

Contemporary Issues in  
**Education, Health  
and Sports**

The Way Forward

BOOK OF READING IN HONOUR OF PROF. J. A. AJALA

Edited by

B. O. Ogundele  
O. A. Moronkola  
J. F. Babalola

# Contemporary Issues in Education, Health and Sports: The Way Forward

(BOOK OF READING IN HONOUR OF PROF. J.A. AJALA)

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# Developing Youths through Health Education for Nation Building

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Odelola, J.O.

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## Abstract

*Healthy population of a nation is a valuable asset as it is the agent of nation building. The youths are important factor in the nation's developmental programme because of their abundant energy and numerical strength. Any nation aspiring for development must pay attention to the development of her youths. Nigeria as a developing nation must give priority to the youth developmental programme to prepare them properly and adequately for the leadership role of the future. The paper discussed concept and importance of health education as well as the role of health education in the development of health, intellect, value for life, good virtue and industry among Nigerian youths. It is recommended that, health education should form part of developmental programme for Nigerian youths.*

## Introduction

Youths occupy the greater proportion of the world's population. According to the United Nation's Population Fund (UNPF) and the Action Health Incorporated (AHI), (2002) over three million young people exist in nations of the world today. This number is large enough to dictate the pace of development in the world. Bamigbose (2004) noted that forty million of the youth in the world are Nigerians and that persons between

ages 15-35 dominate the population of Nigeria. Youth represents a tremendous resource. They possess abundant energy, zeal and greater capacity for work. If their enthusiasm, initiative and idealism could be channeled through appropriate education, they can be of immense use in nation building. A nation with healthy youth is a wealthy nation.

Youth is a relative term that can be defined according to different cultures and societies. Hornby (2006) defined youth as the time of life when a person is young especially the time before a child becomes an adult. A youth is an individual whose age range falls between eighteen and thirty years and can neither be classified as children nor adult and still in higher period of mental, emotional and spiritual growth. The National Youth Service Corp Scheme designed for graduates of universities and polytechnics in Nigeria suggests that, youths in the country are individuals whose age is thirty or below. Ogunkunle (2004) believed that, physiologically, youths are young adults who are relatively matured in thought and deeds and who are capable of bringing their potentials towards the growth and development of their environment.

Youths are suffering from utmost neglect, even their issues did not feature prominently in the global agenda for development in the 21<sup>st</sup> year. Youth engage in activities that endanger their lives and that of others in the society, such activities include; cultism, drug abuse, reckless driving, rape, smoking, uncontrolled sexual behaviour and abortion to mention but a few. No nation can ever develop with such magnitude of problem. Therefore, the youths should be empowered through appropriate education to channel their youthful energy towards nation building. A nation is developed to the extent of the quality of health and education of its youth. This is because, they are the future handlers of education, politics, and economy of the country. Ogunkunle (2004) also noted that, the might of a nation's military, the state of the

economy and the potential of its future are determined by the quality of her youths.

Development describes a process of growth and unfolding capacities, resources and expansion of assets, competencies and skill. (Akinboye, 2003) Ogunkunle (2004) postulated that, development should be seen essentially as a human issue, concerned with mobilizing people, especially the youths in the community and the state as a whole to engage in the task of self-improvement with the little resources available to them. Human development thus explains the process of programmes, strategies and tactics which are used to help the human organism to grow, unfold, actualize, create wealth, create success and achieve fulfillment (Akinboye, 2003).

It is believed that, an investment in human resource is an important source of economic growth. Development should not start with investment on physical capital alone but should include appropriate training, educational provision and mobilization of the youth. Nation building is the act of developing available resources to bring about improvement in the quality of life of her citizens. The goal of a nation building is the achievement of national development. Human resources are vital in the developmental effort. Therefore, true development must start with health education of the youths who are the prime mover in the developmental process of the nation.

### **Concept of Health Education**

Health education involves knowledge provision which cause attitude change that leads to good health practice. Ajala (2003) described health education as the process of informing, motivating and helping people to acquire the skills needed to protect and promote health and to recover from illness. Moronkola (2003) also saw health education as a concept, discipline, course of study, approach or method by which the right health information is made available to people and simultaneously stimulating positive health attitudes and practices

in them to promote personal and community health. Health education is the process with intellectual, psychological and social dimension relating to activities which increase the ability of the people to make informed decision affecting their personal, family and community well being (Davies, 1983).

In brief, health education is the field of practice concerned with provision of health knowledge, and teaching skills and techniques which enables recipients to stay healthy and thereby play a meaningful part in the society to which he/she belongs. Thus, health education is a means by which an individual's capacity is developed for active participation in nation building.

Infact, the emphasis being universally placed on education as the means for development and as a tool for the attainment of the healthy living in every community, is giving prominence to health education as a viable instrument for government to induce desirable health practices in people. Health education as an integral part of total education is increasingly being recognized as a vital instrument for nation building.

### **Importance of Health Education**

Health education is not merely knowledge acquisition, it is essentially about the process of behaviour change that results in desirable health practice. It aims at changing individual's health behaviour in a way that leads to the protection, promotion and maintenance of his/her health. Okanlawon (2002) highlighted the following as psycho-social and economic values of health education;

1. Many diseases can be prevented and controlled thereby reducing the morbidity and mortality rate, especially in children and mother.
2. Helps to correct any misconception about a particular illness.
3. Economically, it is quite cheaper to prevent diseases through health education than curing them.

Moronkola (2003) reported a document of WHO/ UNESCO, UNICEF consultation on strategies for implementing comprehensive school health education/promotion programmes held in Geneva from 25 to 29 November 1991, highlighted the need for the teaching of health education in school as follows:

- (i) Children's health status affect their educational achievement
- (ii) Health education of future and present mothers within the school system has a potentially profound effect on the health and wealth of a nation
- (iii) Schools themselves are an important channel of communication for health education messages (and potentially of health services as well) to the student, the family and the community as a whole.
- (iv) Health teaching in the school will equip young learners to practice good health habits when they are out of school.
- (v) Education for life skills guides people to think critically about social issues. It encourages learners to solve problems and provides them with the confidence and skills which are needed to participate fully in community health related activities.

### **Health Education and Health Development of Youth**

Udoh and Ajala (1998) said that, health as a quality of life is a result of one's total function within his or her environment. They further opined that, effective living is a resultant of an individual functioning in a variety of life activities including physical, mental, social and spiritual experience.

Health is a foundation for development. Oyekan (2000) noted that, the state of health of citizenry is a critical factor which influences the productive and prosperity of a nation. The youth can contribute to the development of the nation if their state of health is good. The area of knowledge that helps to develop the state of health of an individual is health education.

Therefore, the effort of a nation to produce healthy youths for nation building calls for education for health.

Olugbile in Bolarinwa (1993) described health education as a tool and as a means of critically imparting information in such a way that, the recipient is motivated to use that information for promotion, protection, maintenance and restoration of himself, his family and his community health. The WHO Scientific Group (in Achalu, 1993) declared that, the objective of health education is the development in people:

- (a) A sense of responsibility for their own health and for that of the community
- (b) The ability to participate in community life in a constructive and purposeful way

Health education provides the knowledge and skills necessary for people to make informed decision regarding their health. It is assumed that, the individuals who are armed with sound scientific information can protect their health by engaging in activities that enhance health rather than detract from it (Achal, 1993). Health education approach can be effective if well utilized to develop youths so that they can contribute their quota to national development.

### **Health Education and Intellectual Development of Youth**

Bamisaye (1989) said that, knowledge stimulates the development of our intellectual and physical abilities and competence. She went on to say that, these intellectual and physical abilities provide us the means of securing gainful employment and thereby ensure our survival in the society.

A well planned health education programme will help to develop health knowledge in the youth. The health knowledge serves as the basis for the formulation of desirable attitudes. Appropriate health education programme will help the youth to understand the germ theory of disease and also have the desire to prevent disease whenever possible by means of desirable health practices.



## **Health Education and Development of Value for life among Youths**

Value is the worth we place on a particular object or idea. This is with a view that, certain benefit would be derived from such. Our life is of great value because whatever endeavour, depends on the existence of life. Life itself will be of no meaning if good health is not enjoyed. Therefore, health is of greater value. Bamisaye (1989) noted that, whatever actions, words or behaviour that would promote good health are valued, and those that detract from it are considered reprehensible. The youths can pursue their life ambition only when they enjoy good health.

Our youths should be made to value life and good health too. In this way, they will not engage in life endangering activities such as drug abuse, unhygienic behaviour, risky sexual behaviour, and poor eating habits which can cut short their lives. Health education places emphasis on the development of value for knowledge, appropriate attitude, skills, abilities and competences that are necessary for nation building. It helps to develop concern for others, sharing with others, adhering to the rule and promoting a way of life that fosters morality, ethical behaviour and the concern for individual dignity and worth. In this way, values concerning what is right and what is wrong become familiar and adherence to democratic principles is developed.

## **Health Education and Development of Good Virtue among Youths**

Virtue is a character trait or quality valued as being always good. It can also be said to be in conformity for one's life and conduct to moral and ethical principles, uprightness and rectitude.

Education is a value that should affect social behaviour. Experts argue that, moral development could be enhanced by

intellectual development. Knowledge is crucial to development of intellect, physical abilities and competencies.

In order for knowledge to be of educational value, it should cater for skill acquisition as well as positive social behaviour and concern for individual dignity. Health education is capable of enhancing one's ability to consider others and be committed to their welfare.

### **Health Education and Development of Industry in Youths**

Industry is the quality of working hard. Good health state of an individual ensures capacity for work. Health is that condition which permits optimal function. It is also one of the essentials of human development. Healthy population translates into increased productivity. It is when the individual is healthy that steady manpower could be maintained, consequent upon which sound economy of a country will evolve.

Health education helps to promote health of an individual for increased capacity for work, as well as influence attitude for hardwork. In this wise, such negative attitudes as indolence, short cut to wealth, whiping away time and procrastination are curtailed. In other words, if health education is given a prime of place in the curricular of all levels of education in Nigeria, rapid development, which is a function of industry could be achieved.

### **Conclusion**

Youth in Nigeria constitutes a greater proportion of the nation's population. Youths are energetic and dynamic. Therefore, they are perfectly suited human resource for national development. One of the crucial steps in the development of a nation is the provision of education which consequently assures literacy and good health. Therefore, emphasis must be placed on education for health.

The efforts of Nigerian youths at contributing to nation building have been bedeviled by poor intellectual development, poor reproductive health, poor health knowledge, social-maladjustment, indolence, emotional instability and misplaced value. Therefore, if the youths are to be empowered to overcome the identified problems to allow for meaningful contribution to nation building, Health Education could certainly be a panacea.

### **Recommendations**

In order to allow for maximum development of our youth through health education for the task of nation building, the following are suggested:

- 1 Health education must be taught as a core course at all levels of education.
- 2 Effective school health programme must be put in place for the promotion of physical, mental and social health of the entire school population.
- 3 Health education curriculum must lay emphasis on life skill acquisition for youths to be able to solve their personal and community health problems.
- 4 Health education must be given the prime of place in Nigeria's Health System. Emphasis must be laid on health promotion.
- 5 Health education must feature prominently in the Universal Basic Education Programme.
- 6 Provision must be made for out-of-school youth in health education programme because, they constitute a significant number of the total number of youths in this country.

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*Contemporary Issues in Education, Health and Sports: The Way Forward* is a timely book written by array of scholars. Each chapter is well written, incisive, logical and precise. It is a must book for students, academicians, researchers, policy makers and must also be in various libraries.

**Editors:**

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