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Basic Education Department strengthening curriculum content on Life Skills and Life Orientation through scripted lesson plans, 6 September 2019

The Department of Basic Education is currently testing the scripted lesson plans in five provinces with the intention of strengthening the Life Skills curriculum offering in the schooling system while seeking to make learners more conscious on issues of Gender Based Violence.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has been offering HIV prevention and Sexuality Education (SE) through the Life Skills and Life Orientation (LO) Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), HIV and AIDS Life Skills Education Programme and co-curriculum activities since 2000. However, the high rates of learner pregnancy (from 71 234 in 2009 to 99 041 in 2013) and HIV infections (estimated at 2000 weekly among girls aged 15-24) indicated that there has been no change in the behaviour of learners and many educators felt uncomfortable teaching sexuality education.

In 2017, the DBE developed the National Policy on HIV, STIs and TB for Learners, Educators, School Support Staff and Officials in all Primary and Secondary Schools in the Basic Education Sector (henceforth referred to as the DBE National Policy on HIV, STIs and TB) as a strengthened sectoral response. This Policy mandates the DBE to provide curriculum-based Sexuality Education and access to Sexual Reproductive Health Services as modalities to prevent new HIV infection and STIs, early unintended pregnancies amongst learners, school related gender-based and to retain learners in schools.

Sexuality Education lesson plans were developed by the Department to guide the provision of SE in the Life Skills and LO CAPS (Grade 4-12). To ensure standardised and quality delivery of SE in SA schools, the Department scripted the lessons plans. The Scripted Lesson Plans (SLPs) have been designed to assist educators to teach scientifically accurate, evidence-informed, incremental, age appropriate and culturally appropriate SE within the Life Skills and LO CAPS in the classroom. The SPLs uses a human rights approach which allows adolescents and young people to develop appropriate life skills to support healthy choices and promote gender equality.

The Educator Guide and the Learner Book that are used as Learner and Teacher Support Material (LTSM) have been framed to cover the following Life Skills and LO key themes including:

- Relationships;
- Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality;
- Understanding Gender;
- Violence and Staying Safe;
- Skills for health and Wellbeing;

The Human Body and Development;
Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour; and
Sexual and Reproductive Health

The SLPs are additional resource tools for educators and learners to enhance pedagogy and teaching methodologies in the classroom. These are currently being tested in 1572 schools across 5 Provinces, namely Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Western Cape ahead of full implementation. Additional resources to engage stakeholders within school communities have been developed in preparation to the provision of sexuality education in schools. These include School Governing Body Orientation Manuals, School Management Team Orientation Manual, Teacher Training Manuals and Parent Engagement Manuals. The National Consultative Forum (NCF) was consulted on the content of the SGB Manual.

The Department's HIV prevention and sexuality education curriculum and co-curriculum programmes have been part of the broader National Response in the fight against the HIV Epidemic for example the key programmes such as the "She Conquers"" Presidential Campaign and the DREAMS Programme. As a result of these joint efforts the Department is pleased to note a steady decrease in the new infections amongst adolescent girls and young women (from 2000 to 1300 infections per week), early and unintended pregnancies (from over 99 000 in 2013 to 82 00 in 2017 pregnancies among learners).

Through the provision of sexuality education, the Department endeavours to equip learners with the knowledge and life skills that will empower them to make informed decisions and choices to ensure that they live healthy lives and realise their full potential.

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