

The Use Of Modern Methods And Materials As A Basis For The Production Of Functional Health Educators For Primary Schools In Nigeria

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Introduction

An important aspect of the process of teaching health education is the method employed in transmitting knowledge. The teaching method used is even more vital when it concerns primary school children. This is because the children at this level are still in an impressionable stage and the primary school is the foundation upon which the other tiers of education system rest.

Pollock and Oberteuffer (1974) described teaching methods as a formal structure of sequence of acts commonly denoted by instruction. They explained that the term covers both the strategy and tactics of teaching and involves the choice of what is to be taught at a given period; the means by which it is to be taught, and the order in which it is to be taught.

Similarly, Udoh, Amusa, Sohi and Agbede (1985) defined teaching methods as organized orderly and systematic way of achieving a given purpose or objective. The purpose may be the teaching of health education in primary schools as was the case in the present paper. It must be pointed out that method, as applied to health education is concerned with the best way to provide learning experience so that pupils behaviour will be modified in the best interest of their health and that of others. Method is used in this paper to mean activities that are organized in orderly and systematic manner to provide learning that can bring about behavioral changes that lead to optimal health. By implication, the term encompasses the content to be followed, because the content of a course usually determines or gives indication of the method to adopt in transmitting it. However, teaching methods have been grouped according to their characteristics or emphasis.

Adedji (1985) observed that there is as many teaching methods as there are teachers. These, according to him, include lectures, dramatic, problem solving, group and project methods. He added that methods are not limited as they are a means to an end and not an end in themselves. He further suggested that the best method is that which utilizes as many of the senses as possible. Other methods enumerated by National Teachers Institute (NTI) (1990) include, discussion, fields trips, demonstration, value clarification and textbook method.

On the other hand, the term materials was defined by Udoh et al (1985) and Udoh, Fawole, Ajala, Okafor and Nwana (1987) to mean everything and anything in the pupils environment which contributes in any way to the learning process and is considered a material aid to teaching. These materials, according to them, could be physically manipulated, shown or pointed at to facilitate learning. On their own part, Pollock and Oberteuffer (1974) described materials as resources used during a unit plan to enhance learning. According to them, they include films and filmstrips, books, journals, transparencies, charts, tapes, models, pamphlets and other teaching materials. Materials are regarded in this paper as everything in the pupils environment that can be used during teaching to enhance learning and which could be physically manipulated or displayed.

Opera (1993) stressed that the teacher needs to use at the primary school level, methods that allow the child to get involved, play initiate, examine facts and events and take decision considering the characteristics of the pupils. She pointed out that the child at this level has keen and vivid imagination, likes to investigate, and has interest in rhythmic activities and are manipulative or constructive, in nature. She further observed that although self

interest is more predominant, the child enjoys being a part of small groups, and interest in adventures that are high. She explained that such methods include the use of songs and rhythms, role playing, drama, demonstration, mini projects, idioms and tables, use of proverbs, stories and educational games.

Discussing about materials, Okafor (1991) stressed the importance of material and posited that they help the pupils to better understand some concepts, events and experiences. Also, Ademuwagun and Odutitan (1986) stated that methods and materials provide effective education in health as well as scientific accuracy and education. However, Nwana (1992) regretted that some teachers tend to stress specific techniques and ways of imparting information and encouraging memorization of facts rather than strategies for practicing problem solving skills. She went further to stress that the more abstract a technique, the less effective it is in producing the desired effect.

It is possible that many teachers in Nigerian primary schools are similar to those referred to above in the sense that they graduated from contemporary institutions for preparing teachers in the country, and they operate the same way like other else where. In addition, the general slow pace of development in the country is likely to affect the production of teachers with the minimum qualification of National Certificate in Education (NCE) at primary schools. It must be pointed out at this juncture that the paper discusses the following:

1. Importance of methods and materials
2. Training competence
3. Factors associated with selection of methods and materials
4. The need for the production of functional Health Educators

Importance Of Methods And Materials

The importance of methods and materials can not in anyway be over stressed. This is because they make a marked difference between individual that knows them (trained teachers) and the person that does not. A part from the advantages that respective methods and materials have Okafor (1991) expressed that they help the students to better understand some concepts, events and experiences that would have been otherwise difficult to them. Again, as expressed by Ademawagun and Oduntan (1986), methods and materials provide effective education in health as well as scientific accuracy in education.

With the importance on the use of methods and materials, studies seem to portray that there is a marked difference in their use. For example a study conducted by Kajang (1998) on methods and materials used for teaching health education in primary school in Pankshin local government area of Plateau state showed that, the following methods were always used by teachers in both urban and rural areas. These were, textbooks, demonstration and dramatized. It is known that the textbooks, helps the pupils to read, recite, narrate or summarizes health topics in the class. Demonstration helps pupils to learn by observing and jotting the points. Dramatization, helps pupils to convert facts to drama as well as to give room for discussion and for clear explanation.

These methods are some of the practical methods that should be used in teaching health education in the primary school as pointed by Opera (1993). However, it was surprising that not many teachers in the rural areas were using the textbook method always as their counterparts in the urban areas as indicated by 108 (75.52%) urban teachers and 112 (62.22%) rural teachers.

The textbook, as it is well known, has the advantage of being used as a method as well as material. One would have expected the rural teachers to make use of the textbook always since it can serve as a good source of getting information by them. This lack of using textbook method always by some of the rural teachers might be indicative that some of the items were not quite understood by them or that they do not know that the textbooks could be used as a

method as well. This view could further be strengthened by the fact that 25 (13.88%) rural teachers indicated that they have never used the textbook method.

When differences in method used was desired, it was discovered that the results of the chi-square calculation showed that there was a significant difference in methods used between urban and rural teachers. With regards to the use of materials by the teachers, the urban teachers used all materials investigated always than the rural teachers. This situation was not expected because the rural teachers were expected to use a lot of teaching materials to facilitate learning among pupils in rural schools who are exposed to too much health problems. When the chi-square was used to verifying the difference in materials used and the results showed that there was a significant difference in all the materials studied except flash cards, therefore the null hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected.

Training Competence

The differences observed in the use of methods and materials may likely be as a result of training competencies as well as the qualification of the individual teachers. For example, Adegbite (1990) conducted a research at Zaria on primary school teacher's perception of their professional competence in teaching health education. The subjects used were 375 teachers (both men and women). She discovered that 40 percent of teachers rated their preparation in methods and materials in health education low, 16.3 percent of the teachers rated their opportunity for understanding health projects, high. She concluded that the preparation of teachers for grade II certificate programme teaching health education in the primary school was not satisfactory and advocated that. Preparation in health education in primary school be enriched by making use of health resources (both human, material and facilities) that are available in the community rather than making the preparation solely college based. This means for health educators preparation, it will be better to consider the resources available in terms of standard, quality and the number which can facilitate the production of capable hands to handle the subject.

In a related study, Ungwuoyi (1995) conducted a research on the mode of physical education teacher preparation as a predictor of teacher effectiveness. The sample used for the study was 437 physical educators in Nsukka and 60 respondents from Enugu Education Zones. Twenty NCE and B.Sc (ed) holders. He found that teachers with NCE and B.Sc (ed) had the highest mean score of 13.95, followed by those with B.Sc (ed) with a mean of 10 and lastly the NCE holders only had a mean score of 8.3 in the use of instructional materials. Similarly on the methodology of teaching the subjects (physical education) teachers with NCE and B.Sc (ed) had the highest score with a mean of 16.6, followed by those with B.Sc (ed) with a mean of 12.65, the last was those with NCE 9.6,

He concluded that evidence abound that the training mode that prepares the most effective professional secondary school physical educator is the mode which possessed both NCE and B.Sc (ed). In the light of the study the more teachers of health education are trained following the progressive stages for teacher education, the better their performance.

Factors Associated With The Selection Of Methods And Materials

Pollock and Obertufer (1974) acknowledged that some general principles for the selection of teaching learning strategies are well established in theory even if not always employed. The proper selection of an appropriate teaching method in health education instruction involves certain factors these include: Objective to be achieved, nature of the activity, age and abilities of the class as well as instructional methods must be evaluated in terms of outcomes, that is, changes in learners behaviour.

Similarly, Adewoyin (1991) explained that the proper selection of an appropriate teaching method in health education instruction involves consideration of some criteria which

include, time, size of the class interest of learners as well as choice of materials which must be governed by what is being taught, the maturity level of the pupils and perhaps materials readily available. Again, Okafor (1991) observed and stressed that in health education as in any other area of the school curriculum sound principles must be followed in the selection of a particular instructional material. How can this be followed? This will depend to a large extent the capabilities of teachers in terms of competences, experience and expertise in the use of methods and materials.

The Need For The Production Of Functional Health Educators

There seems to be a lot of health problems that affect humans in our present day Nigeria. Some of these are preventable or controllable, but these diseases seem to defile solutions being provided in curative medicine or seems persistent in the society. Again, these diseases affect people of all ages, sexes, and strata. Yet health education is taught at all levels of our educational system. What is the problem? Could these be from the wrong application of methods used for teaching? This is because Nwana (1992) stressed that some teachers tend to stress specific techniques and ways of importing information and encouraging memorization of facts rather than strategies for practicing problem solving skills.

Again Ajala (2005) pointed out that the teacher education programme in Nigeria has not effectively handled the content, methodology and the basic class room/managerial and delivery system, which are the baseline training requirements for an effective teacher. Stressing further, he emphasized that teachers across all levels of education in Nigeria are largely deficient in creative and innovation skills, fluency, flexibility, visualization, ciragination, expressiveness, openness, critical and productive thinking, originality ecetara.

It is known that qualitative and functional education can not take place without teachers that can bring out the needed results in these areas of weakness pointed out above for it is a fact known to all of us that no quality of education can rise above the quality of the teachers in a society. What are we to do? Knowing that Nigeria is be deviled with so many health problems ranging from nutritional problems, not many have access to potable water, poor sanitation, communicable and non communicable disease etc.

These and others call for total change in the training of teachers as his/her effectiveness is dependent on the competencies (knowledge and practice) possessed by such individuals in health education. When this is done they will be aware during the course of training the very exception the society expects and string towards achieving the set goal. Again, the training institution will have a crucial role of involving every sector in the community that can contribute to the preparation of these teachers, which means it will be a multi dimensional training programme.

In conclusion, for functional health educators to be produced for our primary education level in Nigerian, methods and materials that allow the children to get involved, play initiate, examine facts and want to take decision considering their characteristics be used. Several agencies in the area of education, health, social and allied sciences, health agriculture and other relevant community agencies should be brought together to define the nature of the programme for teacher education. In turn, training institutions along side various agencies should determine the assessment techniques that will adequately ensure that students achieve the competencies they are expected to have.

Based on the discussion and conclusion above the paper suggest that since experts in the field of health education have observed that some teachers tend to stress specific techniques and ways in teaching, it is recommended that practicing teachers be allowed to obtain higher qualifications. To be sponsored to attend professional conferences and workshops since deficiencies are observed among many practicing teachers, it is recommended that teacher education should aim at the identification of functional

behavioural objectives the condition through which assessment of students competencies will be made and practical assessment procedures enforced.

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