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Derailing Gautengs HIV/AIDS train: An evaluation of the provincial governments implementation of a life skills education programme in primary and secondary schools

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study it to evaluate the Gauteng Government's attempt to implement a life skills education programme in all primary and secondary schools. A chosen strategy of the National HIV/AIDS/STD Strategic Plan for South Africa: 2000-2005, a universal programme of life skills and HIV/AIDS education in primary and secondary schools was identified as a vital means to contain South Africa's HIV/AIDS epidemic. Broadly, the life skills and HIV/AIDS education programme is intended to "promote improved health seeking behaviour and [the] adoption of safe sex practices" (DOH, 2000) amongst school going youth. Responsibility for the implementation of this programme in all primary and secondary schools is decentralised to the provincial level. Accordingly, this study seeks to analyse and evaluate the Gauteng Provincial Government's (GPG) progress in the implementation of the life skills programme. A case study design centered upon documentary analysis and key informant interviews was employed in order to capture the necessary and predominantly qualitative data. These data are analyzed using the conceptual framework developed through the work of Hildebrand and Grindle (1994 in Brijal and Gilson, 1997), and Brijal and Gilson (1997). This study found that numerous implementation deficits arising at the organisational, task network, public sector institutional and external environmental levels combined to hamper implementation of the life skills programme according to the time frames set out within the National Integrated Plan for Children Infected and Affected by HIV/AIDS. Nevertheless, this study also found that political stability in Gauten gprovince was a significant factor promoting steady and progressive programme implementation and expansion. To conclude, this study indicates that policy implementation requires numerous complimentary factors (for instance, a strong level of local service delivery capacity) to be in place in order for public HIV/AIDS policy implementation to be achieved in an efficient and sustainable manner.