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Policy Brief

An Overview of the HIV & AIDS (Life Skills Education) Grant and Learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities Grant

16 August 2021

Executive Summary

On the 18 and 19th of August, the Select Committee on Appropriations is hosting a meeting focussing on education conditional grant expenditure. The Select Committee of Appropriations has requested the Financial and Fiscal Commission (FFC) to provide a short report on two specific conditional grants: the HIV/AIDS (Life Skills Education) grant and the Learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities grant. The report details key challenges that the FFC would like to highlight with respect to the two grants.

Background

Direct conditional grant transfers provide a critical means to supplement or fund specific programmes or functions of national priority in provinces, such as infrastructure and capacity building. Given basic education's priority and concurrent function, a sizable portion of the conditional transfer is allocated to its nine provincial departments via the national Department of Basic Education (DBE). This briefing note is in response to the Select Committee on Appropriations' request and focuses on two specific purpose allocations (i.e. schedule 5 grants) to provinces for basic education, namely: the HIV/AIDS (Life Skills Education) Grant and Learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities grant. Table 1 below sets out the purposes of these two conditional grants, their date of inception and the schedule classification.

Table 1: Overview of Key Conditional Grant Information

Grant	Year Established	Schedule	Purpose as Per DoR 2021
HIV/AIDS (Life Skills Education) Grant	2001/02	Schedule 5A: specific purpose grant	<p>To support South Africa's HIV prevention strategy through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> comprehensive sexuality education and access to sexual and reproductive health services to learners; supporting the provision of employee health and wellness programmes for educators; mitigating the impact of HIV and TB by providing a caring, supportive and enabling environment for learners and educators; Reducing the vulnerability of children to HIV, TB and sexually transmitted infections, with a particular focus on orphaned children and girls.
Learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities Grant	2017/18	Schedule 5A: specific purpose grant	To provide the necessary support, resources and equipment to identified care centres and schools for the provision of education to children with severe to profound intellectual disabilities.

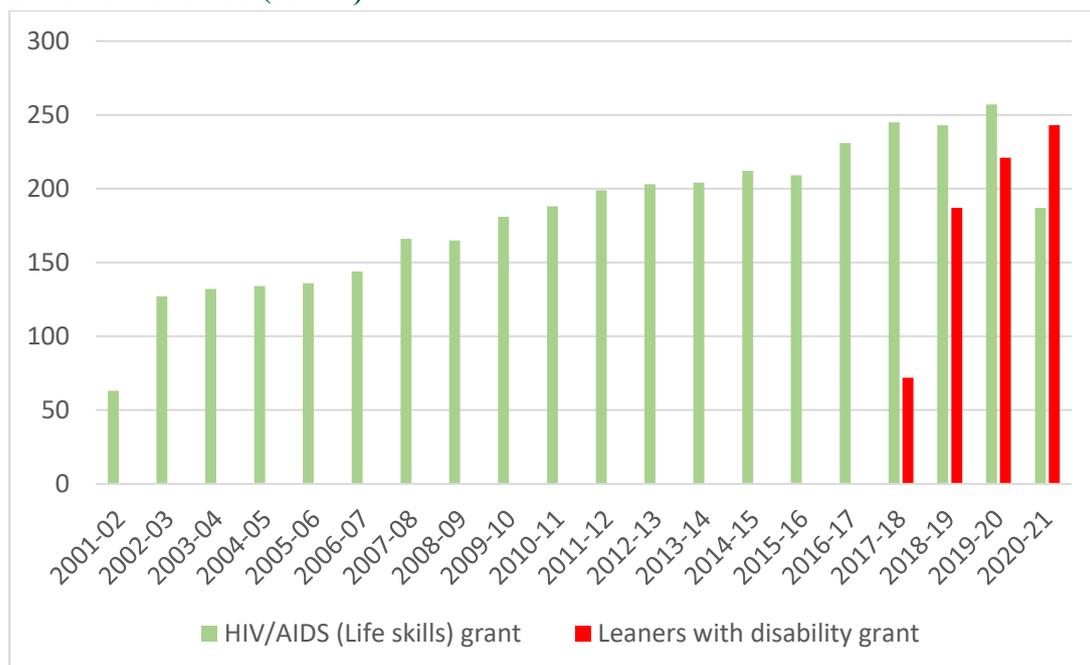
Research Findings

Based on its analysis of the two conditional grants, the FFC would like to emphasise the following key points:

HIV/AIDS (Life skills Education) Conditional Grant

1. *Historical background.* The HIV/AIDS (Life skill education) conditional grant was introduced in 2000 as part of an integrated awareness response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic comprising of the Department of Health, Education and Social Development. The grant was introduced with an initial allocation of R110 million, the bulk (R63 million) of which was allocated to the Department of Education to implement the life skills program, while the remainder was given to the Department of Health (R34 million) and the Department of Social Development (R12 million) to carry out community outreach and finance community-based care programmes, respectively.
2. The Department of Health sub-component has since been incorporated into the HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria and Community outreach grant, whereas the social development sub-component was incorporated into the Provincial Equitable Share (PES). From a low baseline allocation of R63 million, the Education HIV/AIDS Life Skills grant has increased threefold to R187 million since the 2001/02 financial year, growing at an annual average rate of 6%, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: HIV/AIDS Life Skills grant and Learners with Disability grant per year, 2001/02 – 2020/21 (R'000)

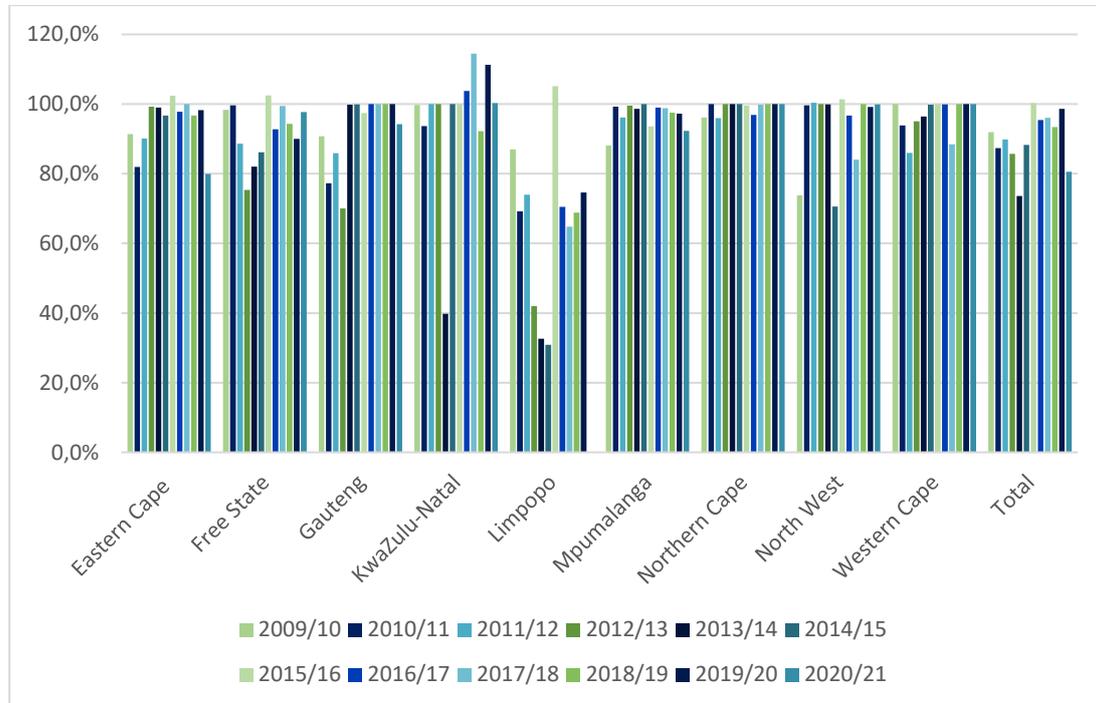


Source: National Treasury budget database

3. *Despite the long-standing existence of the grant, challenges persist.* The HIV/AIDS Life Skills conditional grant was established twenty years ago, and spending performance suggests that challenges in provincial spending still exist. In some provinces, these challenges have persisted over the entire lifespan of the grant to date. In Limpopo, for instance (see Figure 2), there appears to be a long-standing challenge with respect to spending. The Commission emphasises the need for national sector departments to play a

strong oversight and support role to assist those provincial education departments that have struggled to manage their conditional grants.

Figure 2: HIV/AIDS (Life Skills Education) Conditional Grant: Provincial Spending Performance (2009/10 – 2020/21)



4. *Potential duplication and unverifiable outputs.* Many of the HIV/AIDS Life Skills Education conditional grant outputs are an integral part of the curriculum delivery, which is funded through the PES. Hence, some of the grant outputs may not necessarily be solely directly linked to the allocated grant funding and purpose, given its small share relative to the overall allocation for provinces (see Table 2). Furthermore, it is worth noting that HIV/AIDS prevalence among the youth has declined from 6.7% to 5.5 % between 2002 and 2018¹, which suggests that the purpose for this grant instrument may be becoming outdated relative to the needs of life orientation and quality education for the youth today. Hence, the Commission’s view is that this grant could be incorporated into the Provincial Equitable Share, allowing the associated function and programme to be implemented through the overall life orientation school curriculum.

Table 2: The HIV/AIDS Life Skills grant as per 2020/21 DoRA delivery performance reported

➤ 20 032 life orientation educators and 9 721 educators trained in the integration of life skills in the curriculum,
➤ 97 611 functional peer education programmes were undertaken,

¹ Statistics South Africa, 2018. Mid-year Population Estimates.

- 79 083 learners trained on the learner retention and learner pregnancy programme, 106 550 learners trained in the substance abuse programme,
- 12 387 school-based support teams established,
- 4 657 learner support agents in schools,
- 10 613 school management teams trained to develop policy implementation plans, and 186 729 vulnerable learners identified and referred for services,
- 419 163 sets of learning and teaching support material delivered to 14 474 schools.
- Advocacy reached 225 096 learners and educators, as well as 226 188 members of the school communities on the new DBE national policy on HIV, STIs and TB - to review and change societal norms and values on the provision of comprehensive sexuality education and access to sexual and reproductive health and TB services, and
- reaching 28 784 learners through advocacy activities focusing on the prevention of TB in 5 174 schools reached through monitoring and support visits

Learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities Conditional Grant

5. *Strong growth in allocations:* Within the suite of provincial conditional grants relating to basic education, the Learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities Grant is the newest and the smallest. At establishment in 2017/18, the conditional grant was allocated R72 million in total. By 2020/21, a total of R255.8 million is allocated in respect of this conditional grant (see Figure 1 and Table 3).

Table 3: Learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities Conditional Grant: Provincial Allocations, 2017/18 to 2020/21 (R'000)

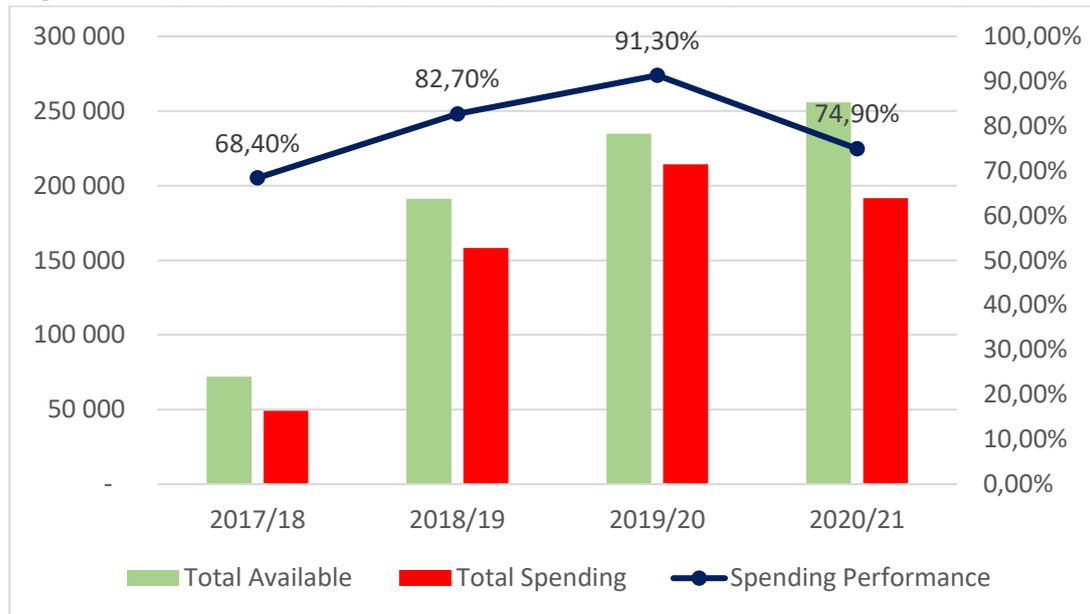
Province	Audited		Pre-Audited (R'000)	
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Eastern Cape	3 537	25 778	27 819	34 079
Free State	11 368	20 397	29 962	29 248
Gauteng	12 632	26 451	31 259	33 715
KwaZulu-Natal	5 558	28 330	37 617	32 586
Limpopo	9 853	23 688	27 082	32 432
Mpumalanga	12 883	20 709	26 094	29 585
Northern Cape	2 021	6 837	11 298	13 760
North West	2 274	12 797	16 835	19 079
Western Cape	11 874	26 206	26 883	31 319
Total	72 000	191 193	234 849	255 803

Source: National Treasury budget database

6. *Spending not keeping pace with allocations.* Whilst allocations for this conditional grant have more than tripled since its inception in 2017/18, spending has not kept pace with funding. In 2020/21, only 74.9% of the total allocation was spent - below the generally

accepted 5% permissible range for any under or overspending (see Figure 3). The grant’s poor spending performance can be explained by the common challenges that most new grants face in terms of implementation. Note that spending had improved to 91.3% in 2019/20. More recently, however, spending performance may have been negatively affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is therefore emphasised that it is crucial to ensure that the root causes of this underspending are properly understood and measures are put in place to mitigate them.

Figure 3: Aggregate Budget, Spending and Performance, 2017/18-2020/21 (R’000)



7. *More robust prioritisation of funding for inclusive education and learners with disabilities required.* As mentioned above, the allocation in respect of this conditional grant is the smallest of all basic education-related grants. Whilst the Commission welcomes this stream of funding as it starts to prioritise the needs of our most vulnerable learners, that is, those with disabilities, it must be pointed out that more needs to be done to progress towards truly inclusive education for all.

8. *Ubiquitous grant outcomes.* Being a fairly new grant and having been introduced after years of lessons and experience with other grants, the Learners with Profound Intellectual Disability grant has an inordinate number of outputs, which not only make the reporting process cumbersome, but further increase the risk of misalignment between expected outputs and reported performance. As can be deduced from Table 4 and Table 5 below, the number of reported outputs are noticeably fewer than the expected outputs.

Table 4: Expected Outputs for Learners with Profound Intellectual Disability grant as per DoRA 2020/21²

Human resources specific to inclusive education through the recruitment of key staff in permanent posts, including:

1. nine deputy chief education specialists as provincial grant managers, 245 transversal itinerant outreach team members recruited to guide and support curriculum delivery and provide therapeutic support in special care centres and targeted schools,

Database of selected schools and special care centres, this includes:

2. disaggregated data of 518 special care centres that support children with severe to profound intellectual disabilities,
3. disaggregated data of caregiving staff in special care centres linked to disaggregated data of children enrolled in special care centres,
4. disaggregated data of children with profound intellectual disabilities enrolled in targeted special care centres and schools and who are using the learning programme for children with profound disabilities,
5. disaggregated data of learners from special care centres who have been placed in schools & disaggregated data of learners with severe intellectual disabilities that are not using the learning programme for children with profound disabilities who are awaiting placement in schools and those who, because of age, cannot be placed in schools, and are participating in basic non-accredited skills, such as gardening, beadwork and cooking

Transversal itinerant outreach team members, caregivers, teachers, in-service therapists and officials trained on the learning programme for children with profound intellectual disabilities and other programmes that support teaching and learning. This will entail training of:

- 245 transversal itinerant outreach team members,
- 2 970 caregivers and 1 928 special school teachers,
- 408 in-service therapists,
- 510 officials

Outreach services provided will include the outreach services to 12 185 children with severe to profound intellectual disability.

Facilitating the use of the learning programme by children with profound intellectual disabilities in 518 special care centres and 115 schools through:

6. conducting an assessment of children enrolled in special care centres to determine their intellectual functioning and level of support needed,
7. conducting baseline assessment for learners with profound intellectual disabilities, assessing the performance of learners using the learning programme for learners with profound intellectual disabilities,
8. preparing and submitting mark schedules and report cards facilitating the development of basic non accredited skills, such as gardening, beadwork, cooking,

² Output targets may be revised to accommodate COVID-19 response and budget adjustments

among learners with severe intellectual disabilities who are awaiting placement in schools and those who, because of age, cannot be placed in schools,

9. providing psychosocial and other therapeutic services,
10. providing learning and teaching support materials to special care centres and selected schools,
11. providing assistive devices to children with severe to profound intellectual disabilities enrolled in special care centres when required,
12. providing storage containers to store procured learning and teaching support materials in selected special care centres where storage is inadequate,
13. providing support to schools that have enrolled learners with profound intellectual disabilities in cases where there are no in-service therapists,
14. providing support to learners with profound intellectual disabilities enrolled in schools in cases where there are no in-service therapists

Response to the COVID-19 pandemic

15. Number of personal protective equipment procured (by type) for transversal itinerant outreach team members, caregivers in special care centres, special care centres support staff and learners in special care centres,
16. Thermometers and consumables provided to 518 special care centres,
17. Relevant technology provided to 518 special care centres to enable remote learning and access to therapy

Table 5: Actual Outputs for Learners with Intellectual Disabilities (LSPID) grant as per 2020/21 DoRA

- Eight of the targeted nine deputy chief education specialists were retained to manage the grant provincially,
- 186 of the targeted 230 transversal itinerant outreach team members were recruited,
- Database of 482 special care centres and 9809 learners enrolled in these special care centres was captured,
- Database of 5 365 C/LSPID enrolled in 382 of the targeted 482 special care centres that were serviced during the year and five special schools are using the Learning Programme for C/LSPID,
- Database of 453 C/LSPID from special care centres placed in schools
- 186 transversal itinerant outreach team members,
- 2467 caregivers, 1089 special school teachers, 210 in-service therapists and 279 officials were trained,
- 5 365 C/LSPID enrolled in 382 of the targeted special care centres, and five schools used the Learning Programme for C/LSPID,
- Mark schedules and report cards were generated for these learners,
- 4 308 C/LSPID were provided with psychosocial and other therapeutic services,
- 482 Special care centres and 58 schools were provided with Learning and teaching support materials,

- Of the 482 special care centres, only data of C/LSPID from 476 was captured by provincial education departments,
- 174 C/LSPID were provided with assistive devices for individual use in Gauteng, Limpopo and Western Cape,
- In addition, assistive devices for group use were provided in 184 special care centres in nine provinces

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Commission reiterates the need to reduce HIV/AIDS prevalence through less costly and non-curative measures, such as life skills and awareness programmes. Similarly the need to support and integrate learners with intellectual disabilities into ordinary schools, cannot be over-emphasised. However, in order to achieve overall programme objectives, funding instruments must be properly designed, aligned and monitored.

The Commission recommends that:

- I. Department of Basic Education and National Treasury consider adjusting the allocation criteria for HIV/AIDS (Life Skills Education) grant from reliance on PES education component shares, to performance information on expected outputs - if the Department of Basic Education deems that grant funding is still necessary as the funding instrument to bring about improvements in outputs.*
- II. If not, the Department of Basic Education and National Treasury consider incorporating the HIV/AIDS (Life Skills Education) grant into the Provincial Equitable Share allocation.*
- III. Department of Basic Education and National Treasury streamline the reporting process for the Learners with Profound Intellectual Disability Grant by reducing the number of expected outputs and improving the linkage between the expected outputs and overall grant objectives (outcomes)*

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