

# SECTION SEVEN: RECOMMENDATIONS



- Behaviour change and HIV prevalence
- Increase HIV prevention knowledge
- Target districts with high HIV prevalence
- Improve self-efficacy skills
- Prevent transmission of HIV from those already HIV positive
- Discourage migratory practices
- Establish workplace health programme
- Eliminate gender disparities
- Reduce alcohol misuse
- End violence in schools
- Potential attrition
- Database management



# 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study was commissioned by the ELRC, comprising the DoE and the unions, mainly because of lack of adequate information for planning in the education sector. The unions and the DoE had separate but overlapping terms of reference for the study. Through discussion it was possible to combine the terms of reference for the study into one comprehensive research investigation that was agreeable to all parties. For this reason, the recommendations are specific to either or both parties and yet their implementation would require participation of the key relevant stakeholders from parties, the Council and tertiary institutions, donor agencies and, at times, domestic and international scientists.

## **1. Behaviour change and HIV prevalence**

The key behavioural determinants of HIV infection were lack of condom use given HIV-positive status, multiple partnerships, alcohol use and age mixing. Efforts are needed, particularly targeting consistent condom use amongst all educators in all age groups and race groups as well as marital statuses, especially with non-regular sexual partners. Condom use messages need to be reinforced through media and training targeting especially married and female educators promoting condom use efficacy and HIV risk (condom use) self-efficacy. It is recommended that the DoE, working with unions and NGOs, develop HIV prevention programmes targeted to educators, given that they are a captive audience. There should be attention to educate them about the risk introduced by lack of condom use if the HIV status of the partner is unknown, dangers of high-risk drinking and the risk of age mixing not only for the older partner but also the younger ones. The messages should not only be about using condoms, faithfulness and abstaining but should increasingly address the issue of serial monogamy and HIV testing before engaging in unprotected sex with a partner whose HIV status is unknown to an educator, and having sexual partners within one's age group.

## **2. Increase HIV prevention knowledge**

Having noted the gap in knowledge of HIV transmission in certain areas, it is recommended that the DoE, with participation of the unions, design educational campaigns that place more emphasis on anal sex and oral sex in prevention campaigns to ensure that this form of sex is not considered to be safe because it is not mentioned frequently as part of awareness-raising. Such a programme would be possible if it can be established as part of a workplace programme. Given the high rate of educators who frequently visit health practitioners, it is possible to begin such a programme as part of normal health care. The services of scientists in helping to design evidence-based interventions would prove useful.

## **3. Target districts with high HIV prevalence**

The observed high HIV prevalence among educators, which was found to be concentrated in 11 districts, is reason enough for the DoE to intensify targeted efforts and improve conditions that make the transmission or spread of HIV infection favourable and to encourage translation of knowledge into behaviour change. Priority for HIV prevention should go to these districts found to have HIV prevalence of 20% or more. Given the

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high awareness and knowledge of HIV transmission modes and easy access to condoms observed in this study, it does not appear that it is lack of HIV-prevention knowledge nor poor access to condoms that hinder behaviour change; what is needed are skills necessary to translate knowledge to safe sex. This could be achieved through building skills in self-efficacy.

#### **4. Improve self-efficacy skills**

Educators are responsible for teaching life skills designed to prevent HIV infection in learners; it is crucial that they be given the skills to prevent themselves from becoming infected. It is therefore recommended that the DoE and unions work together to design an education programme that will equip educators with skills to negotiate safe sex. These two stakeholders may work closely with NGOs to design such a programme, which would focus on encouraging educators to seek voluntary counselling and testing of couples to know their HIV status, negotiate safe sex and stay in monogamous relationships. These are sensitive issues and need to be managed by professional counsellors. The unions and the DoE should establish a monitoring and evaluation system to assess whether this proposed skills-building programme leads to behaviour change and hence lower HIV infections.

#### **5. Prevent transmission of HIV from those already HIV positive**

To prevent new HIV infections, it is recommended that the DoE work closely with unions, NGOs and scientists to design an intervention programme to prevent HIV transmission among HIV-positive educators. One such effective intervention that could be adapted for South African HIV-positive educators was tested in the USA (Kalichman, Rompa, Cage, DiFonzo, Simpson, Austin, Luke, Buckles, Kyomugisha, Benotsch, Pinkerton & Graham 2001). This intervention would be designed to assist educators living with HIV/AIDS to reduce their HIV transmission risks and enable them to effectively disclose their HIV status to their partners and consistently use condoms with their regular and non-regular partners. The group intervention would use a highly interactive approach that includes educational, motivational, and behavioral skills building components. The intervention would be gender sensitive and would also take into account sexual orientation of the educator. To ensure its relevance, the content of the intervention would be developed jointly with educators who are currently living with HIV/AIDS. Implementation of this recommendation is crucial because the study found that only 58.9% of educators who knew that they were HIV positive used a condom the last time they had sex with their regular partners and even so, condom use with a regular partner was found to be inconsistent (only 29.8% used a condom every time). While it is not known whether their sexual partners were HIV positive, it is of concern that 70% of these HIV-positive educators may become re-infected with HIV or with other STIs and hence exacerbate their condition. They are also more likely to pass the virus to their uninfected partners.

### **6. Discourage migratory practices**

The long and/or frequent absences from home and family or stable relationships may contribute to increased risk of educators acquiring HIV infection. For this reason, it is recommended to the DoE and the unions to develop a structured programme for deployment of educators to specific areas; this would entail a deliberate effort to place teachers near their homes rather than leaving it to chance. In addition, it is recommended that the tertiary institutions could increase intake of education students from rural area to mitigate the shortage and reduce the chances of urban teachers getting jobs in rural areas. It is also recommended that the DoE should provide financial and other incentives for them to work in those rural areas where they have family roots. Furthermore, the number of work-related nights that educators spend outside their homes should be reduced.

### **7. Establish workplace health programme**

Prolonged illness associated with HIV and other chronic diseases is likely to erode the gains in improving quality of education. Before the educators die from AIDS and other chronic diseases it is expected that they will not work to their fullest potential. The study has shown that absenteeism due to illness is already high. This suggests that healthy educators will be forced to take additional teaching responsibilities and this might create more stress. This could be so given that 15.5% of educators were previously diagnosed by a health practitioner to have hypertension and 9.9% to have stomach ulcers. It is therefore recommend that the DoE and donor agencies establish and manage a workplace programme specifically to provide a comprehensive prevention and treatment programme for all illnesses (including HIV/AIDS and TB) but ensuring confidentiality for educators. Such a programme would include stress reduction involving counselling, assessment of workload and adjustment thereof, blood pressure and diabetes screening and treatment. A programme such as this may have several benefits: First, it may help educators reduce stress; second, provide a 'one stop' comprehensive prevention and treatment centre near the school where teachers can easily access it; third, reduce absenteeism from school since there will be no need to miss school to see a healthcare provider unless the educator is ill; fourth, it will help monitor adherence to treatment for TB and HIV/AIDS; and fifth, access to drugs that can prolong life will be important in improving the quality of life of educators.

### **8. Eliminate gender disparities**

To reduce gender disparities and reduce the rate of spread of HIV it is recommended that the DoE, the tertiary institutions and unions join hands with civil society to create a social environment that discourages men from engaging in risky behaviour that puts them and consequently women at risk of HIV. Despite the observation that the South African Constitution prohibits gender discrimination, South Africa remains a patriarchal society, where women continue to be treated as subservient to men. In addition, harmful practices such as marital rape and marrying young girls to older men continue unabated. To change such practices, it is crucial to involve traditional and religious leaders to lead a campaign to change the traditional practices and stereotypes that increase vulnerability of men and women to HIV. These practices include discouraging older males from having

sex with female youth, changing the beliefs that for men to be macho they must have multiple partners, and discouraging domestic sexual violence, including marital rape.

## **9. Reduce alcohol misuse**

With respect to alcohol use, it is recommended that the DoE, working closely with unions, develop an alcohol prevention campaign targeting male educators to reduce high-risk drinking. This may significantly reduce the number of unhealthy days and absenteeism of male public educators from work. Such an intervention may entail a few words or written information about the risks of drinking may prevent hazardous or harmful alcohol use in the future. Depending on the severity of their high-risk drinking, high-risk drinkers need: (1) simple advice; (2) simple advice plus brief counselling and continued monitoring; and (3) referral to a specialist for diagnostic evaluation and treatment. The DoE should consider implementing workplace alcohol prevention programmes to include both primary and secondary prevention. Primary prevention aims to keep alcohol problems from developing, and secondary prevention seeks to reduce existing problems. Primary prevention often is more cost-effective than secondary prevention. Many employers offer employee assistance programmes (EAPs) as well as educational programmes to reduce employees' alcohol problems.

## **10. End violence in schools**

The study found that violence at school was common, with the problem differing by province. Educators with a higher violence index score rated the morale at their school as lower than those with a low violence score, and educators with a higher violence score more often thought of leaving the education profession. This suggests that violence may be the reason for an educator to leave the education institution. Therefore, it is recommended that the DoE should work together with the South African Police Service to increase security at schools for the teachers.

## **11. Potential attrition**

One of the major concerns observed in this study is the large percentage of educators who indicated their intention to leave the education service (56.2%). However, not all educators who indicate they intend to leave may indeed quit. The decision is probably more complicated than that. This matter will be taken up in more detail in the human resource report.

At this stage it is worth noting that those with skills are the ones who intend to leave the profession. The reasons for wanting to leave were low job satisfaction and job stress. Low job satisfaction can be addressed through negotiation on conditions of service between the DoE and the labour unions in the ELRC. The issues requiring resolution are: lack of career advancement and recognition and the teaching structure in terms of working hours/load/policies. Concerns related to mode of discipline of students require in depth discussion by both the DoE and unions. This recommendation does not imply that corporal punishment should be reinstated. What it connotes is that a more effective

incentive for disciplining learners is required. Such a method should restore respect of educators.

With respect to job stress, the discussion between the DoE and unions may entail teaching methods and administrative issues. The DoE should also consider providing support to educators, especially those who have been teaching OBE who report to have difficulty adapting to the new system. Other support educators indicated they needed from the DoE in terms of the care of ill teachers and learners, were treatment and medication, financial support (grants, medical aid), emotional support (home visits, moral support), other material support (such as food), assistance/support to schools (substitute teachers/workshops), combat stigma and discrimination, and home schooling/care centers. It is recommended that discussions be held between the DoE and unions in order to reduce the stress levels of educators.

### **12. Database management**

To draw the sample for the study required access to information on the geographic location of schools and the number of teachers employed at each school. The school data comes from the DoE's SRN while the teacher data comes from the PERSAL database. A major drawback in working with this data is that there is no unique alphanumeric number in either of the databases that allows teachers to be linked to a particular school. In the SRN, the Education Management Information System (EMIS) number provides each school with a unique number while the PERSAL data does not have the EMIS number nor a unique number of its own. The only common variable found in the two databases was the name of the school. Consequently, the teachers in the PERSAL database had to be linked to the schools in the SRN by the school name, which resulted in many problems.

Duplicate school names in and between provinces required extensive work to be done to ensure that the PERSAL database linked correctly to the SRN database. The truncation of school names, schools of different types but with the same name, and the spelling of school names in different languages all contributed to the difficulties in linking teachers to schools. If the unique EMIS number were used in both databases this problem would largely have been alleviated. A problem with the SRN database is that it might be recorded that a school is situated in a particular province but spatially, it is located in another province. Consequently, these sorts of problems had to be addressed. Another problem relating to the SRN database was that schools selected in the sample were found to be closed. To remedy this problem requires that the SRN database to be updated on an annual basis.

Furthermore, the Annual School Survey conducted by the provinces should be systematically linked to the updated SRN database to be able to provide the most recent statistics on schools and teacher numbers. Similarly, the PERSAL database must be updated on a regular basis and the EMIS number included in the database so that data on teachers can be easily linked to the school database. It is recommended that the South African Council of Educators develop a web-based system that will allow district managers to update information on the school locations and attributes on a regular basis.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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By implementing this recommendation it will be possible to track the employment history of educators in the public service. On a regular basis it will be possible to do analysis of teachers to look at career management and identify where teachers with scarce skills are deployed, as an example. Ideally, the system should be able to track teachers from the time they are given a provisional registration number at college to when they retire from the teaching profession.

