

## Changing metaphors in HIV & AIDS education policies in South Africa

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### Abstract

Health metaphors have been widely studied, in both clinical and linguistic contexts. Military metaphors have been prominent in Western medicine since the nineteenth century (Nie et al. 2016), and from the 1970s, it has been especially the case for cancer with the USA National Cancer Act of 1971. In terms of HIV and AIDS, military metaphors have been prominent especially in HIV cure discourse (Nie et al. 2016) in the West. However, there has been critique regarding whether this is the best metaphor to use, and several alternatives have been proposed. In contrast to the Western obsession with dominating nature, a more African view regards illness as a part of nature with which one should peacefully coexist (Nie et al. 2016). Exploring the HIV & AIDS metaphors used in Africa should provide insight into alternatives to military metaphors.

When choosing a text or context to focus on, policies provide unique opportunities – metaphors in policies can frame thoughts and discourses and affect decisions made at various levels of society (Vallis & Inayatullah 2016). In South Africa, where HIV infections are widespread, educational policies have the potential to be particularly important in this regard, especially for prevention and destigmatisation.

There have been two such policies so far – South Africa's National HIV/AIDS Education Policy from 1996, and the National Policy on HIV, STIs and TB from 2017. Analysing the HIV & AIDS metaphors in both of these policies should not only provide insights into the type of metaphors used, but also how it has changed over time.

To analyse the data, we follow a qualitative thematic discourse analysis approach. The MIPVU procedure for metaphor identification is used to identify conceptual metaphors directly related to HIV and/or AIDS, and thematic discourse analysis is used to group these metaphors into overarching themes. For methodological rigour and validation, a co-coder and Cohen's kappa coefficient are used.

Preliminary findings suggest that HIV and HIV-related processes such as infection, transmission and prevention, are most often conceptualised as objects in the 1996 policy. In the 2017 policy, it is also conceptualised as an object, but there are two other prominent images – as an agent (performing or initiating actions), or as a person (specifically, a companion). This indicates that the metaphors associated with HIV and AIDS have evolved in important ways over time. Furthermore, each policy contains only a small number of military metaphors.

More details will be presented in the paper, together with a conclusion regarding the main themes and the most significant changes from the old policy to the new.

**Keywords:** Metaphors; Health metaphors; HIV & AIDS metaphors; Discourse analysis; HIV; AIDS; Policy

## **References**

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