

**A CASE STUDY EXPLORING LEARNERS'
EXPERIENCES OF HIV/AIDS PROGRAMMES**

Thesis presented by

ESTHER GRIESEL-ROUX

In fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR (PhD)

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

of the

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

SUPERVISOR: DR. LIESEL EBERSÖHN

CO-SUPERVISOR: DR. BRIGITTE SMIT

CO-SUPERVISOR: PROF. IRMA ELOFF

PRETORIA

OCTOBER 2004

ABSTRACT

This study set out to explore and describe adolescent learners' experiences of HIV/AIDS programmes presented at their schools. The rationale was that an understanding of how learners experience HIV/AIDS programmes might afford insight into the ways in which adolescents manage HIV/AIDS-related issues every day. Subsequent understanding could perhaps contribute to the body of knowledge on HIV/AIDS education, and possibly inform future HIV/AIDS education curriculum development.

The conceptual framework constituted the impact of HIV/AIDS on society, education and adolescents; theories on experiences and adolescent development; relevant Department of Education policies and curriculum plans; as well as national and international research concerning HIV/AIDS education programmes. A qualitative research approach was followed from an interpretivist epistemology, with sensitivity given to criteria of credibility, transferability and dependability. An instrumental case study was conducted at three secondary schools (cases), using focus groups and written essays as the methods for data collection from 90 diverse participants, Grade 11 learners. Responses were audio-taped, transcribed and analysed from a constructivist grounded theory perspective. Results were interpreted by means of literature control. Six prominent themes emerged.

Learners experienced that they were changed positively by knowledge on HIV/AIDS. In this regard they were more open and motivated to communicate, their views and perceptions altered and they were motivated to behave responsibly. However, **learners also experienced HIV/AIDS knowledge negatively.** They felt bombarded with HIV/AIDS information and they experienced some HIV/AIDS information as upsetting. **Learners' experiences still reflected some stereotyping and persisting misconceptions.** Learners associated poverty and lack of education with higher HIV infection rates, as well as a lack of support from parents and/or family. Learners' experiences reflected that they would **appreciate their parents' participation in HIV/AIDS programmes.** Learners voiced a need for improved communication with their parents regarding HIV/AIDS, and experienced their parents as ignorant, shy, stubborn or scared in this regard. Learners' accounts reflected that parents' initial negativity towards the programme later changed into positive support. The learners also had **positive and negative experiences regarding their friends and the HIV/AIDS programmes.** They expressed that their peer-relationships improved in terms of ability to communicate and render support. In addition they expressed that their friends still had a great influence in their lives. Some issues, such as risk behaviour and the HIV-status of their peers, shocked learners. The learners indicated that they thought HIV/AIDS education was

necessary, but **recommended certain amendments for future HIV/AIDS programmes**. Their experiences suggested smaller gender-specific groups; an outsider-presenter; parent/caregiver involvement; variety in programme format; long-term HIV/AIDS education; HIV/AIDS care, support and treatment information in addition to that of prevention; addressing values and life skills content in HIV/AIDS education; as well as fear-provoking real-life contexts.

Several recommendations were made in terms of HIV/AIDS education and programme development. Integration between HIV/AIDS education, life skills education and values education in the formal curriculum is supported by findings and recommended for curriculum development and educational practice. Correspondingly, it is recommended that multiple views on poverty be incorporated into HIV/AIDS education to address persisting stereotypes and misconceptions. Furthermore, cognisance of learners' suggestions in terms of format and content regarding future HIV/AIDS programme development is recommended.

Findings queried existing premises regarding adolescents and (ir-)responsibility in developmental theory, establishing a foundation for further research. Existing silences in the data relating to gender, orphans, violence, non-governmental organisations, condom-use in the context of HIV/AIDS also requires further research.

Establishing that the use of open-ended methods with adolescents resulted in access to rich and descriptive data signified a methodological contribution. Theoretically this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge related to HIV/AIDS education by giving voice to adolescent learners' experiences of HIV/AIDS programmes. Contributions in the realm of HIV/AIDS educational practice and curriculum development include learners' views of what they found beneficial and lacking in existing programmes, as well as their recommendations regarding format and content for future HIV/AIDS programmes directed at adolescents.

Keywords

Adolescents / adolescent development

Learners / schools

Experiences

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS programmes / education

Curriculum

Poverty

Life skills

HIV/AIDS support and care information

Peer influence

Sex education

Values education

Adolescent responsibility

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER 1	
INTRODUCING THE STUDY	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.1.1 What were my motivations in this study?	2
1.1.2 Background of the study	3
1.2 Statement of intent and aims	6
1.2.1 Research question	7
1.2.1.1 Primary research question	7
1.2.1.2 Secondary research questions	7
1.2.2 Research aims	7
1.3 Paradigmatic perspective	9
1.4 Conceptualisation	13
1.4.1 Case study	13
1.4.2 Exploring	13
1.4.3 Experiences	14
1.4.4 Learners	15
1.4.5 HIV/AIDS Programmes	15
1.5 Research Design and Methodology	16
1.5.1 Research Design	18
1.5.2 Data Collection	20
1.5.2.1 Selection of Data Source	20
1.5.2.2 Selection of cases (sampling)	21
1.5.2.3 Methods of Data Collection	22
a. Mode of observation	22
b. Data documentation	23
c. Data capturing and editing	24
1.5.2.4 Data analysis and interpretation	24
1.5.3 Ethical Strategies	25
1.5.4 Trustworthiness	26
1.6 Limitations of the study	27
1.7 Conclusion	27
1.8 Organisation of the thesis	28

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE STUDY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1	Introduction	30
2.2	The impact of HIV/AIDS on society	34
2.3	The impact of HIV/AIDS on the education system	40
2.3.1	The importance of HIV/AIDS education	46
2.4	The adolescent and HIV/AIDS	51
2.4.1	Introduction	51
2.4.2	Exploring learners' experiences in terms of adolescent development	54
2.4.3	Why adolescents are so vulnerable in terms of HIV/AIDS	61
2.5	Programmes in HIV/AIDS education	63
2.5.1	Introduction	63
2.5.2	Programmes implemented at international level	64
2.5.3	Programmes implemented at national level	70
2.6	Conclusion	72

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1	Introduction	74
3.2	Context and setting	75
3.3	Research Design	76
3.3.1	Data collection	79
3.3.1.1	Selection of data sources	79
3.3.1.2	Selection of Cases (sampling)	80
3.3.1.3	Methods of data collection	82
	a. Mode of observation	82
	b. Data documentation	84
	c. Data capturing and editing	85
3.3.2	Data analysis and interpretation	86
3.3.2.1	Method of analysis and interpretation	87
3.3.2.1.1	Data analysis steps	88
3.3.2.1.2	Data discussion and interpretation	91
3.3.3	Ethical Strategies	92
3.3.4	Trustworthiness strategies	94
3.4	The role of the researcher	95
3.5	Conclusion	96

CHAPTER 4

INTERPRETATION OF LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF HIV/AIDS PROGRAMMES

4.1	Introduction	98
4.2	The context within which understandings emerged	98
4.3	Discussion of the data	104
	Theme 1: Knowledge that changed me positively	104
	Category 1.1: "The programme opened it up for me"	105
	Category 1.2: "I am more comfortable with issues"	110
	Category 1.3: "The programme changed my lifestyle"	116
	Theme 2: Knowledge that impacted me negatively	122
	Category 2.1: "I am fed up with talk about AIDS"	123
	Category 2.2: "It was like a big shock to me"	124
	Theme 3: Persisting Misconceptions and Stereotyping	129
	Category 3.1: "Some white people...But black people"	130
	Category 3.2: "I do think poverty plays a major role in HIV"	131
	Category 3.3: "You go on the rumours you pick up"	133
	Theme 4: My parents, the HIV/AIDS programme and me	134
	Category 4.1: "It has paved the way for communication"	135
	Category 4.2: "My parents are too scared to talk about sex"	139
	Category 4.3: "These things should start at home"	141
	Category 4.4: "Even my parents are more open to HIV/AIDS issues"	142
	Theme 5: My friends, the HIV/AIDS programme and me	144
	Category 5.1: "An opportunity to open up to our friends and peers"	144
	Category 5.2: "You just do what your friends do"	146
	Category 5.3: "It was a shock to my system"	148
	Theme 6: "We need something different now"	150
	Category 6.1: HIV/AIDS Programme format: "There must be new ways"	151
	Category 6.2: "We need to know..."	157
	Category 6.3: "You have to be scared to get it"	162

CHAPTER 5

TRANSCENDING FINDINGS

5.1	Introduction	164
5.2	Overview of study	165
5.3	Conclusions and addressed aims	166
	Research aim 1	166
	Research aim 2	167
	Research aim 3	170
	Research aim 4	175
	Research aim 5	177
	Research aim 6	177
5.4	Transcending Findings	177
	Transcendent conclusion 1	178
	Transcendent conclusion 2	179
	Transcendent conclusion 3	180
	Transcendent conclusion 4	181
	Transcendent conclusion 5	182
	Transcendent conclusion 6	183
	Transcendent conclusion 7	183
	Transcendent conclusion 8	186
	Transcendent conclusion 9	188
5.5	Limitations of the study	189
5.6	Quality Criteria	191
5.7	Implications for research, practice and HIV/AIDS programme development	192
5.8	Contributions of the study	193

REFERENCE LIST

219

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Projects of Tirisano Programme 1	5
Table 2	Paradigmatic Perspective	13
Table 3	HIV/AIDS programmes at international level	66

Table 4	Distribution of participants	101
Table 5	A comparison of what worked and what learners want regarding HIV/AIDS programmes	185

LIST OF DIAGRAMS

Diagram 1	Research Design	17
Diagram 2	Conceptual framework	33
Diagram 3	Influence of development on experience	55
Diagram 4	Integration of strategies for data analysis	88
Diagram 5	The research process	97
Diagram 6	Emergent themes from learners' experiences	103
Diagram 7	Silences in learners' experiences	187

APPENDIX A: Example of data analysis	197
APPENDIX B: Example of field notes	209
APPENDIX C: Checklist of data documentation	213
APPENDIX D: Synoptic overview of programme content	215
APPENDIX E: Focus Group discussion questions	217

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MY SINCERE THANKS TO:

- ⊗ Liesel: for giving me the opportunity to grow as a researcher under her patient and loving guidance
- ⊗ Brigitte: for challenging me to think at a different level
- ⊗ Irma: for her time and guidance
- ⊗ Clarisse: for finding the near impossible with a smile
- ⊗ Lambert: for his love, acceptance and for being the inspiration in my life
- ⊗ Mom and Dad: for their unconditional love and encouragement
- ⊗ Nicola: for her patience with mom's "book"
- ⊗ My in-laws: for their interest and loving support

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream;
not only plan, but also believe.

Anatole France