Challenges in providing HIV and sexuality education to learners with disabilities in South Africa: the voice of educators

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Description:
People with disabilities are at increased risk of exposure to HIV, yet they lack access to HIV prevention, treatment care and support including sexuality education. Lack of knowledge, skills and confidence of educators teaching sexuality education to learners with disabilities is related to this increased vulnerability. This study identifies possible challenges educators of learners with disabilities face when teaching sexuality and HIV education. Five focus groups were conducted in three purposely selected types of special schools representing four impairment groups in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Educators recognise that teaching about sexuality is part of the South African Life Orientation curriculum and understand its importance to learners. However, they identified a number of challenges to such work, including barriers in communication and language, cultural values and expectations, learners' knowledge and behaviour, handling of sexual abuse cases and the teachers' own life experiences. Educators feel a lack of support from parents, departments of education, fellow educators and members of the community. They report the need for training and adapted HIV and sexuality education tools and resources to accommodate learners with disabilities. This training needs to provide knowledge on disability and HIV, offer guidance on disability-appropriate communication strategies, deal with sexual abuse and include educational tools for the classroom.

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