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CHAPTER SIX

IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH POPULATION FAMILY LIFE AND AIDS EDUCATION.

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OBJECTIVES OF THE CHAPTER:

This chapter attempts to address the following issues:-

1. The meaning of population, family life and AIDS Education
2. Basic Issues involved in the inculcation of population education, family life and AIDS Education
3. The contributions of population, family life and AIDS Education to the improvement of quality of life.

Introduction

The alarming rate of population growth against dwindling resources constitutes one of the serious social problems confronting Nigeria and other developing countries in recent times. The looming fear is that world population if not adequately managed could inevitably lead to a situation where population itself may outstrip resources which are meant to sustain it.

Indeed rapid population growth and its attendant consequences on family life and other related issues are most pronounced in developing countries like Nigeria. In apparent reaction to this challenges, the federal government of Nigeria launched a National Population Policy to monitor and control the rate of population growth in the country (Federal Republic

of Nigeria, 1988).

Education is in fact considered the most viable way of helping people to examine their beliefs and values in respect of population, family life and AIDS related issues and accordingly modify their behaviours and practices. The child and specifically the primary school child is a potential adult and leader of tomorrow in Nigeria. However, how he grows into fulfilling adulthood and responsible parenthood later in life depends on the quality of life he is able to enjoy within the family/household and community unit.

Significantly, the size of his family, child-spacing within his immediate family units, resources available to the family etc, could go a long way to determine the quality of education, quality of nutrition and medical care and other related attention he would get from the family. Furthermore, the increasing rate of AIDS scourge in the society today portends danger to children as potential victims.

Consequently the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) was mandated by the federal government of Nigeria to evolve a population awareness programme in the society with the young ones as its main focus. Currently, the population programme has expanded to include family life education and AIDS prevention awareness.

This chapter attempts to define and discuss those basic concepts of population, family life and AIDS education in relation to their explicit and implicit implications for improved quality of life for the Nigerian child within the family/household, community, state, national and international or world environments.

Concepts of Population, Family Life Education and Aids Education:

The term population refers to the number of people who

reside in a particular place or environment. Population may be high or low depending on some factors. A very high population refers to sharp increase in the rate of growth in population of a place. Conversely low population depicts a drastic decrease in the rate of population growth of a particular place. Some of the causes of high or rapid rate of population growth include high birth rate, low death rate, improved standard of life and medical services as well as the persistence of superstitious/religious and other socio-cultural beliefs.

Population education is conceived to address the above issues through well planned and articulated educational programmes. Population education in Nigeria is relatively a very new concept. According to NERDC (1988), Population Education means.

... an educational process which provides for an articulate and practical study of the population situation in the family, the community, the nation and the world with the aims of developing in the individual a more rational attitude and responsible behaviour towards improving the quality of their life now and in future.

Family Life Education (FLE) on the other hand is concerned with the study of attitude and skills related to dating, marriage, parenthood, family health and later life. (Adedoyin, 1991). The content of population /family life education includes the family, family budgetting, personal health and hygiene, common disease among adolescents, environmental health, dating, love and marriage, myths about sexuality, pregnancy, drug abuse and preparation for parenthood etc.

AIDS education is a concept that is beginning to gain prominence in population education literature. The acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is currently a scourge to human-

ity. As at now there is no known cure for this dreaded disease. The issue now is how do we curtail, prevent and perhaps manage the symptoms and socio-cultural and economic problems associated with this disease?

This is where the AIDS education comes in hand as an articulate programme on sex education with the aim of informing youths and other members of the society on the consequences and implications of the menace of AIDS, in Nigerian Society.

The pertinent issue is how do we educate the young ones on population, family life and AIDS related issues in such a way that the messages would make sense to their world and sensitivities? This is no doubt an arduous task which goes beyond mere propaganda. It requires articulate and well directed educational programmes.

Formal education is by far the most portent instrument of educating the school age youths. One basic way of achieving this is through integrating population, family life and AIDS education into the various school subjects. For instance, social studies, Health and Physical Education are some of the subjects chosen and used in disseminating population, family life and AIDS education in Nigerian Schools.

The greatest emphasis in popular education today is education for an improved quality of life at the family, community, state, national and international and world levels. This perhaps explain the commitment of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCCE) towards integrating population, family life and AIDS education into its programmes for NCE teacher trainees in Nigeria.

Some reason can be advanced for this development. First, the society is dynamic and so are its numerous problems, needs and aspirations. Thus education, which is one of the instru-

ments of effecting national development should equally be dynamic and innovative in goals, content and methodology.

Secondly, the essence of education is to prepare the learner to adapt and function in his environment. Thus through population education, family life education and AIDS education, children or youths will acquire good knowledge of the social realities of their environment.

Thirdly, population, family life and AIDS education if effectively disseminated can help the young ones to understand themselves better and cope adequately with physical, emotional and social changes in their environment. These changes form part of the process of development which the young ones must necessarily undergo to become good and matured adults in the society. It is therefore the goal of population, family life and AIDS education through the various school subjects to help the young ones to manage sex attitudes and behaviours which could disrupt their educational career through unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned family etc.

Fourth, as potential teachers for primary schools, NCE teacher trainees must be well equipped for effective performance in and outside the classroom, as teachers, parents, guardian and models. To achieve this it becomes necessary that population education, family life education and AIDS education should be included in their educational programmes in order to enhance their knowledge of basic issues affecting their society.

Fifth, the various school subjects especially social studies have suitable methods which can encourage young people to change their attitude and beliefs on population and family life issues willingly and convincingly. Thus methods like discussion, values clarification, inquiry and problem solving can be used effectively in teaching population, family life and AIDS

education related concepts in the classroom.

Sixth, socialization is the hallmark of education. To this end, it is believed that the various school subjects (integrated with POP/FLE) will provide information in values and skills necessary for functional adult life, marriage, responsible parenthood and effective participation in the affairs of the community. It is therefore strongly believed that exposing children to population, family life and AIDS education content will help to develop in them skills they require to function effectively.

Basic Issues in Population, Family Life and Aids Education:

According to Yisa (1988:21) the basic issues that are involved in population, family life and AIDS education include the following

- Responsible parenthood
- Family size and family welfare
- Delayed marriage
- Population related beliefs and values.

Responsible Parenthood:

To ensure improved quality of life through effective population education, the young ones are expected to receive some core messages and instructions which are capable of sensitizing them on population practice. Responsible parenthood means among others planning the size of the family, spacing children, taking care of the elderly and knowledge of human reproduction (Adeyoyin, 1991). It is believed that the future of the child depends to a large extent on the opportunities provided to him by the family and society through education to grow into an effective adult citizen. To achieve this, parents need to create conducive environment for the child to develop intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Family size and Family Welfare:

Indeed, most of the topics in population and family life education are more home based than school-based. In other words, they demand more from parents than schools. The family is the first unit of social and economic interaction between parents and young siblings. In the Nigerian context, the family goes beyond the nuclear type (father, mother and children) to include the extended family members and even neighbours.

In fact, apart from reproductive functions, the family functions as an economic unit to meet the basic welfare and needs of the young ones—food, clothing and shelter. The traditional African family used to be economically self-supporting. This encouraged many hands on the farm hence large families and polygamy. Today the changes brought by urbanization, industrialization and education especially western education and civilization have changed the activities of the family.

In view of this development, the centre and unit of economic activities of the family is no longer just the home but skills and money power. Therefore the ability to earn and the purchasing power of the family is a determining factor in the improvement of its quality of life. In other words, there is a relationship between population characteristics and economic resources at the family/household level. For instance, the economic resources and improvement in the quality of life of a small sized family, well educated and skilled will be remarkably different from another family that lacks these population characteristics.

Delayed Marriage

The need to improve the quality of life of the young ones at times suggest that the age at which they enter into marital life be delayed. This is to encourage them to prepare effectively for marriage and acquire requisite vocational skills that would help