

## POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLICATION OF SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examined the need for policy development and its implication to school health programme and services in Nigeria. It is believed that a good policy development will ensure a safe and secure physical, environmental and positive psychosocial environment for teachers and learners and also promote public health.*

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### INTRODUCTION

School health policies which include the laws, mandates, regulations, standards, resolutions and guidelines provide a foundation for school district practices and procedures. School health policies are written statements used to guide all those who work within the programme. Policy also describes the nature of the programme and the procedure for its implementation to those outside the programme. A well-written school health policy provides a sense of direction, credibility and a means of accountability for the school programme. It also strengthened the possibility that the school health programme will become an institutionalized part of the school culture (McKenzie, Pinger, and Koteck, 1991).

The major aim of policy development in Nigeria is promoting the health of learners to achieve the goals of education for all. It also outlines the roles of relevant line ministries such as Education, health, environment, water resources, information and other stakeholders (Gilbert, Sawyer and McNeil, 1991).

School is seen as an important context for health promotion, principally because it reaches a large proportion of the population for many years. The emphasis on school is also a recognition that the learning of health-related knowledge, attitude and behaviour begins at an early age. The goals of school health policy according to Ajala (1991) are to:

- enhance the quality of health in the school community and to create an enabling environment for intersectoral partnership in the promotion of a child-friendly school environment for teaching and learning and health development.

Accordingly, the Federal Ministry of Education (1991) listed the objectives of the school health policy to include

- provision of the necessary legal framework for mobilization of support for the implementation of the school health programme.
- Setting up machinery for the coordination of community effort with those of government and non-governmental organizations towards the promotion of a child-friendly environment.
- Guiding the provision of appropriate professional services in school by stakeholders for the implementation of school health programmes.
- Promoting the teaching of skill-based health education
- Facilitating effective monitoring and evaluation of school health programmes.
- Setting up modalities for the sustainability of school health programmes.

### The Need for Policy Development

Policy development including skill based health education in school and the provision of some health services can help promote the overall health, hygiene and nutrition of children. Federal Ministry of Education (1100L) noted that a good school health policy should go further to ensure a safe and secure physical environment and a positive psychosocial environment □ such policy should address issues of abuse of students, secure harassment, health related practices of teachers and students, school violence bullying and guaranteeing the further education of pregnant girls and young mothers; all of these activities are designed to help promote inclusion and equity in the school environment.

Federal Ministry of Education (1100L) also opined that policy development helps to prevent and reduce harassment by other students and even by teachers. It also help prevent girls from withdrawing or being withdrawn from schools. Policies regarding the health related practices of teachers and students can reinforce health education. Teachers can act as positive role models for their students for example by not smoking in school.

The process of developing and agreeing upon policies draws attention to these issues in school. Policy development provide highly visible opportunities to demonstrate commitment to equity, non discrimination, gender issues and human rights as well as serving as a positive model for the whole society school policy development are necessary for and can give clear structure to a safer protective and inclusive school environment (Federal Ministry of Education, 1100L)

Policy when clearly communicated to the school population and the whole society can provide rules on how to behave and what is accepted or not accepted in the school setting. Also policy that are actively accepted and endorsed by the Parent Teachers Association and the community can be followed more effectively. In cases where policies are not followed, there will be a demand for change and strict monitoring will be possible.

To be effective, school policies need resources for their implementation. This means adequate resources must be made available at the national state and local government level such resources include government financing, but may also include contributions from non-governmental organizations to ensure long term sustainability of effective implementation of school health policies support from PTA and the local community (Park, 11011).

### **Implication of School Health Programmes and Services in Nigeria**

One of the objectives of health education is to fight against poverty, ignorance and the associated diseases. It will be difficult to achieve the above objective in Nigeria without an adequate health education programme in schools. In view of this, majority of the citizens are often ignorant of the transmission and prevention of common communicable diseases hence the need for adequate health education programme in school to enhance the promotion and maintenance of the health of our Nigerian citizens (Federal Ministry of Education, 1100L).

Also, the Nigerian society is becoming more complex with multiple health problems and this is creating a lot of concern to lot of people who understand the implications. This therefore calls for the need for a comprehensive health education programme in Nigeria because the more complex a society becomes, the more one would depend on the process of education for guidance (Mckenzie, Pinger and Kotech, 11011).

It is also noted that the physical and mental health needs of many Nigeria school children are not being met by the family or any other agency, if a child has difficulties with health or emotional adjustment, the school would make little progress in encouraging his intellectual development until these problems or needs are solved. Policy development therefore introduced health education in schools, because the content of such health instructions belonged in the school curriculum. Such knowledge which is necessary is most effectively learned in schools and no other public agency would provide such instructions.

The schools are the most effective base for the inculcation of any desirable health habits aimed at improving the life pattern of the general population. Any health habit that is learned at school persists throughout life. To be effective, such health education programme must include healthful school living, school health services, school health instructions and school and community relationship all these are made possible to the learners through policy development (Winnail, Dorman and Stevenson, 1100v).

Okafor (11000) stated that there are many things in the modern Nigeria that show very clearly the need for extensive knowledge of health and hygiene in maintaining individual and group health. A limited amount of thought, observation, and reflection concerning the health habit, practices, mistakes and shortcomings of most adult Nigeria population, particularly makes it luminously clear that there is an urgent need for better education and understanding of health and healthful living if both individual and group health is to be improved and maintained on a basis commensurate with recent scientific advances in Nigeria.

A number of researches in the area of health education have shown that most Nigerian students have poor knowledge of health and health related issues. Adequate health instruction is therefore needed for our schools in order to impart adequate health knowledge to our children in schools and motivates their best towards all that concern health and health promotion and maintenance, policy development that encourages provision of health instruction in school makes this to be possible.

The gullibility of the Nigerian public in spending millions of Naira each year on unnecessary and often harmful treatments, drugs, vitamins and patent medicine shows a need for better understanding of health and healthful living. Also experiences here shown that many of the Nigerian public suffer from various kinds of food facts. In both of these cases a lot of money is wasted and many of the food falls and diets lead to malnutrition, ill health and suffering for a gullible individual who follows advertising and incorrect advice suggesting the use of medication and faulty diets (Gilbert, Sawyer and McNeil, 11011).

Better health knowledge through health instruction made possibly by school health policy development will help prepare people to make the best and most intelligent use of the available health services. Again the increasing number of both children and adult who are neurotic about their health point to another reason for better health education in schools. Adequate health information is needed in schools because the more knowledge and understanding the individual has about the close relationship of emotional and physical health the easier it is to help either the child or the adult to recover and regain good health following any physical disorder (Gilbert, Sawyer and McNeil, 11011).

Policy development enables health counselling for children and parents. Health counselling is a procedure whereby the children and parents are informed of the children's health needs and problems so that necessary action can be taken. Based on the results from lots of appraisal technique employed in the school health matters are discussed with students and parent and planned procedures established to provide for these needs in order to eliminate the problems, counseling also help the students develop sound health attitudes. Counseling also help parent and pupil develop a feeling of responsibility for promoting school and community health programmes.

Umeh (11011) observed that Nigeria as a developing nation with inadequate medical services needs teachers who are able to identify some health problems in children through careful observation hence the rare future of a descent level of health for Nigerians lies in reaching out to the school children and helping them maintain and promote their own health through the process of education made possible through school health policy development.

Ajala (11011) opined that it was becoming increasingly evident that the possession of certain basic knowledge about health was essential if each individual was to take advantage of the advances of medical sciences, protect himself, his family and his community. The schools are the most effective base for the inculcation of any desirable health habit aimed at improving the life pattern of the general population as

any habit that is learned at school persist throughout life. Policy development empowers schools to undertake these programmes through the provision of healthful school living, school health services, school health instruction, school and community relationship.

When individual have some favourable feelings about their school, they tend to participate in it maintenance. When there is nice social and emotional climate in the school that meets the need of teachers and students, there is bound to be effective teaching and learning. When there is good climate in the school, there is bound to be adequate development and expansion of basic skills, attitude and knowledge, values, and purposes will be clarified, processes of inquiry and problem solving will be adequately utilized, members will have some feelings of personal worth and enjoy working and living in school and will enjoy participation in worthwhile activities. Policy development empower school authorities to provide healthful school building and facilities. Healthful school day, good interpersonal relationship at school as well as adequate sanitation through healthful school living (Moronkola, 11011).

The Nigerian school child has an increasing opportunity to learn some emotional reaction. Most of the time he is being frustrated by the increasing demands of the society on him. These demands are the environmental forces in which the present day Nigerian school children are placed. Also, it has been observed that most of the Nigerian streets and roads today are occupied by mentally ill persons. In most cases some of these mental problems are caused by stresses and tensions created by our dynamic and near scientific society as well as by perpetually unsettled world condition. These conditions seem to contribute to reasons why we should have a health guidance programme for our children in school. Policy development ensures school authority provide health guideline in school to provide information and interpretation and assist pupils through the use of appropriate tools and technique to understand their health problems, concern or health status, help pupils develop positive health habits, attitudes, beliefs values and trait, and also promote pupils acceptance of the responsibility for the promotion and reservation of their health. These are done through school health guidance services, health information services, health referral services and follow up services (Ayala, 11001).

The school is just an institution in the community, whatever happens to the school affect the community either directly or indirectly, hence the school authority, the school staff, the school children and the community all have their different but complementary roles to play in preventing accident in school and at home.

Nigerian school children especially those of primary school age like to experiment on several things that come across their ways. National Policy on Education (NPE) confirmed that children in this age group are between 6 to 11. This document pointed out that the progress and development of Nigerian economy rest on the success or failure of all our educational system put together. This implies that if the Nigerian school child is left to be killed, disabled or handicapped through accidents there will be no people to carry on the development programmes. Effective teaching of safety education in schools will provide a solution to accident problems in schools. This teaching of safety education is made possible through policy development. Effective safety education programme for contemporary schools in Nigeria is aim at providing safety knowledge, supervision and leadership, developing safety attitude and habit as well as providing safety environment at home and school for Nigerian children.

There are many health products including a variety of goods and services in the market with the result that producers use all sorts of advertisement and jingles to convince the unfortunate consumers and most people consume goods and services without knowing their sources or values or thinking whether it is worth what they have paid for in terms of quality and quantity.

Consumer health education equips individuals with knowledge, skills and attitude they requires in order to know their right as consumers, discern or judge information and consume intelligently within their means or available resources policy development enables school authority to provide learners with information that

will make them efficient and intelligent consumer of goods and services through teaching of primary science, health science and health education in schools. Consumer education enables learners to recognize quackery, evaluate health information, evaluate advertisement made for different product and services and also help them make right and responsible decisions (Moronkola, 110111).

Traditionally, many Nigerian marry in the early twenties, conceive their first child shortly after marriage and live together until the death of one spouse. Many others on the other hand do not follow this pattern. Many adolescent and young adult are sexually active without the expectation of commitment. A gulling number of couples live together prior to or without the expectation of marriage and some single women choose to bear children outside of marriage relationship. In relationship, conduct that enhance growth, build trust and helps an individual to reach his or her potential is moral. In contrast behaviour that reduces self-esteem and self worth, breakdown the capacity for communication with others or result in exploitation is immoral. Policy development empowers school authorities to teach about family life and human sexuality education to provide learners with knowledge and skill to fully develop their sexuality as decisions about sexual life style options and the relationships that develop as a result of these decision can have a profound effect on ones wellbeing and the family and the community at large (Moronkola, 110111).

Many children are badly behaved from time to time and many young people worry about their appearance or their input or other aspect of their body. Most young people experience the same things and these worries usually pass without too much trouble. The most common problems occurring at school are a failure to learn despite the ability to do so, playing truant, refusing to listen, aggressive and disruptive behaviour, bullying, stealing, acting in an inappropriate sexual way and extreme disobedience. Sometimes children run only from homes and they are lured into crime, prostitution, drug abuse or addiction policy development enable school authority to provide help to such individuals, parents or family, hence any member of teaching staff, or school health services or social worker can be approached. Also educational psychologist, or the child or adolescent health expert can be contacted for advice (Ayala, 11001).

Policy development empowers school authority to carry out evaluation or the students as well as on services provided and the effect of education on the society. These could be carried out in tehform of formative and summative evaluation (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 11010).

Health is undoubtedly an important factor in human endeavour. It has become a master concern in education because if a child is to get the most benefit from education he must be healthy, policy development makes the provision of health programmes and services available to learners in schools. This promoting individual, family and community health.

### Recommendations

- i. It is therefore recommended that government should develop policies that will help to reduce harassment by students and even by teachers.
- ii. Policy should be clearly communicated to the school population and the whole society
- iii. Policy should be endorsed by the Parent Teachers Association and the community to make it effective.

### Conclusion

Policy development empowers school authority to carry out evaluation or the students as well as on services provided and the effect of education or the society. These could be carried out in the form of formative and summative evaluation. Health is undoubtedly an important factor in human endeavour. It has become a master concern in education because if a child is to get the most benefit from education he must be healthy policy development makes the provision of health

programmes and services available to learners in schools, thus promoting individual, family and community health.

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