

# **H** **EALTH EDUCATION TEACHING IN SCHOOLS A MUST FOR A HEALTHY NATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**T**he nature of diseases are known, the causative agents and preventive measures are also known. It is the responsibility of individuals, families and communities to strive to be healthy. Health education in schools (Primary, Secondary, Tertiary) offers this opportunity. The need for effective teaching of health education in schools of and to prepare teachers for the task were discussed. Teaching of health education in schools was seen as since qua non for a healthy nation. Recommendations were made for effective teaching of health education in schools.

**Keywords:** Health Education, Healthy Nation

## **Introduction:**

The nature of disease was not known by the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Illness was attributed to various causes such as smell emanating from decay or organic matter evil spirits, gods, departed ones and witches. Disease like malaria was said to be caused by bad air coming out of the marshy area. For any particular disease, the knowledge of causative agent, mode of transmission and prevention was completely lacking.

However, the situation has changed in present time because causative agent, modes of transmission and preventive measures for

**V**arious diseases and health problems are known. It is the responsibility of individuals families and communities to strife to be healthy and when this happens the nation will be healthy. A healthy nation is a wealthy nation. For a nation to be healthy the citizens should through their knowledge causes and preventive measures for numerous healthy problems change those behaviours that are detrimental to their health and promote those that will enhance a healthy living programme.

Health education has been defined in various ways by different authors and organizations (Green 1979; Grout, 1968 and WHO 1968). Green (1979) defines health education as 'any combination of learning opportunities designed to facilitate voluntary adaption of behaviour that are conducive to health'. According to the author these adaptation may be those individuals, families, groups, institutions such as schools or places or work or communities. Teaching of health education in schools will offer learning opportunities that will facilitate voluntary adaption of behaviours that are conducive to health.

A healthy nation entails that the citizens are healthy and this requires teaching of health education schools. A healthy nation is measured by the use of the such health indices as incidence and prevalence rates of various diseases, maternal morbidity and mortality as well as infant mortality rate, in that country.

## **NEED FOR TEACHING HEALTH EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS**

### **Primary School**

The life of style of a child begins to take shape virtually at birth, and health education begins as early as the child begins to react to both the human and physical environment. Within the limits of their experience and understanding, even pre-school children had already accumulated a set of attitudes and habits that will be the basic of their styles.

Sorcochan and Bender (1974) indicated that elementary health education is best directed towards the development of sound health habits and attitudes on the part of the pupils. Turner (1971) stated that the school is the most important agent outside the home in shaping the health and personality of the child. According to the author the elementary school years as well as the home is very formative for the child from a healthy education stand point. Ogbalu (1994) indicated that trained health education teachers are in a better position to give health education to school children who in turn will educate their parents and significant others.

### **Secondary School**

There is the need for continuity in teaching health education in school if we are to have a healthy nation. The health problems of school children change as they advance in age and so health education teaching in secondary school is important. The students need to know the causes and preventive measures for these health problems. The knowledge and health behaviours acquired in the primary school need to be internalized so that as youths and later adults, they will contribute to a healthy nation.

Unfortunately, health education teaching is not done in most senior secondary schools in Nigeria especially in Anambra State. This has created a gap between secondary and tertiary levels of healthy teaching.

### **Tertiary Level**

Health education teaching in tertiary institutions is very important. It is at these institutions that health educators are trained. They are to educate members of the community. The more the number of health educators in the community, the better for a healthy nations.

## **EFFECTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION TEACHING**

The ultimate goal of teachings has always been to bring about changes in attitude and behaviour through educational experience. The best test of effective teaching is the amount of student learning that takes place during the process of teaching. Effective teaching helps students to learn and grow, to provide opportunities for changes in cognitive, social, affective and motor behaviours and to produce learning experiences that are productive and enjoyable to students.

Teaching health education involved the use of the various types of methods and instructional materials. The use of appropriate method will produce effective teaching for the achievement of the best result. Provision of adequate resources both human and materials is necessary (Babalola and Fadoju, 2001). The strength of an educational system largely depends on the quality of its teachers. For effective health education teaching, Ogbalu (1997) indicated that teachers must be well prepared to enable them carry out this important role.

## **PREPARATION OF TEACHERS**

Preparation of teachers for effective health education teaching is necessary. Well prepared teachers are essential to producing well informed, productive and happy citizens. Ademuwagun (1969) indicated that the quality of citizens that pass through our schools reflects the quality of the schools and teachers. According to Turner (1966) the pre-service preparation of teachers in health education and their further in-service training as needed are recognized as of great importance to the quality of health education in schools. Seminars and workshops in health education will be useful to teachers of health education.

## **HEALTHY NATION AND HEALTH EDUCATION TEACHING IN SCHOOL**

It is not easy to talk of healthy nation in a country where there are a lot of health problems and morbidity and mortality rates for various diseases are

high. Some people, due to ignorance and false beliefs contribute to their own health problems. For example there are people who do not believe that there is Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in Nigeria. For others, diseases are caused by evil spirits, witchcrafts, gods and even enemies. Disease such as malaria is still believed to be caused by various things such as departed ones, eating too much oil and staying under the sun for a period of time (Ogbalu 1980). Such people find it difficult to see the need to clear the bushes and gutters around their houses to reduce the breeding places of mosquitoes. In such a situation, the need for health education teaching in schools becomes obvious for a nation to be healthy. Health education teaching in school will help in reducing these false beliefs and ignorance of the people.

## CONCLUSION

Health education teaching in school is essential for a nation to be healthy and teachers need to be trained for this task.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Health education teachers should be allowed to go for in-service training, workshops and seminars to enable them update their health knowledge.
2. Health education should be included in senior secondary school curriculum and should be taught by experts.
3. Ministry of Education should budget enough money to enable it sponsor health education teachers during conferences seminars and workshops.
4. In tertiary institutions health education should be included in a general study course and made compulsory.

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