

**Author/Autora:** Van Wyk, Noleen ([wykjn@unisa.ac.za](mailto:wykjn@unisa.ac.za)). University of South Africa, South Africa

**Title/Título:** Home-school relations in the absence of parents: The impact of HIV/AIDS in South Africa

Relaciones familia-centro docente en ausencia de los padres: El impacto del VIH/SIDA en Sudáfrica

**Topic:** Policies and actions to ensure effective and democratic co-operation and dialogue among social actors to promote home-school-community links

Políticas Educativas y Sociales que promueven una efectiva y democrática cooperación y diálogo entre los actores sociales para estimular las Relaciones entre las familias, los centros docentes y las entidades y servicios sociales comunitarios

**Presentation time/Día de presentación:** Session in English. Friday 16, 10:15-11:45 a.m. Room 5, Third Floor

Sesión en Inglés. Viernes 16, 10:15-11:45 a.m. Sala 5, Tercer Piso

### **Abstract**

An estimated 12 percent of South Africans (approximately 5 million people) are HIV positive. Because of the rapid increase of infections in the mid-1990s, it is estimated that there will be 1,3 million orphans in the country by 2005. Some of these children are placed in institutions, while others live in child-headed households, are taken care of by the community or become street children. Often the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS makes life hard for these orphans - a veritable 'social death'. It is against this background that research on home-school relations took place. Data were obtained by open ended-questionnaires sent to a number of schools and focus group interviews with teachers and school principals. Results indicate that in communities severely affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, teachers often take over many of the roles parents traditionally fulfill. Schools provide learners with one meal per day, take HIV-positive learners with secondary infections to local clinics and administer anti-retroviral drugs to learners who have been prescribed these. Preventative measures are discussed in AIDS awareness programmes. Many teachers also try to provide the emotional support learners need when trying to cope with the death of a parent and the stigma attached to AIDS-related illnesses. However, few teachers attempt to involve grandparents and other community members in the support of these children. Often this is because they have not been trained to do so or because most schools do not have a policy of parent / community involvement. This is unfortunate as, "Learning institutions in an AIDS-infected world cannot be the same as those in a AIDS-free world." Challenged by this pandemic, the paradigm of education and home-school relations needs to change.