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Editorial

This volume of the *West African Journal of Physical and Health Education (WAHOPHE)* contains stimulating and illuminating articles in the areas of physical and health education, recreation, sports and dance and related disciplines. I want to place on record the unalloyed support of the current head of department and editor-in-chief of the journal, Professor James A. Ajala and members of the editorial board in making the publication of this edition possible. Special thanks also go to the various contributors for their educative articles and prompt response to the corrected manuscripts.

B.O. Ogundele, PhD

Managing Editor

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Preface to Volume 9, No.1, 2005

The primary objective of the *West African Journal of Physical and Health Education (WAJOPHE)* is the dissemination of current and crucial information on human kinetics and allied health education by publishing well-researched articles relevant to the two disciplines. In performing this significant role, the editorial board has continued to solicit quality research and review articles for publication in *WAJOPHE*.

This edition is published in two separate parts - human kinetics and health education. The first part covers such areas as exercise and coronary heart disease, correlates of muscular and cardio-respiratory endurance, counselling for holistic education, postoperative management of amputees, and the effects of interval training on body composition, just to mention a few.

Some of the articles on health education include environmental health, an enormously critical issue facing our society today, epidemiological study of some communicable diseases, dietary protein intake and fitness, sexuality education as a necessity for healthy living of adolescents and young adults, and smoking behaviour of university athletes in Nigeria.

Finally, a word of appreciation and thanks should be extended to the authors, reviewers and editors, especially the managing editor, Dr. B.O. Ogundele, for a job well done.

Contributors to this journal are hereby enjoined to always provide a synopsis of the papers, as this will help the reader or researcher decide if the full text of the article is of interest to them. Thank you.

Professor J.A. Ajala
Editor-in-Chief

Population and Family Life Education for Health, Sustainable Democracy and Nation Building: The Nigerian Experience

J.O. Odelola*

Abstract

The need for Nigerian government to promote the health of its citizens, sustain the nascent democracy and mobilize people for nation building cannot be overemphasized. The need becomes necessary, especially at this time when the country is yearning for technological and industrial developments. The nation's most valuable asset is its population, being the agent and beneficiary of development. The improvement of quality of life is vital to national development. Improved quality of life is a key concept in the entire process of population and family life education (POP/FLE). Therefore, this paper examined the concepts of POP/FLE and its role in promoting health, sustainable democracy and nation building. The paper called for a sustained interest of government in POP/FLE programme in Nigeria.

Introduction

Most developing countries of the world remain poor today as a result of scarce resources brought about by overpopulation. Nations with low resources are likely to have low per capital income. A relationship has been found between low per capita income and poverty. According to UNICEF annual report (Achalu, 1993), economic performance of developing countries had continued to be unsatisfactory since 1986. The gross domestic product (GDP) of some developing nations, according to the report, had fallen by 2.5 percent, thus making an African 20 percent poorer than he was 6

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years earlier. The cause of a myriad of problems facing developing nations today is poverty. This is why most people in African are suffering miserably from poor nutrition, housing, health and other physical conditions.

The population of Nigeria was estimated to be 30.4 million in 1963. By the 1991 census, the population was put at 88.5 million. This was said to be about 1.6% of the world's population and 13.8% of Africa's population of 642 million (National Population Commission (NPC), 1991). Currently, the estimate of the country's population size has reached about 150 million. Already, Nigeria is known to be the most populous country in Africa and the tenth most populous country of the world (NPC, 1991).

By all standards, this population is too large for the country, as it is not able to cope with its resources, demands and environmental consequences. Kuteyi (1988) noted the poor performance of the gross domestic product (GDP) and food production which grew by 2.1 percent and 1 percent, respectively, in 1986. This is a clear indication that the country cannot sustain the growing population. Okanlawon (2000) said that poverty and poor health are as a result of too many people putting too much demands on otherwise finite resources. He further said that overpopulation is associated with low life expectancy, high mortality rates and more disease and illness conditions.

The present population growth in Nigeria is already having adverse effects on the socioeconomic life of the people. The living standard remains poor, as people continue to suffer from malnutrition and congestion as a result of inadequate food and housing. Our youths are roaming about the streets in search of jobs not available. Public amenities like portable water, regular supply of electricity, health service, good roads and communication systems are on the decline. There is low life expectancy as rates of morbidity are high. There is frequency of strike, as a result of poor salary and neglect of workers' welfare, a situation which leads to inefficiency and low productivity. In fact, the country has been bedevilled by consequences of overpopulation and rendered unfulfilled the aspirations of its people to live good quality life. As a result of the unfulfilled aspirations, there are inter-religious and communal clashes, and threats of secession by major ethnic groups of the country. There is high rate of political violence in the country.

A study of various newspapers in Nigeria revealed the incidences of political, religious and ethnic violence. The *Nigerian Tribune* of 6th February 2001 reported how a group of youth attacked the Delta

State governor and his entourage during a church service. The violence was said to be due to protest over election results in Ethiope East Local Government Area of the state. The religious riot of the 80s and 90s in the northern part of Nigeria, particularly in Kano and Katsina, will be remembered for long. The riot involved the killing of Christians and Muslims and destruction of property. *The Punch* of 14th November 1999 reported that youths of Choba Community attacked the Wilbros Nigeria Limited (a multi-national oil and gas industry). The youths claimed that the industry had been making millions of Naira on their land while indigenous people of the community lived in abject poverty, with no pipe borne water, electricity, good roads and modern communication system.

In the past, the military used such situations as an excuse to seize power from democratically elected government, to establish a dictatorial government. In the process, our fundamental human rights are denied us and the process of nation building is brought to a halt.

Population and Family Life Education (POP/FLE)

Population and family life education started as a result of the growing concern about the rising population of the world and the realization of its imminent danger. In a United Nations' conference of August 1974, which was attended by 135 nations, deliberated on the World Population Plan of Action. The responses from the various countries cumulated into the development of population education as a curriculum innovation (Gulma, 1988). In Nigeria, POP/FLE is an innovation which came into being as a result of a recommendation by a group of experts from the federal government and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) in 1980. Since then, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) has been entrusted with the implementation of a Comprehensive Population Education Programme for Nigeria on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education (Adesina, 1988).

Population education is a process which provides for a study of a population situation in the family, the community, the nation and the world, with the purpose of developing in the citizens a more rational attitude and more responsible behaviour towards improving the quality of their lives now and in the future (NERDC, 1985). Family life education, on the other hand, is an integral part of population education and has to do with the study of attitudes and skills related to dating, marriage, parenthood, family health and

later life, as socio-cultural and economic units of the society (NERDC, 1992). It is an educational process concerned with attitudes and skills designed to help youths make rational decisions in matters that affect them and the society emotionally and morally (Nwagbara and Ikegulu, 1994).

In line with the National Policy on Education (1998), population education in school is meant to help students to:

- Identify the implications of the increasing gap between birth and death rates for the provision of such basic facilities and services as school, health institutions, water and housing, etc.
- Relate growth and size of family to the demand for available food and facilities, health and productivity of members of the family.
- Explain how the population structure at the household and national levels affects the patterns of demand for and consumption of goods and services.
- Identify the various ways in which growth has constrains on resources development and the patterns of consumptions of the family level, etc, have contributed to the present state of services, food deficits and quality of life in the country.
- Compare and contrast the population resource situation in Nigeria with that in other countries so as to have an insight into the international dimensions of population problems.
- Highlight the importance of self-sufficiency in food production and the dangers of dependence on food imports and food aids.
- Identify the various uses to which population data are put and, therefore, develop an understanding of the importance of and a sense of responsibility towards population census, enumeration and the registration of vital statistics.

Population/ family life education and health

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and emotional well-being and not absence of disease or infirmity. The goal of the nation on health is to have a level of health that will enable all citizens to achieve socially and economically-productive lives. This is in recognition of the fact that the ability of the people to make a living depends on their knowledge, skills and resources, as well as their physical and mental health. It is only a healthy populace that has the capability, physical and intellectual ability to influence their environment and force their resources on development (Ereku, 1990).

In Nigeria, the widespread cases of malnutrition, communicable infections, low quality of prenatal care, drug abuse, road accidents and problems of adolescence cause morbidity and mortality (Achalu, 1993). The health services of Nigeria have been adjudged to be unsatisfactory and inadequate in meeting the needs and demands of the public (Sorungbe, 1990). This is evident in the poor state of health of the populace and the low coverage of health care delivery. The growing demand for health services, as a result of the ever-increasing population, has overstretched the available health infrastructures, which are already too old. Therefore, if the quality of life of the citizens is to be considerably raised with a decrease in morbidity and mortality rate, the governments at all levels should not only promote a comprehensive health service, prevent and control communicable diseases, and improve environmental sanitation, but should also perfect their population reduction strategies.

The health system that is based on primary health care has been adopted as a means of achieving the goal of national policy. The primary health care system recognized the role of education in the achievement of its goal, since it made 'education concerning the prevailing health problems and methods of preventing and controlling them' its first strategy. The function of POP/FLE is to provide knowledge and attitudes necessary for people to make informed decision regarding their health and lives. In POP/FLE, good quality of life is the goal and education is the process by which the goal is achieved.

Population/ family life education and sustainable democracy

Democracy is a system of government, which allows for citizen participation in the act of governance and management. It safeguards equitable governance and distribution of national wealth. Democratic governance is opposed to military administration where the rights of the people are infringed upon.

During the long military rule in Nigeria, Nigerians had bad experiences, including socio-economic hardship brought about by incessant strikes and fuel scarcity, which claimed many lives in an attempt to store the commodity. Olayinka (2002) noted that:

During the military rule from 1923 to 1999, huge expenditure in military campaigns fuelled corruption in social life in Nigeria. This consequently had disastrous effects on socio-economic development of the country with

inflation and the collapse of the worth of the national currency. Moreover there was abridgement of freedom. Newspapers were closed at will and at the slightest provocation. Draconian decrees were issued. There was large scale unemployment.

In fact, the saying that the worst civilian is better than the best military is justified by these experiences.

The political principles, as embodied in the idea of democracy, connote the freedom of individuals to make decision for themselves on wide-range of matters regarding their general well-being. Democracy should guarantee good quality of life, as incorporated in the United Nations charter, which include basic right to adequate food, shelter, clothing, education and job. In fact, what Nigerians expect as dividends of democracy is the availability of social services and facilities, such as hospitals, schools, good network of roads, potable drinking water and good communication system.

It should however be realised that the above can be guaranteed only when the nation's population growth does not exceed what its resources can sustain. The central goal of POP/ FLE is the achievement of quality of life for individual citizens. The quality of life, in terms of easy accessibility to food, employment and shelter, is the condition for sustainable democracy.

Population/family life education and nation building

The goal of nation building is the achievement of national development. A nation is developed to the extent that her citizens enjoy better standard of living. According to Adeniyi, Nwagbara and Etim (1994), the sustained development of resources and proper utilization of same is necessary to raise the standard of living and improve quality of life. Thus, nation building is the act of developing available resources to bring about improvements in the quality of life of the citizens. Enhanced quality of life connotes a standard of living that guarantees adequate health, food, shelter, education, security and equal opportunities for all.

Human beings are vital to nation building. This is probably why the Nigerian government declared that her population is the nation's stated valuable asset and beneficiary of national development (Yisa, 1988). In pursuit of this polity statement, the government embarked on series of developmental programmes in the area of education, agriculture, housing and health.

However, it is increasingly being realized that if the people of Nigeria are to derive individual benefits from the efforts to improve the standard of living, the present population growth must be controlled. This is because population control has far-reaching implications for the judicious use of resources, preservation of the environment and sustainable development. This led to the growing concern over effects of population growth on social and health status of Nigerians. To this end, the government has made tremendous efforts to reduce the rates of population growth. Among such efforts are the intensive research involving diverse disciplines in the areas of reproductive health, contraceptive technology and the evaluation of an acceptable and effective population control programme. Training programmes have been introduced by national and international agencies and contraceptives are made available for all. Aside from the provision of contraceptive services, non-contraceptive population control programmes have been introduced by past and present Nigeria governments. These include Better Life for Rural Dwellers, Family Support Programme, Poverty Eradication Programme and the Universal Basic Education Programme. The effectiveness of these programmes can be enhanced by the introduction of POP/FLE.

POP/FLE aims at imparting knowledge of certain population phenomena and issues, such as population growth rate, birth rate, death rate, family size and welfare, overcrowding, environmental quality, resource availability and management. There is a complex relationship between population growth and a nation's socioeconomic development, as well as better quality of life. For instance, a reduction in population growth can lead to the attainment of a better living standard (Ajaegbu, 1988). Improved quality of life that guarantees adequate health, housing and other amenities is a condition for physical, social and mental well-being of an individual in the society. The goal of POP/FLE is the attainment of good quality of life, an objective which can spur citizens to nation building.

Conclusion

The low level of development in Nigeria is as a result of the mismatch between resources and population growth. The factor of population is crucial to a nation's ability or effort at achieving social, political and economic developments. POP/ FLE is concerned with the provision of knowledge for developing attitudes and skills necessary for rational and responsible behaviour towards

population-related issues, with a view to improving the quality of life of an individual.

The youths, being the agents and beneficiary of development, are mostly the target of POP/FLE. The youths need to be healthy to participate in the sustenance of democracy and nation building, and POP/FLE has a role to play in this regard.

Recommendations

The following recommendations will ensure the sustenance and effectiveness of POP/FLE in Nigeria.

1. The present POP/FLE programme organized by government and non-government organizations in pilot secondary schools should be reorganized in such a way that only the professionals in the field of health education are allowed to handle the programme. Also, considerable time should be allowed for treating topics involved, so that they are well understood.
2. Government agencies and NGOS providing POP/FLE should find a way of reaching out to the out-of-school population.
3. Adequate funds must be made available for adequate instructional materials for training both field and in-training teachers.
4. POP/FLE should be included as an important unit of health education in primary and secondary school curricula. It could be introduced into the tertiary education curriculum as a general study programme.
5. Research should be conducted in the area of developing and sustaining POP/FLE in Nigeria.

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