SCHOOL-BASED RESPONSES FOR SEXUALITY EDUCATION AND HIV PREVENTION: EDUCATORS’ DELIVERY OF THE LIFE ORIENTATION PROGRAMME IN 16 SOUTHERN AFRICAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND

The Integrated Strategy on HIV, STIs and TB 2012 – 2016 is the South African education sectors’ holistic response to the HIV, STIs and TB crisis in South Africa and its impact on educational outcomes and the delivery of quality basic education. The Strategy sets out to strengthen the implementation of the Life Orientation (LO) programme through enhancing teaching pedagogy, the quality of learning and teacher support materials and training content on sexuality education for educators based on a revised in-service curriculum, as a key outcome. There is a large body of evidence substantiating the effectiveness of school-based HIV education and prevention programmes for changing HIV-related attitudes, knowledge and sexual practices1.

This paper examines how LO educators are delivering the LO programme to secondary school learners, including the factors that help and hinder them in this regard.

METHODS

The ecosystems theory of Bronfenbrenner2 provided the theoretical framework for analysing important factors at different levels within the school environment as well as the influence of the family and community on educators’ delivery of the LO programme, particularly with regards to the delivery of HIV and AIDS and sexuality education topics.

RESULTS

Educators strongly believed they had a responsibility to “tell learners the truth” about life and about sensitive topics like HIV and AIDS and sex. This stemmed in large part from parents’ failure to communicate with learners about these topics. Male educators were more likely to describe the content of these lessons, while female educators were more likely to describe the context of teaching these topics.

Educators across poverty quintiles had concerns in their community about sensitive topics such as the lack of money, lack of education, and the fear of getting sick. They also had concerns about the availability of resources, including adequate staffing, facilities, and equipment.

Educators adopted a number of roles in addition to their role as an academic teacher. These included the role of a guide, facilitator, mentor, and social worker. These roles were often provided at the request of learners or in response to specific needs, such as addressing learner stress or providing resources.

“Life Skills” was the most commonly used term to describe the LO programme in South Africa, and this term was used to describe the programme’s focus on HIV and AIDS prevention.

Figure 1: Ecosystems Theory: Bronfenbrenner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors influencing educators’ delivery of LO</th>
<th>Personal factors</th>
<th>Interpersonal factors</th>
<th>School and district level factors</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Formal training</td>
<td>• Support received from other educators, senior staff and parents</td>
<td>• Resource constraints</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Age</td>
<td>• Educators’ relationship with learners, including learners’ behaviour and interactions in the classroom</td>
<td>• Support from LO subject advisors</td>
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CONCLUSION

The majority of LO educators recognised the importance of their role and responsibility in teaching learners LO. However, there was agreement that the delivery of the programme was not uniform across all level schools.

Pre-service and in-service teacher training focus on broadening their teaching repertoire and discourse around HIV prevention beyond the routine ABC discourse. This finding suggests that LO educators would benefit from training to:

1. Enhance their knowledge about HIV and AIDS, sex and sexuality and increase their proficiency and skill in teaching these content;
2. Provide them with the skills and knowledge to deliver participatory approaches and implement classroom management strategies that will channel learner interest and energies into productive forms of engagement;
3. Assist them in teaching and managing learners personally affected by sensitive topics to minimise trauma and emotional distress;
4. Enhance their personal development by interrogating and creating awareness of personal belief systems and attitudes that have a bearing on the way they deliver LO and position themselves and learners in that process.

Table 1: Factors influencing educators’ delivery of LO

References


