocre to non-existent awareness of what is expected from teachers, schools and parents of pregnant learners. Numbers of teachers are apprehensive about learner pregnancies and approach them with mixed feelings. They therefore tend to show negative attitudes towards pregnant learners in schools.

This study explores the impact of the learner pregnancy policy after 9 years of its implementation. What is the effect of the policy on learner pregnancies and their consequential afflictions? How effective is the prevention policy in contributing to the decrease of learners' pregnancies in schools? Does it rather play a role to the increase of learner pregnancies? The investigation maps out the scope of the existing policy and its understanding by stakeholders. By capturing understanding, experiences and emotional responses of teachers and management teams to the occurrences of learner pregnancies in the selected schools, the analysis will deconstruct underlining logics that structure stakeholders' actions in relation to the implementation of the pregnancy prevention policy, and the observed and prevailing learner pregnancy dynamics.

The study is qualitative and employed purposive sampling to select the three schools. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to guide the process of data gathering by means of one-on-one interview. Thematic analysis of Braun and Clark (2006) is used to ensure deeper insight of the data, while the research paradigm that informs interpretation, extraction of findings and results is located in the theoretical framework of Bandura social cognitive theory.

Key concepts

Learner; Learner pregnancy; Learner parents; Learner pregnancy policy; Parents; Pregnancy