

HIV study paves way for innovative public-private sector collaboration

The first study ever conducted to ascertain capacities among South African technical and vocational training colleges (TVET) to teach and support learning about HIV/Aids is complete and the results are already being used for new projects.

This baseline study was conducted in 2015 by the Higher Education and Training HIV/Aids Programme (HEAIDS) of the department of higher education and training (DHET).

The study made some critical findings with the overall conclusion that the current HIV/Aids policies for TVETs are outdated, that the curriculum needs strengthening and that action plans are urgently needed.

Curricula lack varied content

The greatest gap across TVETs is that their curricula are almost entirely technical and focused purely on vocational training. They lack varied content and while some do offer life-skills training, there are many weaknesses that need to be addressed.



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This translates into a lack of teaching about health and wellness, exacerbates risky sexual behaviour, substance abuse and gender-based violence and more specifically the inability of students to deal with HIV and related issues in their places of work. These gaps may further have the combined effect of preventing many students from completing their training or entering the job market.

Two-pronged approach

HEAIDS implements a two-pronged approach across 50 TVETs and 26 universities: it supports the roll out of comprehensive campus-based health and wellness initiatives to ensure students and graduates remain healthy. It also strengthens teaching and learning about personal and professional competencies so students can compete as part of a productive labour force.

TVETs are ideally placed to address students on the issues of HIV/Aids, health and related social challenges because of their location and the central role they play in social and youth development, and as the source of graduates ready to enter various industries.

In explaining the aim of the study, Dr Ramneek Ahluwalia, director of HEAIDS says: “Investment in our youth is an investment well placed.”

The findings are being used to inform strategies on how to improve life orientation teaching in colleges. Essentially this will be done by reviewing and strengthening the curriculum and capacitating lecturers to teach it.

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