

Summary Report

The Roles of Educators in Mitigating the Impact of the HIV/AIDS Pandemic on the Education System in South Africa

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List of Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
DoE	Department of Education
FET	Further education and training
HE	Higher education
HEAIDS	Higher Education HIV/AIDS Programme
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Summary

In April 2009, an exploratory study investigating the roles of educators in mitigating the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the education system in South Africa was completed. The study was a component of phase 2 of the Higher Education HIV and AIDS Programme, a joint initiative of the Department of Higher Education and Training and Higher Education South Africa, which is funded by the European Union. It was one of a range of related projects, information on which can be found on the HEAIDS website: www.heaids.org.za. The overall purpose of the HEAIDS Programme is to reduce the threat of the spread of HIV/AIDS in the higher education subsector, to mitigate its impact through planning and capacity development and to manage the impact of the pandemic in a way that reflects the ethical, social, knowledge transmission and production responsibilities that are the mission of higher education institutions in society and South Africa.

The purpose of the study summarised in this document was to determine the roles of educators in mitigating the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and to ascertain the skills and knowledge required by them to play such roles effectively. Recognising that educators have a crucial role to play in all education subsectors, the study investigated the current and possible future roles of educators in schools and further education and training (FET) colleges as well as those of educators working in the higher education (HE) subsector.

This document summarises the findings and recommendations of the study, which combined qualitative and quantitative research in innovative ways that are described in Part 2. A strength of the research is that it explored the relatively uncharted terrain of educators' roles with respect to HIV/AIDS by allowing respondents to raise their own issues – and, in the group interviews, to interact with one another as well as with the researchers – in addition to responding to the questions posed by the researchers.

The study also sought to provide a quantitative picture of educators' beliefs, attitudes and practices, and of their predisposition towards playing a role in mitigating the impact of the pandemic in the future. A national survey was undertaken in all three subsectors, canvassing the views of 3,699 educators. The survey questions were derived from the qualitative dataset, thus establishing a strong link between the two phases of the study.

The findings of the study (presented in Part 3) are summarised below:

- The qualitative fieldwork showed that levels of concern among educators across the three subsectors are polarised with respect to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, ranging from lack of concern and denial of its importance to extreme concern and a strong sense of ethical responsibility to mitigate its impact. However, the majority of survey

respondents displayed a very high level of concern regarding the pandemic. Survey respondents in the higher education subsector displayed lower levels of concern than their counterparts in the FET and schooling subsectors.

- Although a small number of respondents in both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study were critical of the national HIV/AIDS message, there was a high level of agreement among survey respondents with regard to the importance of faithful relationships, condom use and sexual abstinence.
- Although the institutional climates reported by interviewees varied as greatly as their professional and personal responses, the analysis of the survey data shows that institutional climates across all three subsectors in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic are generally favourable to efforts to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.
- Reported roles currently played by educators in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS were much more prevalent among survey respondents at schools and FET colleges than at universities.
- The survey responses show that the predisposition towards playing a future role in mitigating the impact of the pandemic is very prevalent among educators in the schooling and FET subsectors. In the HE subsector, although only 33% of educators reported that they currently play a role, 70% expressed a desire to play a role in the future.
- A continuum of approaches from possibly ‘enabling’ to possibly ‘inhibiting’ (in terms of the extent to which they may contribute to mitigating the impact of the pandemic) was identified in the qualitative phase of the study. Certain approaches that go beyond the ‘core business’ of teaching and learning were particularly, but not only, evident in the FET and schooling subsectors, where the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic appears to be more immediate.
- There may be discrepancies between the roles of educators that are prescribed in policy and those actually practised. In the HE subsector no HIV/AIDS-specific educator roles are prescribed in policy; in the FET subsector there are implicit roles specified in policy for which the study found

no evidence; the roles reported by school-based educators fall short in some respects of the HIV/AIDS-specific roles that are explicitly specified in national guidelines.

- In-depth analysis of the survey data showed significant differences between an ‘active’ subset of HE educators (14,1% of respondents, predominantly older, female and African or Indian from Health Sciences and Education) and a ‘passive’ subset (4,6% of respondents, predominantly younger, male and white from Commerce, Economics and Management, Engineering, Mathematical Sciences and Physical Sciences). The former are, for example, more likely to play a variety of roles in relation to the pandemic, including listening to their students’ personal problems and giving them relevant advice and support, conducting relevant research and participating in relevant community development initiatives.
- Although the qualitative fieldwork showed that opinions about HIV/AIDS and the curriculum are quite polarised, survey respondents expressed a very positive attitude to the inclusion of HIV/AIDS-related issues in the curriculum – particularly in the schooling subsector – ranging from approaches that favour the inclusion of compulsory courses and modules to those that support the development of critical decision-making skills.
- The analysis of the qualitative data shows that the different, more positive survey responses to curriculum-related questions in the FET and schooling subsectors are likely to be a result of the greater immediacy of the impact of the pandemic in these two subsectors. However, interviewees in these subsectors reported that they often found it difficult to talk about sexuality with their learners, and this clearly inhibited effective curriculum approaches.
- Most respondents who reported playing roles in mitigating the impact of the pandemic indicated that they do not have enough time to do so. Sufficient support seems to be generally more available at universities than at colleges or schools, and resources to facilitate the roles played by respondents are generally in extremely short supply in the schooling and FET subsectors.
- With the exception of certain types of training, approximately two-thirds of respondents across

the subsectors have not received good or excellent training for the roles that they play. At schools and colleges, one third or less of the staff who play roles in reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS at their institutions reported having received adequate training of any kind.

- High levels of need for training and resources for future roles were expressed by respondents in all three subsectors. The reported needs were especially intense at colleges and schools, where none of the resources or forms of support received an importance rating of less than 94%. The only ‘adequately supported’ subsets of respondents identified in the analysis of the survey data were found in the higher education subsector.
- The definition of distinct approaches is complicated by the fact that some interviewees in the qualitative phase of the study seemed to advocate different and even contradictory positions and approaches to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Moreover, in the course of many of the interviews respondents shifted their positions, sometimes as a result of interaction with colleagues and the interviewer, and sometimes, it appeared, as a result of their own reflections. This indicates that positions on approaches to mitigating the impact of the pandemic may not be static for many educators.
- A strategic dilemma was explicitly presented in the qualitative fieldwork, especially by HE respondents,

who reported institutional strategies of allowing individuals to develop their own responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic – in contrast to the notion that they should be obliged to undertake specific actions. The latitude that should be given to educators to develop their own responses to the pandemic may be a general strategic dilemma across the subsectors.

The findings of the study summarised above have given rise to four sets of recommendations regarding future efforts to mitigate the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on South African education institutions. These recommendations relate to:

- the need to resolve a strategic dilemma – at both national and institutional levels, whether to prescribe approaches to mitigating the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic or allow individuals and institutions to develop their own responses to the pandemic;
- curriculum interventions that meet the challenges of the pandemic;
- differentiated interventions that enable educators to meet the challenges of the pandemic; and
- the need to allocate time and appropriate resources and support, including training, for educators’ roles in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS.

Note: The full study report is available on CD ROM and from the HEAIDS website – www.he aids.org.za

PART 1

Introduction

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

In April 2009, an exploratory study investigating the roles of educators in mitigating the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the education system in South Africa was completed. The study was a component of phase 2 of the Higher Education HIV and AIDS Programme, a joint initiative of the Department of Higher Education and Training and Higher Education South Africa, which is funded by the European Union. It was one of a range of related projects, information on which can be found on the HEAIDS website: www.heaids.org.za. The overall purpose of the HEAIDS Programme is to reduce the threat of the spread of HIV/AIDS in the higher education subsector, to mitigate its impact through planning and capacity development and to manage the impact of the pandemic in a way that reflects the ethical, social, knowledge transmission and production responsibilities that are the mission of higher education institutions (HEIs) in society and South Africa. The purpose of the study summarised in this document was to determine the roles of educators in mitigating the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and to ascertain the skills and knowledge required by them to play such roles effectively. The aims of the research were to:

- Establish
 - how educators across the three education subsectors understand and accept their roles as an important contribution to the mitigation of the

spread amongst, and the effect of the pandemic on, their students or learners and colleagues in their institutions, and

- whether these relate to their roles as teachers, researchers and social actors in their communities.
- Determine the nature and the forms of support needed by educators to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS.
- Present recommendations concerning the education and professional development of educators, as well as resource provisioning, to enable them to play a meaningful role in the mitigation of the effect of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on their students or learners and colleagues.

The results of the study are intended to guide the HEAIDS Programme and the three subsectors of the South African education system (higher education, further education and training and schooling) in developing and implementing appropriate responses to the pandemic in the arena of teacher education and academic and educator professional development. Recommendations on the first steps that institutions might take in this regard are included in Part Three below.

Recognising that educators have a crucial role to play in all education subsectors, the study investigated the current and possible future roles of educators in schools and further education and training (FET) colleges as well as those of educators working in the higher education (HE) subsector. This broad view

of who is an ‘educator’ is a strength of the study, although it should be noted that educators in non-formal settings and in centres for adult education were not included in the sample frame. With that limitation, however, the study presents a comprehensive picture of educators’ beliefs, attitudes and practices with respect to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and of how they construct themselves, their learners and students, and the pandemic itself. It has also generated important information to guide policy makers and education institutions regarding the roles educators want to play in the future in relation to the pandemic, the values that underpin such roles and the resources and training they would need to make an effective contribution.

This document summarises the findings and recommendations of a study that combined qualitative and quantitative research in innovative ways that are described in more detail below. A strength of the research is that it explored the relatively uncharted terrain of educators’ roles with respect to HIV/AIDS by allowing respondents to raise their own issues – and, in the group interviews, to interact with one another as well as with the researchers – in addition to responding to the questions posed by the researchers. In well over 300 individual and group interviews with educators (and student teachers) in all three subsectors, again and again respondents raised concerns that we had not foreseen when developing the research questions – concerns related to their learners and students, about their experience of the pandemic and about their capacity to mitigate its impact.

As they expressed their concerns, educators (including senior managers at each of the institutions visited) conveyed powerful messages about the importance of gender, sexuality, poverty and violence in shaping the context in which the HIV/AIDS pandemic is unfolding, and about its devastating impact on education institutions and the people who work and learn in them. Importantly, many respondents noted that the research had provided them with their first opportunity to discuss the pandemic with others. This in itself is a striking outcome of the research – that while ‘AIDS fatigue’ certainly seems to be prevalent, it may be that many educators are tired of being the

recipients of messages about the pandemic rather than active agents in planning to mitigate its impact in the very different contexts – socioeconomic as well as subsectoral contexts – in which they work.

The study also sought to provide an initial quantitative picture of educators’ beliefs, attitudes and practices, and of their predisposition towards playing a role in mitigating the impact of the pandemic in the future. A national survey was undertaken in all three subsectors, canvassing the views of 3,699 educators on the categories of data that emerged in the initial qualitative phase of the research. The survey results provide important and arguably surprising information about educators’ current and possible future roles in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS. For example, although there is a slightly lower predisposition towards playing a role in mitigating the impact of the pandemic in the HE subsector, and greater polemic in terms of what kinds of roles are appropriate, the willingness among educators to take on HIV/AIDS-related responsibilities is very high across all three subsectors. The survey shows that the need for time, resources and training to support effective contributions is also strong, particularly in the FET and schooling subsectors, where the impact of the pandemic is most immediately and most powerfully experienced.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INVESTIGATING THE ROLES OF EDUCATORS

Given the high prevalence globally of people with HIV-positive status, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is often described as one of the greatest humanitarian crises in our history and one that has begun to unravel nations in terms of their development and stability. Research has revealed the particular vulnerability of the developing world; with its high levels of poverty, illiteracy and socioeconomic marginalisation fuelling the pandemic. The UNAIDS 2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic, with 2005 statistics, notes that Sub-Saharan Africa is disproportionately affected by the pandemic – with just over 10% of the world’s population, the region is home to over 60% of all people living with HIV.

The disease has also moved beyond a health crisis to one that pervades all social systems, leaving no sector unaffected. It has firmly entrenched itself as a psychosocial as well as a socioeconomic and developmental crisis, and now more than ever it has become necessary to respond in a manner that is comprehensive, multi-faceted and strategic in the face of the many competing priorities within the world's resource distribution system and South Africa's in particular. It is against this backdrop that the vulnerability of South Africa's education system must be considered.

The role of the higher education (HE) subsector, as reflected in the relevant White Paper (*Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education, 1997*) and the *National Plan for Higher Education (2001)*, speaks to human resource development and the mobilisation of human talent and potential through lifelong learning. Further, it suggests the need for high-level skills training which provides for the development of professional and knowledge workers with globally equivalent skills. In line with this thinking, the White Paper makes specific reference to the development of professionals who are socially responsible and conscious of their role in contributing to the national development needs of the country and its subsequent social transformation. This responsibility is particularly relevant when it comes to mitigating the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The linkages between all three subsectors of the education system in South Africa are strong. In particular, the further education and training (FET) and schooling subsectors depend heavily on the HE subsector in terms of their ability to contribute to broad development goals and specifically to mitigate the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. For this reason, the study straddled all three subsectors, critically exploring the current and emerging roles of all educators in mitigating the impact of the pandemic.

This approach is rooted in the broad recognition of the importance of the education system in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, both because equity and quality in education are threatened by the pandemic and because education is a powerful tool in mitigating

its impact. At the 2002 DoE *Conference on HIV and AIDS*, the Declaration of Intent recognised the widespread negative impact that the pandemic could have on the sector and the complex challenges that it would pose to individuals and their communities. The fact that the education sector was uniquely placed to confront the pandemic was also acknowledged for the following reasons:

- educators make up the country's largest workforce and are at the coalface of the pandemic;
- educators have access to millions of children and young people and are often the first port of call when confronted with the disease; and
- education employees are seen as a vital national resource in responding to the disease.

Because of the size and importance of the South African education system, the issue of educator development has been specifically identified as a policy priority in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The 2003 guide entitled *'Manage HIV and AIDS in Your Province'*, produced by the Department of Education, suggested that educators would need 'systematic training and support' to deal with HIV prevention, as well as training in effective ways to respond to the burden of the pandemic in classrooms throughout the education system.

It is important to note that this study has addressed the roles of educators in all three subsectors of the South African education system – higher education (HE), further education and training (FET) and schooling. The respondents in both phases of the research (qualitative and quantitative) were educators already working in institutions in one of the three subsectors or students training to become educators in the schooling subsector. It was important to examine all three subsectors because of the strong linkages among them – the concern was not only to ascertain the current and possible future roles of educators, but also to inform how educators might be better prepared in the future for an effective role in mitigating the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This latter function resides in our higher education institutions (HEIs), which therefore have an important responsibility for the effectiveness of educators' interventions in the other two subsectors.

PART 2

Research Methodology

The study summarised in this document can be broadly characterised as exploratory research with an initial qualitative phase and a subsequent quantitative study. The research was necessarily exploratory, as no study to date had, to our knowledge, investigated the roles and potential roles of educators in mitigating the impact of the pandemic in such a comprehensive way and across all of the subsectors of the South African education system. The combination of qualitative and quantitative fieldwork seemed necessary to allow respondents (in the qualitative phase of the study) to engage with the tentative set of issues raised by fieldworkers, and to engage with one another. This phase of the study formed the basis for the analysis of thematic patterns and tensions in respondents' beliefs, attitudes and practices. A larger-scale quantitative survey was then necessary to ascertain statistically significant patterns and tensions derived from the qualitative phase, and to describe (from a quantitative perspective) typical responses to the pandemic at personal, professional and institutional levels.

Within the framework of exploratory, mixed-methods research, the approach adopted in this study helps to understand both the responses of the interviewees and the dynamics of the individual and group interviews that were conducted during the qualitative fieldwork. The interviewers went to the field with semi-structured interview schedules containing core questions derived from the research purpose. However, interviewers were trained to allow interviewees to raise their own issues,

and to a large degree this allowed respondents to set the agenda of the interviews. Because of this open-ended, flexible approach to the interactions, a number of themes emerged that were not foreseen by the research team, or indeed by the interviewers themselves.

The same core questions that underpinned the qualitative research were present in the quantitative survey that constituted the second phase of research. However, it is important to note that the more specific questions that were presented to survey respondents were derived from the qualitative dataset, and therefore reflected the major concerns and observations of our respondents in the qualitative phase of the study. There is thus a strong link between the two major phases of the research.

The synthesis of findings presented in Part Three below is therefore quantitatively significant as well as qualitatively convincing. Because of the strong linkages between the two phases of the study, it was possible to triangulate the two datasets to arrive at recommendations, which should nevertheless be viewed as tentative because of the exploratory nature of the study. It is clear that there are now important propositions that can be explored in future studies; it is also clear that there are practical implications in the results of the study that can already be used from a policy perspective to contribute to mitigating the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the South African education system. Education institutions in all three

subsectors can also use the findings to begin or refine their own journey of reflection, planning and action.

THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Two types of instrument were developed – one set for the semi-structured, open-ended interviews that characterised the qualitative phase of the study and a set of questionnaires for the national survey that encompassed all three subsectors (higher education, further education and training and schooling).

The core questions that informed the qualitative phase of the study were:

- What do you know about the extent of the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on your institution?
- Do you think **the institution** has a role to play in mitigating the impact of the pandemic?
- What role, if any, is the institution currently playing in mitigating the impact of the pandemic?
 - (Refer to ‘responsibility’ as well as ‘role’.)
 - (Probe regarding students, staff and the community.)
- Do you think **you** have a role to play in mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS?
- What role, if any, are individuals (including yourself/ves) currently playing in mitigating the impact of the pandemic?
 - (Refer to ‘responsibility’ as well as ‘role’.)
 - (Probe regarding students, staff and the community.)
- In what ways could the institution’s role be improved?
 - (Ask further questions, if necessary, about encouraging HIV testing and prevention of stigmatisation.)
- In what ways could individuals’ roles (including your own roles) be improved?
- What factors militate against improvement in the institution’s and individuals’ contributions?
- What factors favour improvement in the institution’s and individuals’ contributions?
- How effective, in your opinion, is the message(s) that is being conveyed nationally in order to mitigate

the impact of the pandemic?

- How effective, in your opinion, is the message(s) that is being conveyed in your institution in order to mitigate the impact of the pandemic?
- What support and/or resources would facilitate improvement?
- How did you find the interview? Are there any things you said which you want to emphasise, and is there anything you want to add?

The core qualitative questions presented above informed the design of the survey questionnaires, which were essentially similar across the three subsectors. By deriving the specific survey questions from the qualitative dataset it was possible to quantify the degree to which some of the themes and patterns that emerged through the qualitative fieldwork are dominant among our respondents and, importantly, to describe the profiles of the subsets of respondents that subscribe to particular beliefs, attitudes and practices. The derivation of survey questions from the qualitative dataset considerably strengthened the linkages between the two phases of the study.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH APPROACH

Certain limitations of the research approach must be noted:

- Although educators were included in all three subsectors (higher education, further education and training and schools), educators in adult centres and in non-institutional settings were not included in the sample.
- Students and learners were not interviewed, as the intention of the research was to develop grounded theory with respect to the expressed concerns of educators, not to test the authenticity of these concerns. However, students undertaking teacher education programmes were interviewed.
- The data gathered in the two phases of this exploratory study were reported by the educators interviewed and surveyed and were not ‘tested’ for truth value in any way. So, for example, while

the study shows a high predisposition among educators to act to mitigate the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on their institutions, it must be noted that some educators may have reported this predisposition because it is a social expectation that they be so predisposed. A counterpoint to this limitation, however, is the strategy adopted in the qualitative fieldwork of allowing respondents to set the agenda of the interviews and group discussions, and the commonly reported phenomenon of respondents changing their minds in the course of the interviews, sometimes as a result of their own reflections and sometimes as a result of interactions among respondents. This suggests that interviewees were not merely conforming to social expectations in their responses. In the survey data there is also evidence that responses were not driven by social expectations – for example, many educators in the HE subsector who do not currently play a role in mitigating the impact of the pandemic expressed a desire to play such a role in the future. The analysis of the datasets suggests that despite the possible risks associated with ‘self-reported’ data, the study findings are generally convincing.

- The fieldworkers in both phases of the research were very diverse in terms of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but the language used in the field was English. Given the characteristics of the sample, we do not believe that this presented an impediment in terms of the communication of concerns or concepts, although we acknowledge that it is possible that some respondents would have felt freer to communicate in other languages.

SUMMARY OF THE KEY PHASES OF THE STUDY

The qualitative phase of the research

Qualitative fieldwork in all three subsectors was carried out from August to October 2008. This phase included interviews with key stakeholders in the South African education system. In total, the fieldwork entailed almost 300 interviews and group discussions in the course of:

- two-day visits to 16 universities (90 individual interviews and 26 group discussions with academic staff – including senior managers – and student teachers);
- one-day visits to 16 further education and training (FET) colleges (16 individual interviews and 41 group discussions with teaching staff and college managers); and
- one-day visits to 32 schools (57 individual interviews and 57 group discussions with teaching staff – including school managers – and school governing body representatives).

The quantitative phase of the research

The qualitative phase of the study was complemented by a national survey in which 3,699 respondents participated in all three subsectors. The questionnaires were designed on the basis of the salient features of the qualitative dataset in order to facilitate triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative datasets. The higher education (HE) questionnaire was made available on the internet from January 2009; the schooling subsector and FET subsector questionnaires were administered on site at sampled institutions from January to March 2009. Data management and quality control procedures were built into every stage of the quantitative phase of the study.

The responses obtained per subsector are itemised below:

- From a population of 15,812 full-time academic staff across all 22 contact universities in South Africa, a total of 1,164 respondents participated on a voluntary basis.
- In 2006, there were 7,096 educators in 50 public FET colleges across all nine provinces. Fieldworkers were deployed to these institutions and 13 educators at each college were asked to complete the questionnaire. One campus of each college in reasonably close proximity to a sampled school was selected; the socioeconomic environment of each campus thus reflected the poverty distribution of the schools sample. The final sample consisted of 475 FET educators.

- In 2006, there were 385,860 educators in South Africa working in 26,269 schools. Some schools, such as independent schools and schools that had closed, were deleted from the database, resulting in a sample frame of approximately 25,000 schools. A multistage sampling procedure was then used to select a representative sample of schools. The first stage involved the random selection of 500 schools across the nine provinces, proportional to the number of schools per province. Next, the selection was stratified according to a socioeconomic indicator, the poverty quintile, using proportional random sampling. Fieldworkers were deployed to the sampled schools, and five educators from each school were asked to complete the questionnaire. This resulted in a sample of 2,500 educators, and 2,060 responses were obtained.
- The qualitative phase of the study gave the respondents considerable freedom (within a broad framework of core questions derived from the research objectives) to set the agenda of the discussions, raising their own major concerns without being constrained by the interview schedules or the interviewers' own priorities. This grounded theory approach – including the foreseen and unforeseen data categories – was a central feature of the study.
- Through the survey, the emerging grounded theory was further developed and tested from a quantitative perspective, but with important insights based on the qualitative fieldwork. The quantitative phase of the study contained certain important features, such as correspondence analysis to identify subsets of respondents in terms of their beliefs, attitudes and practices. The qualitative analysis throws useful light on a relatively unexplored phenomenon, and the quantitative analysis helps to understand the profiles of important subsets of respondents – such as those who wish to play a future role in mitigating the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and those who seem to be particularly proactive in their desire to do so. The findings derived from the analysis are presented in Part Three below.

CONCLUSION

The research methods presented in this section constitute a 'mixed methods' approach that has enabled a powerful analysis of two large datasets – the qualitative and quantitative data – and triangulation of the two datasets to generate synthesised findings. Both phases of the study contain innovative features:

PART 3

Findings and Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the study together with recommendations regarding future efforts to mitigate the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on South African education institutions. These recommendations relate to:

- the need to resolve a strategic dilemma at both national and institutional levels – whether to prescribe approaches to mitigating the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic or allow individuals and institutions to develop their own responses to the pandemic;
- curriculum interventions that meet the challenges of the pandemic;
- differentiated interventions that enable educators to meet the challenges of the pandemic; and
- the need to allocate time and appropriate resources and support, including training, for educators' roles in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS.

EDUCATORS' UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE OF THEIR ROLES IN MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF HIV/AIDS

Introduction

This section contains findings related to the first research aim, which was to investigate how educators

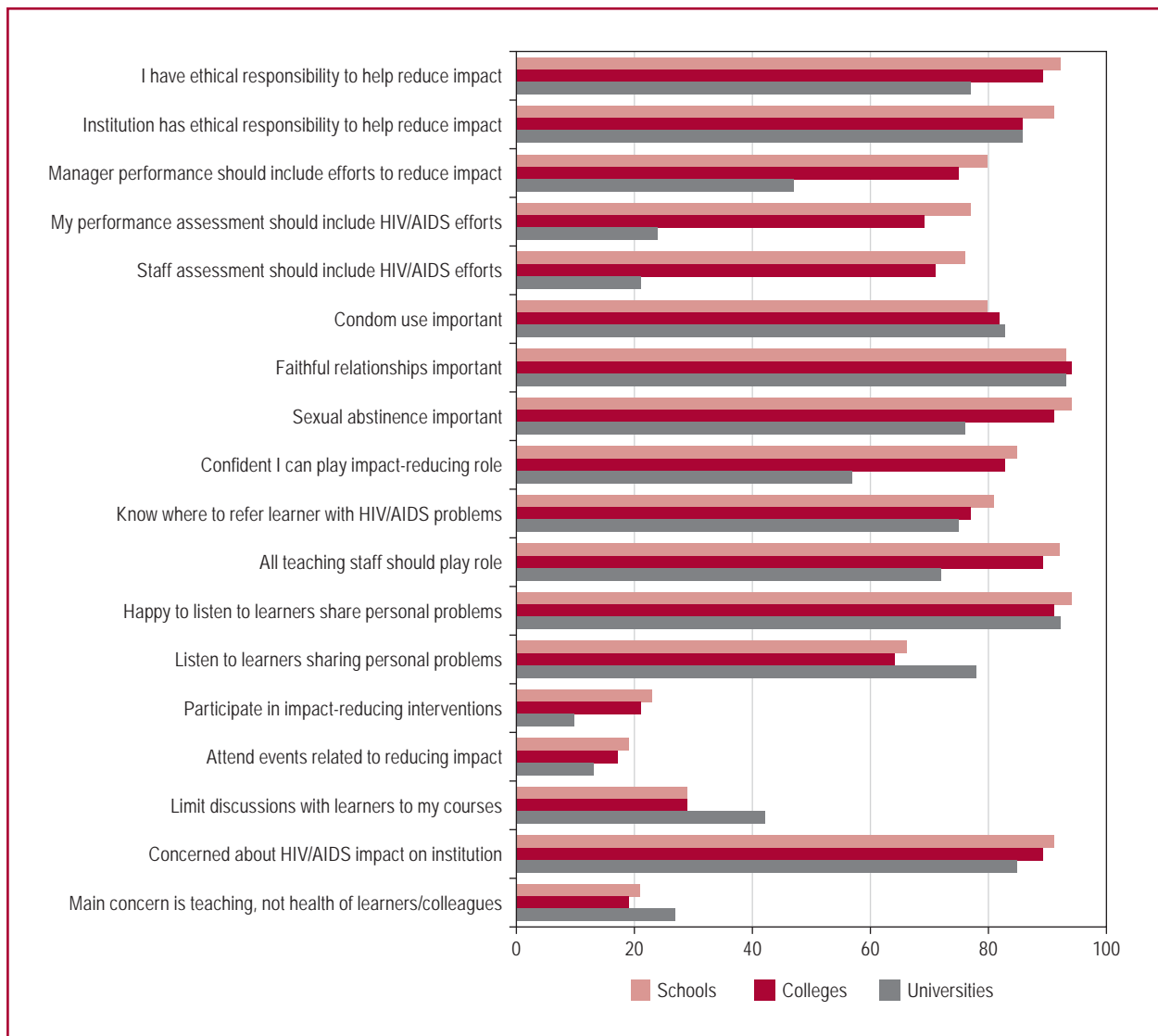
understand and accept their roles in mitigating the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Because of the exploratory nature of the study and the grounded theory approach adopted, the section goes beyond an understanding of the current and future roles of educators and also addresses:

- levels of concern regarding HIV/AIDS;
- attitudes to the national HIV/AIDS message;
- institutional climates;
- the current and possible future roles of educators in mitigating the impact of the pandemic;
- the continuum of potentially 'enabling' and 'inhibiting' responses to the pandemic; and
- curriculum-related issues.

Levels of concern regarding HIV/AIDS

Finding 1: Levels of concern regarding the pandemic

Levels of concern among educators across the three subsectors are polarised with respect to the pandemic, ranging from lack of concern and denial of its importance to extreme concern and a strong sense of ethical responsibility to mitigate its impact. Although the qualitative fieldwork showed that reactions to the pandemic are polarised, the majority of survey respondents displayed a very high level of concern regarding the pandemic, and most survey respondents in all three subsectors agreed or strongly agreed that the definition of teaching excellence should include social

Figure 1 Respondents' beliefs, attitudes and opinions regarding HIV/AIDS issues (%)

consciousness and social relevance. As Figure 1 above illustrates, survey respondents in the higher education subsector were more likely to view teaching as their main concern, more likely to limit their discussions with students to issues related to their courses and less likely to accept efforts to mitigate the impact of the pandemic as part of their institution's performance assessment framework:

Finding 2: Agreement about the national HIV/AIDS message

Although a small number of respondents in both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study were

critical of the national HIV/AIDS message, there was a high level of agreement among survey respondents with regard to the importance of faithful relationships in reducing HIV transmission; condom use and sexual abstinence were also felt to be important, the latter slightly less so among HE respondents (see Figure 1).

Finding 3: Generally favourable institutional climates

Although the institutional climates reported by interviewees varied as greatly as their professional and personal responses, the survey responses (see Figure 2 below) show that institutional climates across all three subsectors in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic are

Figure 2 Openness about and support for people affected by HIV/AIDS or for interventions to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS (%)

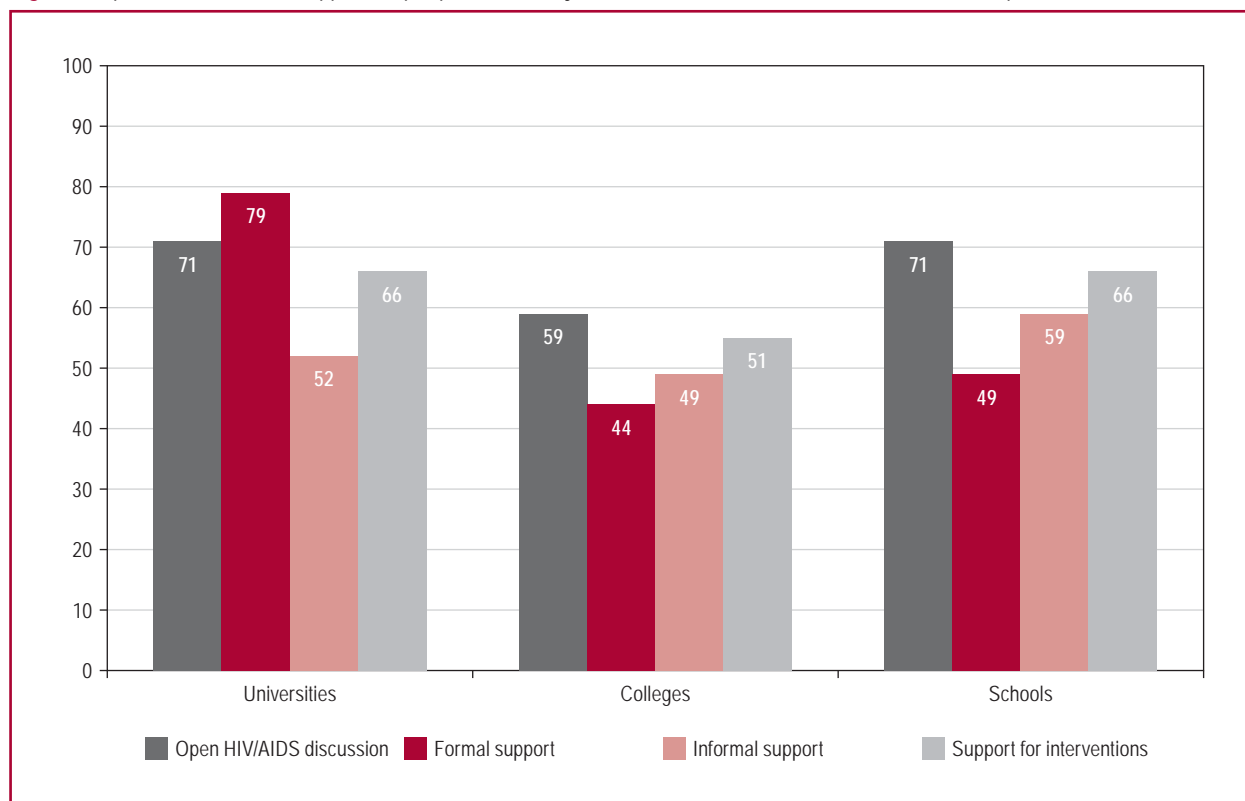


Figure 3 Roles adopted to reduce impact of HIV/AIDS (%)

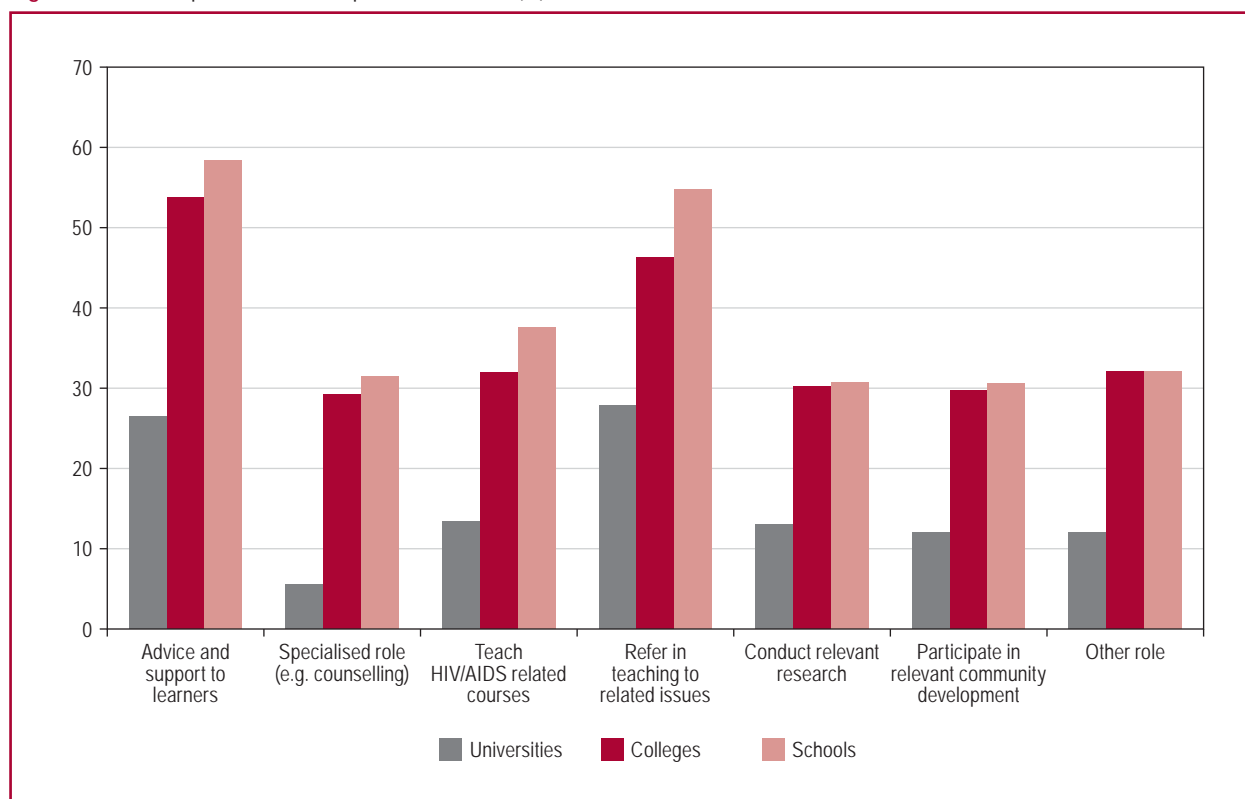
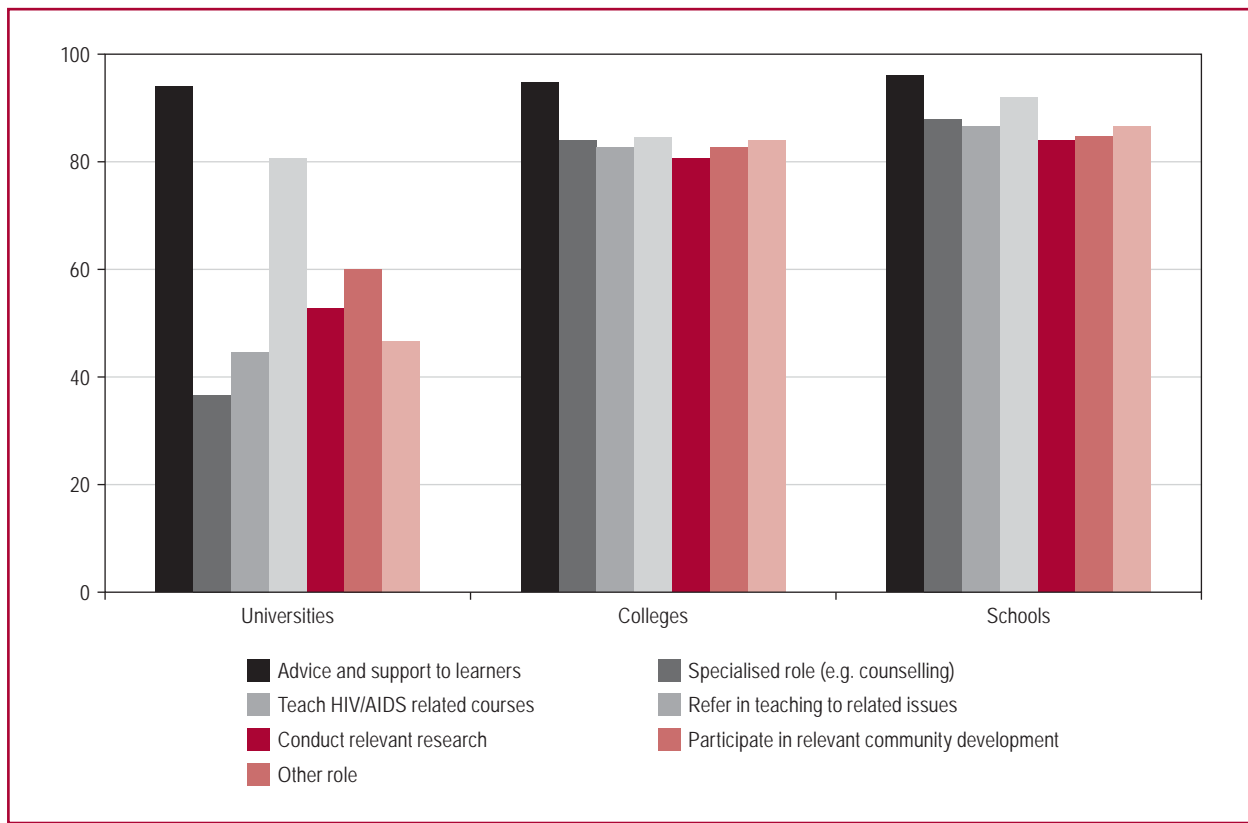


Figure 4 Willingness to play a role in reducing impact of HIV/AIDS (%)

generally favourable in terms of open discussion of the pandemic (most prevalent in universities and schools), formal support for people affected by HIV/AIDS (far more prevalent at universities), informal support (most prevalent at schools) and supportive senior managers (most prevalent at schools and universities).

Finding 4: The current roles of educators

Reported roles currently played in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS were more prevalent among survey respondents at schools and FET colleges than at universities. The proportions of educators playing both formal and informal roles are much greater in schools (68%) and colleges (62%) than in universities (33%). More than half of the college and school respondents give their learners advice and support related to HIV/AIDS. About half of the college and school respondents refer to HIV/AIDS-related issues in the course of their teaching. About three out of ten college and school respondents play one or more of five other roles in reducing HIV/AIDS impact at their institutions.

These are relatively specialised roles such as counselling, teaching specifically HIV/AIDS-related courses, conducting research into HIV/AIDS-related issues or participating in community development initiatives relevant to HIV/AIDS. In contrast, university respondents are much less likely to be playing roles in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS. About one-quarter refer to HIV/AIDS-related issues in their teaching and about one-quarter provide advice and support to their students in respect of HIV/AIDS. One-eighth or less of the university respondents play any of the other roles that are more prevalent at schools and colleges.

Figure 3 provides a graphic illustration of the types of roles currently played.

Finding 5: The predisposition of educators towards playing a mitigating role

The survey responses show that the predisposition towards playing a future role in mitigating the impact of the pandemic is very prevalent among educators in the

schooling subsector and to a lesser degree in the FET subsector – the majority (>80%) of respondents in these subsectors would like to play a future role in all of the areas specified in the questionnaire (including specialised roles such as teaching HIV/AIDS-related courses). In the HE subsector, much more ambivalent attitudes are evident. However, although only 33% of HE respondents reported that they currently play a role, 70% of HE respondents expressed a desire to play a role in the future – typically less specialised roles such as providing advice and support to their students (94% of HE respondents) and referring to HIV/AIDS-related issues in their teaching (81%).

Figure 4 illustrates the types of roles respondents want to play in the future.

A continuum of possibly ‘enabling’ and ‘inhibiting’ responses to the pandemic

Finding 6: The continuum of responses to the pandemic

A continuum of approaches from possibly ‘enabling’ to possibly ‘inhibiting’ (in terms of the extent to which they may contribute to mitigating the impact of the pandemic) was identified in the qualitative phase of the study. Certain approaches that go beyond the ‘core business’ of teaching and learning were particularly but not only evident in the FET and schooling subsectors, where the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic appears to be more immediate and where deeply emotional responses, including feelings of despair and impotence, were more prevalent than in the HE subsector. The continuum of approaches identified in the qualitative fieldwork is summarised below:

- A ‘campaigning approach’ was reported especially but not only among HE educators who were committed to practical initiatives and to raising the profile of HIV/AIDS in their institutions.
- A ‘holistic approach’ to mitigating the impact of the pandemic recognises that learners and students have more than purely academic concerns, and was evident in all three subsectors but most powerfully expressed in schools.

- A ‘socially responsible’ approach to mitigating the impact of the pandemic was reported across all three subsectors by educators who expressed a powerful sense of responsibility to address the challenges of the pandemic.
- A ‘critical approach’ was expressed by a very small number of respondents who took issue with the emphasis on sexual abstinence in the national message.
- An ‘instrumentalist approach’, characterised by lack of acceptance of responsibility for learners’ and students’ lives outside the institution, was evident among senior managers in several HEIs.
- A ‘moralistic approach’ to the pandemic was commonly found in all three subsectors, characterised at times by quite intense ‘conservative’ and ‘religious’ values, and was particularly evident in a small number of HE institutions and FET colleges and in a much larger number of schools.
- A moralistic approach was associated in certain HE institutions, and much more commonly in schools and FET colleges, with a desire to adopt a ‘parental approach’ to students’ behaviour despite the students’ ages.
- ‘Less concerned’ approaches to the pandemic were presented by respondents in all subsectors who did not deny its importance but did not want to play specialised roles in mitigating its impact.
- An ‘uncritical approach’ was identified in all subsectors, characterised by denial of the importance of the pandemic, usually for particular institutions, and silences resulting from the difficulty of talking explicitly about issues related to sexuality and from the social stigma attached to HIV/AIDS.

Finding 7: The roles of educators and national policy

In the HE subsector no HIV/AIDS-specific educator roles are prescribed in policy. Despite the lack of any prescribed role, it must be reiterated that 33% of HE survey respondents reported that they currently play a role in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS in their institutions, and 70% want to play such a role in the future. The roles most commonly reported by educators in the HE subsector were providing advice and support to learners and referring to HIV/AIDS-related issues in their teaching.

In the FET subsector relevant roles for educators in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic are embedded in policy requirements, but no role is explicitly defined. The qualitative fieldwork has shown that the immediacy of the impact of the pandemic is less severe in FET colleges than in schools. Nevertheless, the analysis of the survey data shows that 62% of college-based respondents report having adopted roles that are specifically directed at mitigating the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Again, the roles most commonly reported by educators in the FET subsector were providing advice and support to learners and referring to HIV/AIDS-related issues in their teaching. The study has not generated evidence that the roles reported by FET educators fall short of the implicit policy requirements in the subsector.

In the schooling subsector one of the seven roles set out in policy is the ‘community, citizenship and pastoral role’. This role requires that educators be able to ‘respond to current social and educational problems with particular emphasis on the issues of violence, drug abuse, poverty ... HIV and AIDS.’ The qualitative fieldwork has generated very different examples of how the pastoral role of school-based educators is understood and practised, ranging from explicitly dismissive responses that ignore the role altogether to examples of educators who play the role with great commitment. The analysis of the survey data shows that 68% of school-based respondents report having adopted roles that are not only pastoral in orientation but specifically directed at mitigating the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

However, it must be noted that the roles reported by school-based educators fall short in some respects of the HIV/AIDS-specific roles specified in national guidelines. As was the case in the other two subsectors, the roles most commonly reported by educators in schools were providing advice and support to learners and referring to HIV/AIDS-related issues in their teaching. The national guidelines for school-based educators contain more extensive requirements, such as ‘exemplifying responsible sexual behaviour’ and ‘leading discussion among learners and parents’, for which no evidence was found in the study.

Finding 8: ‘Active’ and ‘passive’ subsets of respondents

In-depth analysis of the survey data identified and profiled three subsets of HE respondents who have been tentatively described as ‘active’, ‘undecided’ and ‘passive’ in their predisposition towards mitigating the impact of the pandemic. (It is important to note that the use of the term ‘passive’ is not intended to be disparaging – the analysis of the qualitative dataset has shown that many respondents gave cogent reasons for their inability or unwillingness to play a formal role with respect to the pandemic.)

Perhaps because of the less immediate impact of HIV/AIDS in the HE subsector, and the greater space that may exist for HE educators to adopt or reject active approaches to the pandemic, there were significant differences between the ‘active’ subset (14,1% of HE survey respondents, predominantly older, female and African or Indian from Health Sciences and Education) and the ‘passive’ subset (4,6% of HE survey respondents, predominantly younger, male and white from Commerce, Economics and Management, Engineering, Mathematical Sciences and Physical Sciences). For example, significantly more of the ‘active’ subset of respondents identified:

- refer to an ethical responsibility to help reduce the impact of the pandemic;
- believe that all teaching staff should play a role in doing so;
- believe performance assessments should include the extent of their efforts and express support for integration into the curriculum of HIV/AIDS-related issues;
- play a variety of roles in relation to the pandemic, including listening to their students’ personal problems and giving them relevant advice and support, conducting relevant research and participating in relevant community development initiatives;
- tend to feel confident about playing a role in reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS;
- tend to report a lack of open discussion about HIV/AIDS issues at their universities and of sufficient formal and informal support to mitigate impact.

Figure 5 Opinions of ‘active’ and ‘passive’ subsets of university respondents about HIV/AIDS (%)

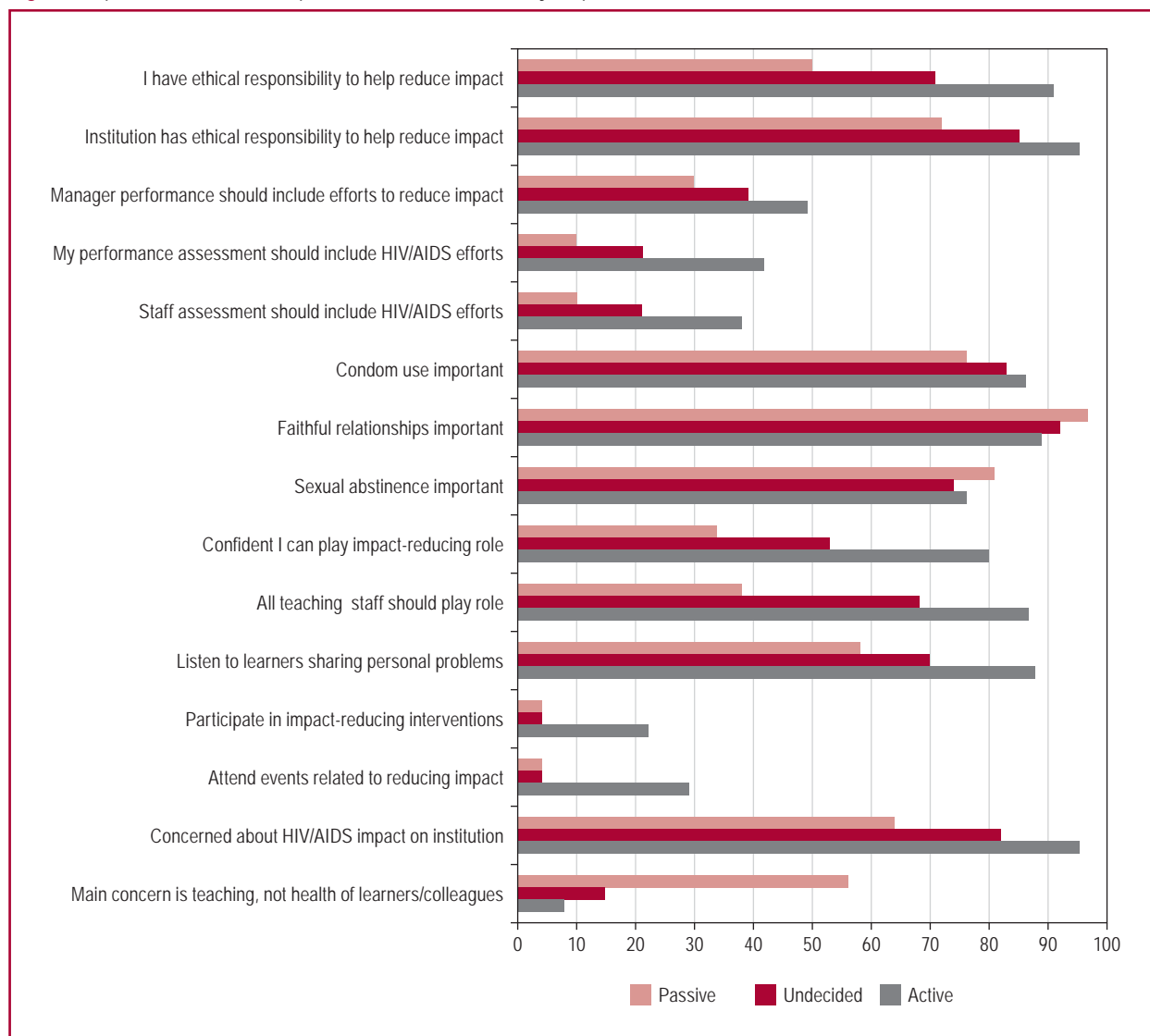


Figure 5 illustrates the key differences between the ‘active’ and ‘passive’ subsets of respondents.

Further in-depth analysis of the survey data, using correspondence analysis, revealed more detailed descriptions of two ‘active’ subsets of educators in the schooling subsector who are predominantly African respondents in the age band 40-49.

The correspondence analysis also identified subsets of respondents with a strong sense of social responsibility:

- in the schooling subsector (predominantly in the age band 50-59);

- in the FET subsector (predominantly African respondents aged 40-49); and
- in the higher education subsector (predominantly African female respondents from Education, Health Sciences, Law, Social Sciences and Theology).

Curriculum issues

Finding 9: Curriculum issues

The study has generated important distinctions in terms of educators’ attitudes to HIV/AIDS and the curriculum, with support for curriculum-related interventions most evident in the schooling subsector.

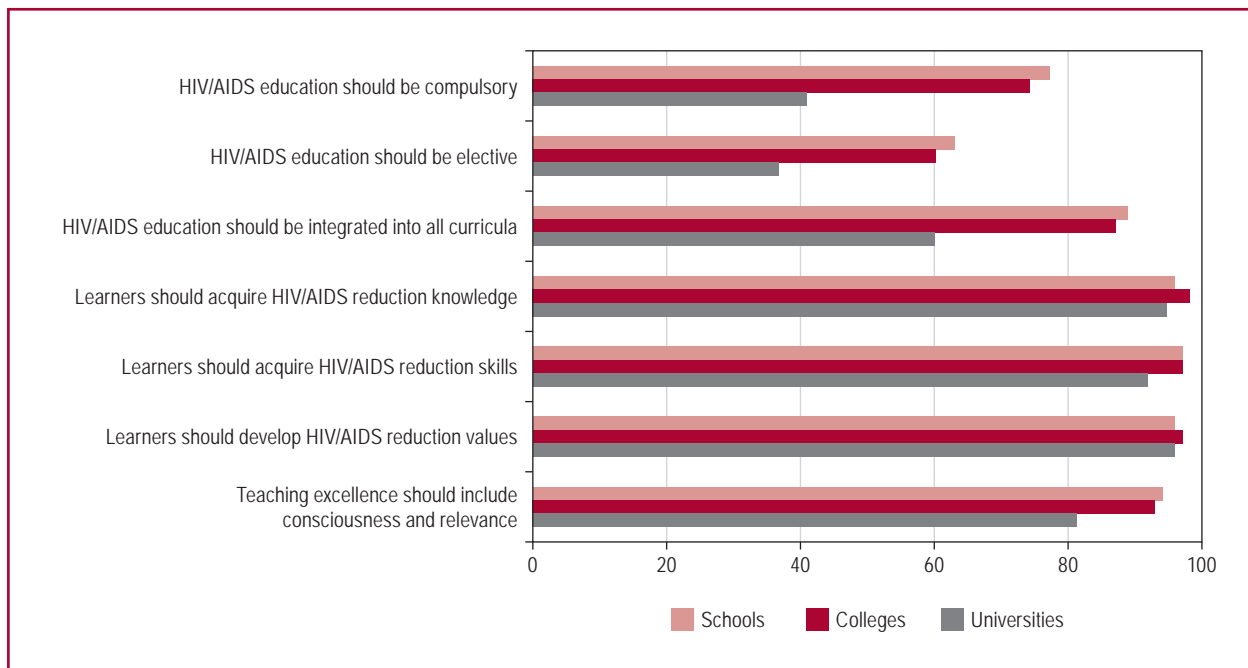
Figure 6 Views about the curriculum in relation to HIV/AIDS (%)

Figure 6 illustrates the key relevant aspects of the survey responses.

The qualitative and quantitative curriculum-related findings are presented below:

- Although the qualitative fieldwork showed that opinions about HIV/AIDS and the curriculum are quite polarised, survey respondents expressed very positive attitudes to the inclusion of HIV/AIDS-related issues in the curriculum, ranging from approaches that favour compulsory courses and modules to those that support the development of critical decision-making skills.
- The qualitative fieldwork indicates that educators who feel that they have ‘nothing new’ to offer their learners and students may be placing emphasis on transmission of knowledge rather than development of critical decision-making skills.
- In schools and FET colleges interviewees in the qualitative fieldwork largely acknowledged that the pandemic has generated curriculum-related needs, and divergent opinions were more related to implementation strategies. In the HE subsector there was greater polemic among interviewees. The survey data show that the school subsector stands out as the

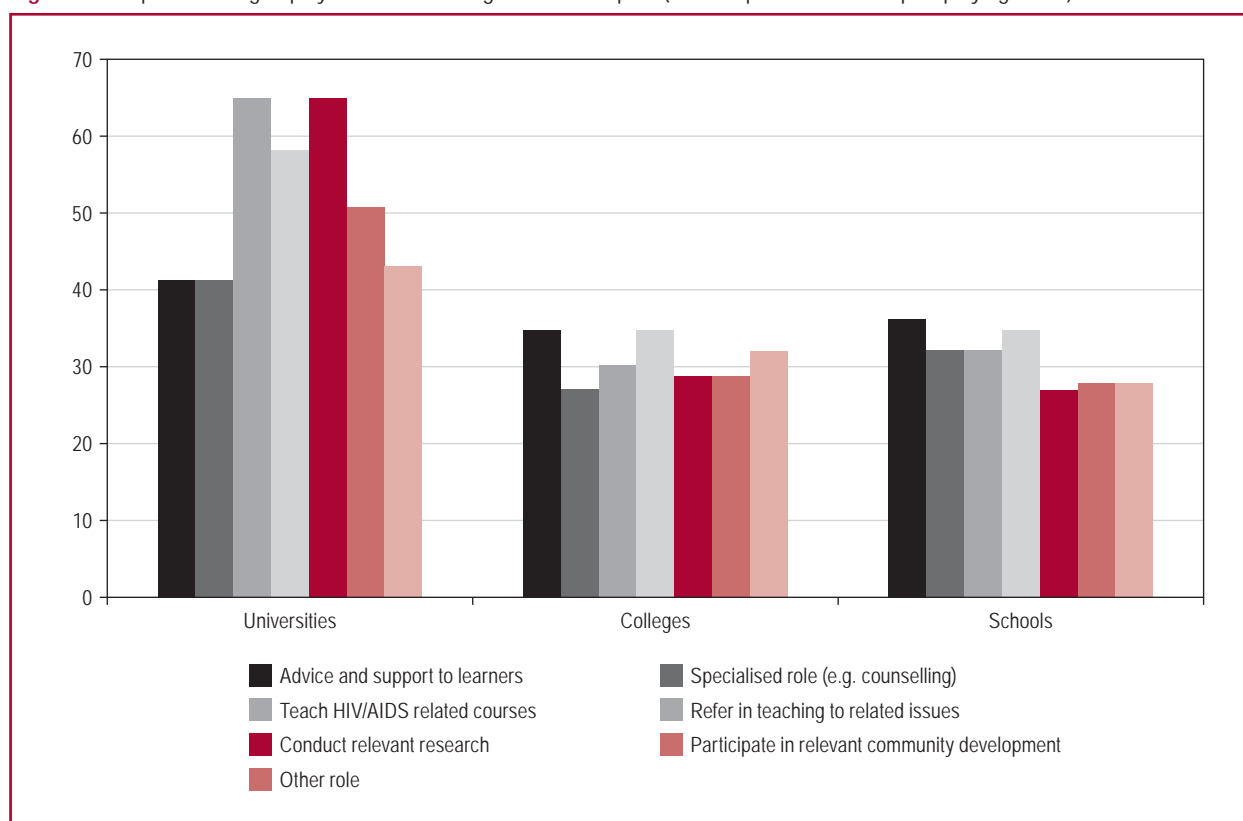
one in which greatest support exists for curriculum-related interventions.

- The qualitative data show that the different, more positive survey responses to curriculum-related questions in the FET and schooling subsectors are likely to be a result of the greater immediacy of the impact of the pandemic in these two subsectors. However, in both the FET and the schooling subsectors interviewees reported that they often found it difficult to talk about sexuality with their learners, and this clearly inhibited effective curriculum approaches. Curriculum approaches reported in these subsectors appear to be informed by radically different constructions of young people, gender and sexuality and the roles of educators.

THE FORMS OF SUPPORT NEEDED BY EDUCATORS

This section contains findings related to the second research aim, which was to ascertain the types of support required by educators to mitigate the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The types of support were identified in the qualitative phase of the study and then included in the survey questionnaires. The section

Figure 7 Adequate training to play a role in reducing HIV/AIDS impact (% of respondents who report playing a role)



addresses the current levels of support available to educators and the support they require in the future to play the roles that many educators want to take on.

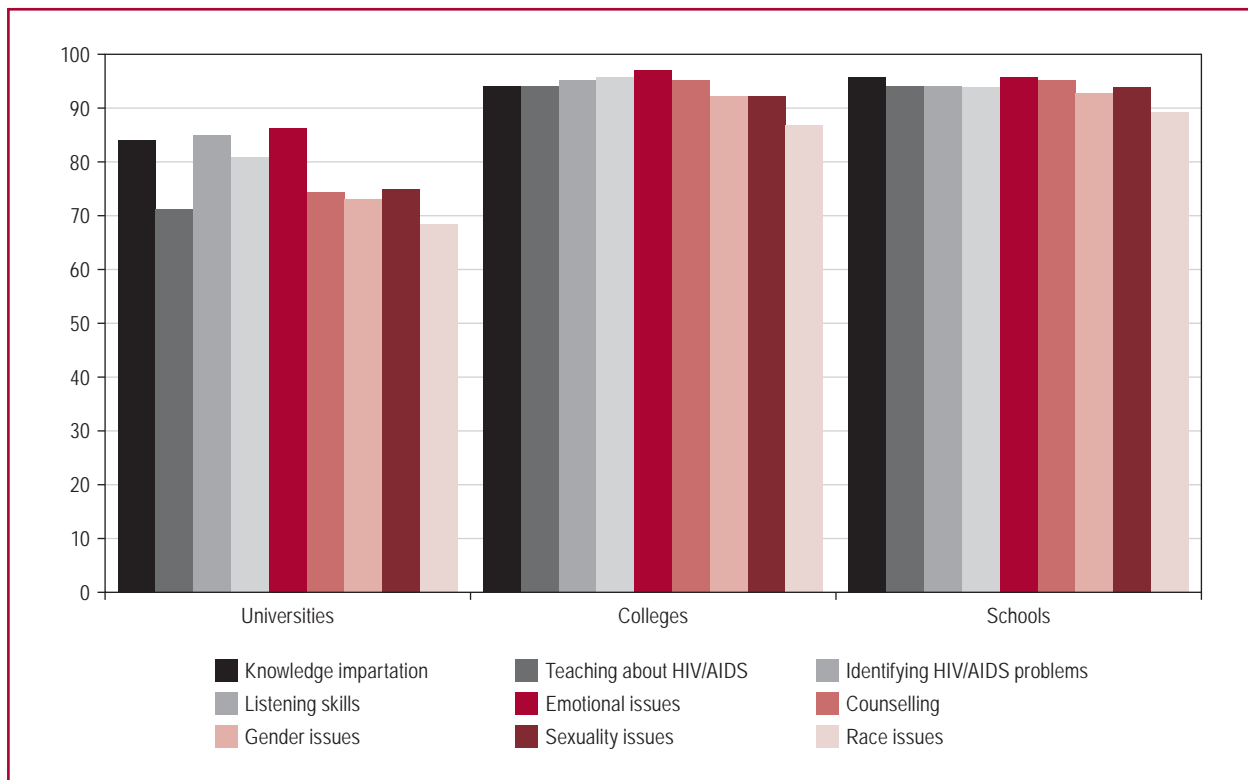
Finding 10: Time, support, resources and training for current roles

In the course of the qualitative fieldwork educators across the three subsectors reported on the types and adequacy of support that they receive in mitigating the impact of the pandemic. These types of support (including time to allocate to efforts to mitigate the impact, resources and training) formed the basis for pertinent questions in the survey questionnaires. The analysis of the survey data generated the following findings:

- Most respondents who reported playing one or more roles in mitigating the impact of the pandemic indicated that they do not have enough time to do so.
- Sufficient support seems to be generally more available at universities than at colleges or schools,

although the converse applies in relation to giving advice and support to students and learners in HIV/AIDS-related matters, with better support available at schools and colleges.

- Research on HIV/AIDS issues is better supported at universities than at colleges or schools, but specialised roles are reported to be less well supported at universities.
- Support for involvement in HIV/AIDS-related community development initiatives or for playing other unspecified roles in mitigating the impact of the pandemic is experienced in less than half of cases in all three subsectors.
- Resources to facilitate the roles played by respondents are generally in extremely short supply at schools and colleges, but less so at universities. However, lack of adequate resources for HIV/AIDS-related interventions was also a problem reported by HE respondents in relation to both specialised and non-specialised roles, although good or excellent resources and support were reported more at universities than elsewhere.

Figure 8 Need for training to facilitate roles in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS (%)

- More than in the FET and schooling subsectors, HE respondents reported having received adequate training, but only with respect to the teaching of HIV/AIDS-related courses, conducting HIV/AIDS-related research, making reference to HIV/AIDS-related issues during their teaching and participating in HIV/AIDS-related community development initiatives.
- At schools and colleges, one third or less of the staff who play roles in reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS at their institutions reported having received adequate training of any kind.
- With the exception of certain types of training, approximately two-thirds of respondents across the subsectors have not received good or excellent training for the roles that they play.
- The exceptions to the above were found at universities (good or excellent training in dealing with emotional issues), at universities and colleges (training that imparts knowledge about HIV/AIDS and training in listening skills) and at schools and colleges (training in listening skills).

Some of the salient aspects of the survey responses related to training received are illustrated in Figure 7.

Finding 11: Future support, resources and training required

The types of support identified in the course of the qualitative fieldwork formed the basis for survey questions about future support, resources and training required by educators to mitigate the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The analysis of the survey data generated the following findings:

- High levels of need for training and resources for future roles were expressed by respondents in all three subsectors.
- Almost all college and school respondents (>90%) said that in order to play a future role in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS it would be important or very important to receive training that imparts relevant knowledge and teaching methods, training in counselling and training dealing with issues related to gender, sexuality and 'race'.

- Many – but fewer – university respondents reported that they were in need of training; their perceived level of need ranged from 68% for training on issues related to ‘race’ to 85% for training in dealing with emotional issues.
- More than 80% of all respondents who want to play a future role in mitigating the impact of the pandemic at their institutions said that it would be important or very important that a range of resources and support (such as peer support programmes and testing and counselling services) be made available.
- Although all of the resources and forms of support mentioned in the questionnaire were perceived to be important by most respondents, at universities the need for counselling services and a peer support programme for students emerged as the highest priorities.
- At colleges and schools, none of the resources or forms of support received an importance rating of less than 94%.

Some of the salient aspects of the survey responses related to future training needs are illustrated in Figure 8.

Finding 12: Subsets of respondents in terms of support needs

The profiling of survey respondents in terms of how well supported they feel shows that there are biodata trends that could be specifically explored in a more in-depth manner in future research. In this study it seems that African respondents (and African female respondents in particular) figure prominently (but not at all exclusively) in the subsets of respondents with the greatest need for support.

- A ‘less supported’ subset of respondents in the schooling subsector (predominantly African female respondents) express a need for training that imparts relevant knowledge, as well as training in teaching methods, identifying HIV/AIDS-related problems, listening skills, emotional issues, counselling, gender and ‘race’.
- A ‘less supported’ subset of respondents in the FET subsector (predominantly African respondents and female respondents) express a need for training that imparts relevant knowledge, teaching methods, problem identification, listening, counselling, and issues related to gender and sexuality.
- A ‘less supported’ subset of respondents in the higher education subsector (predominantly Indian female respondents in the age band 30-49 from Agriculture, Commerce, Humanities and Social Sciences) report that training in issues related to gender, sexuality and ‘race’ is not available.
- A ‘less supported’ subset of respondents in the schooling subsector (predominantly African respondents in the age band 30-39) express a need for resources including teaching/learning materials, infrastructure, counselling and HIV testing services, peer support for learners and staff, expert assistance and HIV/AIDS-related events.
- A ‘less supported’ subset of respondents in the FET subsector (predominantly coloured female respondents in the age band 40-49) report that HIV testing services and peer support for learners and staff are not available or their availability is not known.
- A ‘less supported’ subset of respondents in the FET subsector (predominantly African male respondents in the age band 50-59) express a need for resources including teaching and learning material, research studies related to HIV/AIDS, infrastructure and HIV testing services.
- A ‘less supported’ subset of respondents in the higher education subsector (predominantly in the age band 50-59 from Education, Health Sciences, Engineering, Life Sciences, Law and Social Sciences) express a need for infrastructure, counselling services and HIV testing services.
- An ‘adequately supported’ subset of respondents in the higher education subsector (predominantly African male respondents in the age band 40-59 from Arts, Education, Engineering and Social Sciences) report that the quality of training in teaching HIV/AIDS-related courses and identifying HIV/AIDS-related problems is fair.
- An ‘adequately supported’ subset of respondents in the higher education subsector (predominantly African and Indian female respondents in the age band 50-59 from Education, Life Sciences and

Theology) report that they have access to good or excellent infrastructure, counselling, HIV testing services and external expert assistance.

- An ‘adequately supported’ subset of respondents in the higher education subsector (predominantly African and coloured male respondents in the age band 60-69 from Arts, Commerce, Education, Health Sciences, Humanities and Theology) assessed available information, teaching and learning materials and research as being of fair quality.

DIFFERENT AND CONTRADICTORY APPROACHES TO THE PANDEMIC

Finding 13: Different and contradictory approaches

The definition of distinct approaches is complicated by the fact that some interviewees in the qualitative phase of the study seemed to advocate different positions and approaches to the HIV/AIDS pandemic (for example, ‘holistic’ and ‘moralistic’) and alternated between approaches even when they seemed to be contradictory. We have also observed that the effect of adopting a particular approach to the pandemic might differ widely across the subsectors – for example, in a school an ‘instrumentalist approach’ might mean limiting the pastoral duties prescribed in national policy for school-based educators, while in HEIs it might mean opposing the suggestion that educators have any kind of pastoral role to play, let alone in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Moreover, it must be noted that in the course of many of the interviews respondents shifted their positions, sometimes as a result of interaction with colleagues and the interviewer and sometimes, it appeared, as a result of their own reflections. For example, many respondents began to problematise their approach to the pandemic in the course of the discussion. This indicates that positions on approaches to mitigating the impact of the pandemic, and the beliefs and assumptions on which they rest, may not be static for many educators.

A STRATEGIC DILEMMA

Finding 14: Degrees of latitude for educators to develop their own responses

A strategic dilemma was explicitly presented in the qualitative fieldwork, especially by HE respondents, who reported institutional strategies of allowing individuals to develop their own responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic – in contrast to the notion that they should be obliged to undertake specific actions. The latter approach was advocated by a small number of HE respondents with formally assigned roles related to the pandemic, but often generated hostile reactions among other respondents.

This strategic dilemma was not evident among interviewees in the FET and schooling subsectors, although a small number of these were critical of ‘ritualistic’ activities and messages related to the pandemic. We have noted that respondents who reported this manifestation of what is often referred to as ‘AIDS fatigue’ expressed resentment at having to incorporate HIV/AIDS-related issues in their curricula, but at the same time questioned whether there is ‘anything new’ to teach, suggesting that they placed emphasis on facts rather than relevant skills (such as decision-making skills) or values. The latitude that should be given to educators to develop their own responses to the pandemic may therefore be a general strategic dilemma across the subsectors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The recommendations of the study are presented below. It must be noted that in an exploratory study recommendations should be viewed with caution and applied in a context-sensitive manner. Indeed, the first recommendation below addresses the importance of context in detail. Because of the grounded theory approach adopted in the design of the study, the recommendations presented in this section go beyond the reference in the research aims to the

education and professional development of educators and resource provisioning to enable them to play a meaningful role in the mitigation of the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on their students or learners and colleagues.

Recommendation 1: Resolving a strategic dilemma

Preamble

The study has shown that there are high levels of concern among respondents in all three subsectors with respect to HIV/AIDS, and institutional climates that are generally favourable in terms of HIV/AIDS-related interventions. Probably because of the greater immediacy of the impact of the pandemic on FET colleges and schools, respondents in these subsectors were more likely to be already playing a role – and often playing multiple roles – in mitigating the impact of the pandemic. It must be noted that in all three subsectors the predisposition among respondents towards playing a role in the future was very high. However, both individual attitudes and institutional climates are highly polarised with respect to the types of concern expressed and the types of institutional climate reported, and ‘campaigning’ approaches to mitigating the impact of the pandemic do not always receive appropriate institutional support.

It should be noted that not all beliefs and attitudes are polarised – for example, there were very high levels of agreement among respondents with regard to the importance of faithful relationships, condom use and sexual abstinence in reducing HIV transmission.

A strategic dilemma is evident at both national and institutional levels: whether to prescribe approaches to mitigating the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, or whether to allow individuals and institutions to develop their own responses to the pandemic. We have noted that in the HE subsector there is greater latitude to design various kinds of intervention to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, notably curriculum-related interventions. We have also reported that institutional climates and personal and professional responses

to the pandemic vary considerably and in important ways, and that variations in the latter may be explained by deeply held beliefs that in some cases are related to biographical data such as gender, age, ‘race’ and discipline.

Recommendations

The fertile ground that exists for the development or refinement of national and institutional strategies should be exploited to develop context-sensitive strategies to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

‘One size fits all’ strategies are unlikely to effectively mitigate the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Different approaches to mitigating the impact of the pandemic will be required in different social and intra-institutional contexts. Generic prescriptions should be avoided in favour of a range of types of intervention that will find fertile ground in particular institutions, and that can be implemented by educators with different values and belief systems.

For example, institutions in which a ‘paternal moralistic’ or ‘uncritical’ approach is found – with or without evidence of high-risk sexual behaviour among students and learners – are likely to require a very different type of intervention from one in which a ‘campaigning’ approach is advocated, and in some cases practised, by senior managers.

Each institution should examine the implications of this study for developing or refining its strategy, after examining its own current situation and context.

The strategies should take cognisance of the prevailing climate in a given institution and of the types of concern expressed (and approaches advocated) by its educators, and include interventions that educators with different belief systems can fruitfully implement.

Although the interventions will differ across institutions, a common framework of expected outcomes should be developed in relation to strategies to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

Recommendation 2: Curriculum interventions that meet the challenges of the HIV/AIDS pandemic

Preamble

Respondents expressed a very positive attitude to the inclusion of HIV/AIDS-related issues in the curriculum. However, opinions about HIV/AIDS and the curriculum are quite polarised, with greater polemic in the HE subsector. There appears to be greatest support for curriculum-related interventions in the schooling subsector, and the more positive responses to curriculum questions in the FET and schooling subsectors are likely to be a result of the greater immediacy of the impact of the pandemic in these two subsectors.

There is limited evidence that some educators may be placing emphasis on transmission of knowledge rather than development of critical decision-making skills. It is important to note that approaches to the curriculum reported in all three subsectors appear to be strongly influenced by radically different constructions of young people, gender and sexuality and the roles of educators.

Recommendations

The strong predisposition that exists towards incorporating HIV/AIDS-related issues in the curriculum should be seen as an important basis for future action, noting the differences in how support for curriculum interventions was expressed by respondents – for example, fundamental differences between transmission of knowledge and development of skills and values at the level of curriculum design and curriculum implementation in lecture rooms and classrooms.

In particular, curriculum interventions (and associated training interventions) must explicitly address the challenge of high-risk sexual behaviour (including high-risk behaviour among children and young people) and training interventions must enable educators to do so effectively.

Recommendation 3: Differentiated interventions that enable educators to mitigate the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic

Preamble

Educators' beliefs can strongly influence whether they are able to effectively address the effects of HIV/AIDS – for example, whether they are able to overcome obstacles related to the social stigma attached to the pandemic or to their own reluctance, in many instances, to talk about key HIV/AIDS-related issues such as sexuality.

Approaches adopted by educators to actively mitigate the impact of the pandemic appear to be quite common, and unconcerned or uncritical approaches less so. A 'moralistic approach' is dominant, particularly in the schooling subsector, in many cases in spite of the evidence of high-risk sexual behaviour among children and of children being at risk in the future because of their socioeconomic circumstances and environment.

We have noted that the neat definition of distinct approaches is complicated by the fact that some respondents seemed to advocate different positions and approaches and alternated between them even when they seemed contradictory. Moreover, during many interviews respondents shifted their positions, sometimes as a result of interactions with colleagues and the interviewer and sometimes, it appeared, arising from their own reflections.

While respondents who expressed a high degree of concern (and willingness to act to mitigate the impact of the pandemic) often expressed frustration, it is important to note that school-based educators in particular often expressed powerful feelings of despair and impotence in the face of profound social problems related to the pandemic.

The profiling of respondents shows that there are trends in the biodata of the 'active' and 'passive' subsets that could be specifically explored in a more in-depth manner in future research.

Recommendations

Individual educators who advocate and practise radically different approaches to mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS should receive appropriately differentiated support – for example, the ‘campaigning approach’ advocated by many educators in this study may require a greater emphasis on resource provision than on training, and at the other extreme more effort in training is likely to be required to counteract the effects of ‘uncritical’ approaches to the pandemic.

Somewhere along the continuum between these extremes, interventions are particularly needed in the schooling subsector to address the frequently expressed lack of confidence among educators with respect to talking to children about sexuality, especially since this is a compulsory element of the school curriculum. Support and training related to effective interaction with young people and their priorities and values is urgently needed.

Each institution should examine the implications of this study for developing or refining its strategy, after examining its own current situation and context, including dominant value systems among its educators.

There is a need to engage, through training initiatives, with beliefs that are clearly unhelpful in relation to the pandemic – in particular, those that inform ‘uncritical’ approaches to HIV/AIDS.

The likelihood that educators’ positions with regard to HIV/AIDS will be generally dynamic rather than static should be borne in mind when designing training interventions.

There is a need to provide support for educators, particularly in the schooling subsector, who are most directly affected by the pandemic.

Since deeply held beliefs (about sexuality or children, for example) clearly influence educators’ approaches to the pandemic, it will be useful to understand through further research in what ways biographical data (including factors such as age, gender, ‘race’ and

discipline) may be important variables in individual and collective responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Recommendation 4: Time, resources, support and training for educators’ roles in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS

Preamble

Most respondents in all three subsectors who reported playing one or more roles in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS indicated that they do not have enough time to do so. Sufficient support seems to be generally more available at universities than at colleges or schools. Resources to facilitate the roles played by respondents are generally in extremely short supply at schools and colleges, but less so at universities, where good or excellent resources and support were reported more than elsewhere. With the exception of certain types of training, approximately two-thirds of respondents across the subsectors have not received good or excellent training for the roles that they play. At schools and colleges, where one third or less of the staff who play roles in reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS reported having received adequate training, the situation is particularly problematic.

The need for training and resources for future roles was expressed by respondents in all three subsectors. Almost all college and school respondents reported a strong need for training (including training that imparts relevant knowledge and teaching methods, training in counselling, and training dealing with issues related to gender, sexuality and ‘race’), and in universities the need was less but the need for training to deal with emotional issues was strongly present.

The vast majority of respondents in all subsectors who want to play a future role in mitigating the impact of the pandemic at their institutions reported that it would be important or very important that a range of resources and support (such as peer support programmes and testing and counselling services) be made available. Needs are particularly acute at colleges and schools, where none of the resources or forms of support that were itemised in the survey received

an importance rating of less than 94%. It must be noted that educators who want to play a future role in mitigating the impact of the pandemic constituted the vast majority of respondents.

The profiling of the ‘less supported’ respondents in the analysis of the survey data shows that there are trends in their biodata that could be specifically explored in a more in-depth manner in future research. In this study it seems to be the case that African respondents (and African female respondents in particular) figure prominently (but not at all exclusively) in the subsets of respondents with the greatest need for support.

Recommendations

When developing institutional strategies to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS, educators’ time needs to be viewed as an important resource and allocated appropriately.

Training, resources and support systems for mitigating the impact of the pandemic are in great demand and must be provided in the differentiated manner suggested in Recommendation 1 above.

Demand for training, resources and support systems is greatest in the schooling and FET subsectors and these subsectors should be prioritised.

The study has identified certain types of training, resources and support systems that are in demand, and institution-specific needs should be determined bearing in mind the need for differentiated approaches to support noted in Recommendation 1. Training is needed to impart relevant knowledge and teaching methodologies, as well as in how to identify HIV/AIDS-related problems, in listening skills, in dealing with emotional issues, in first-level counselling with a view to referring people affected by the pandemic to appropriate specialised support, and in issues related to gender, sexuality and ‘race’. Specialised support appears to be urgently needed in the schooling and FET subsectors.

It will be useful to understand through further research in what ways factors such as age, gender, ‘race’, discipline and institutional context may influence the need for certain types of training, resources and support.

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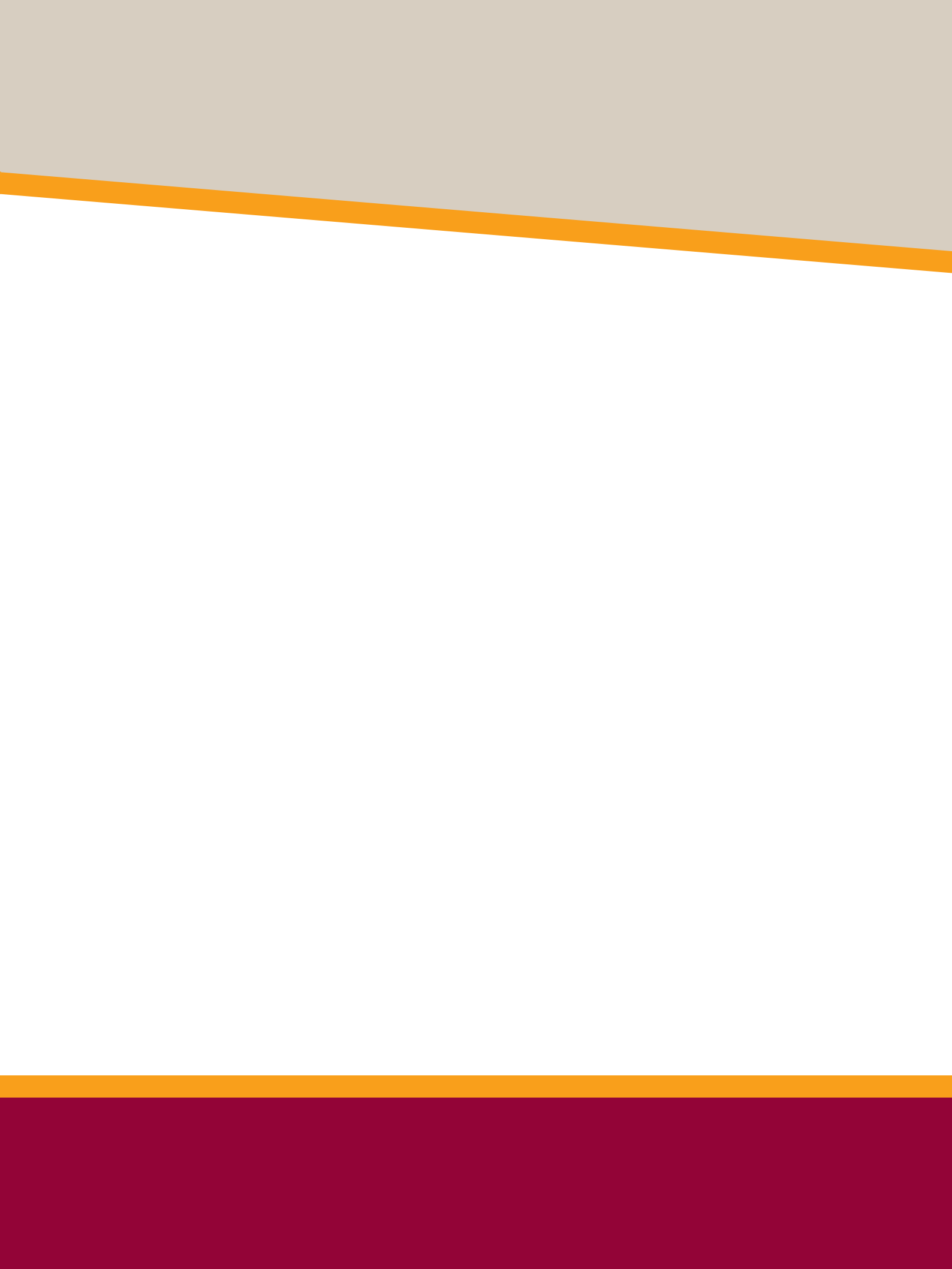
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