Designing an effective sexuality education curriculum for schools: lessons gleaned from the South(ern) African literature

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Description:
Sexuality education forms part of the national school curricula of most sub-Saharan African countries, yet risk-related sexual behaviour among young people continues to fuel the HIV pandemic in this part of the world. One of the arguments put forward to explain why sexuality education seems to have had little impact on sexual risk-taking is that existing curricula have neglected to take into account the complexity of the social, cultural and gender norms that influence the behaviour of school-going young people in sub-Saharan Africa. Over the past few years, the Department of Basic Education in South Africa has recognised the need to provide guidance to teachers on the content, pedagogical processes and messages that are relevant to their specific context. This paper critically reflects on findings from a literature-based study conducted to identify the cognitive and social factors influencing the behaviour of school-going young people in South Africa and the risk and protective factors that might be particular to their circumstances. The findings provide helpful guidelines about the development, content and implementation of sexuality education curricula more likely to be relevant in contexts of serious poverty and disadvantage. Although based on the South African literature, the findings may also offer useful lessons for curriculum designers in other developing countries.

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