
MARKETING NIGERIAN MEDICINAL PLANTS: A 4PS PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Successful marketing is getting the right product in the right place, at the right price, and promoting it so that everyone knows about it. To achieve this objective, marketers need to have the right combination of the four Ps: product, price, place and promotion, irrespective of the kind of product marketed, be it medicinal plants or services. Marketing is important for anybody dealing in medicinal plants because knowing the market and what users want and providing a quality product or service is vital to the success of any organization. Thus, this paper sought to see how medicinal plants are marketed in Nigeria with regards to the traditional marketing mix (4Ps). The exploratory research approach was used to study a sample of 206 marketers of medicinal plants in four areas in which medicinal plants markets are located in Nigeria. Though it has been discovered that most marketers of medicinal plants in Nigeria do not have standardized product packaging, engage in little or no promotional activities, have differentiated/discriminatory pricing policies and adopt mostly the product concept/philosophy of marketing, their distribution channels are adequate but the lack

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of little or no promotional efforts makes it virtually impossible for the prospective consumer/customers to reach them.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing starts and ends with the consumers; it involves finding out what customers want and then giving it to them, that is creating utility. Utility is the satisfaction derived from the consumption of certain goods and services (Dixon-Ogbechi, 2003). Hamayun, Khan & Begum (2003) defined medicinal plants as: “any plant or part of the plant which contain active medicinal chemical constituents and give a definite physiological response in the treatments of diseases in humans and other animals”. Production is not complete until the product(s) get to the ultimate consumers; the marketing function is responsible for ensuring that this takes place. For marketing to take place, certain elements have to be present. These marketing mix elements according to McCarthy (1981) are the Product, Promotion, Price and Place (4Ps) of marketing. The four Ps of marketing are also combined to implement the marketing plan and strategy of an organization; the strategy is how these four work together to deliver optimal customer satisfaction (Beckman, Kurtz and Boone, 1992; Koontz, 2004). Given the importance of the 4Ps of marketing to organizational success, this study seeks to investigate how medicinal plants are marketed in Nigeria with regards to the traditional marketing mix elements (4Ps).

RESEARCH QUESTION/PURPOSE

Medicinal plants are products that satisfy human needs in terms of the curing of ailments, providing protection from certain ailments, enhancing food and animal production, among others (Odugbemi, 2008). However, for people to be able to benefit maximally from the usage of the abundant medicinal plants in Nigeria, a knowledge of the forms in which they are available, where to get them, who to get them from and what price to pay for them is needed. All these questions have to do with the basic elements of marketing, popularly known with the acronym 4Ps. However, to the best of our knowledge, little or nothing has been done in this area in Nigeria. Thus, this paper sought to fill this gap in knowledge by investigating how

medicinal plants are marketed in Nigeria with regard to the traditional marketing mix (4Ps).

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The 4Ps identified by McCarthy (1981) are the traditional elements of marketing. Over the years other elements of marketing have emerged. However, it should be noted that product, place (distribution) and promotion are all expenses; while price brings in revenue (Kotler, Armstrong Saunders & Wong, 1999). The combination of these four elements is what is referred to as the 'Marketing Mix'. Reppel (2003) posits that in an effective marketing programme all of these elements are "mixed" to successfully achieve the company's marketing objectives. In his view, the "marketing mix" is a framework which acts as a guideline for marketers to implement a marketing concept. It consists of a set of major decision areas that a company needs to manage in order to at least satisfy consumer needs. Thus, if marketers of medicinal plants are to effectively and efficiently satisfy consumers/customers' needs and wants, they need to make decisions regarding the 4 Ps.

The product can be regarded as the first P of marketing; it is anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a want or need. Products are simply bundles of benefits offered to satisfy customers' needs; products could be physical objects/goods, electronic or digital goods, services, persons, places, organizations and ideas (Kotler *et al.*, 1999; Reppel, 2003; Adeleye, 2003; Koontz, 2004). Products can be broadly classified into two namely: Consumer goods and Industrial goods. Consumer goods are goods that are purchased by the ultimate buyers. Consumer goods can be sub-divided into four, namely: (i) Convenience goods which could be *Staples* such as bathing soap, butter, bread, gari, some medicinal plants e.g. bitter leaves, ugwu (pumpkin leaves) etc.; *Impulse goods* such as biscuits, sweets, etc.; and *Emergency goods* such as plaster, most medicinal plants etc. (ii) Shopping Goods: which can be divided into two: *Homogeneous Shopping Goods* which are basically similar e.g. car radio, computer monitors, etc.; and *Heterogeneous Shopping Goods* which are basically different from one another e.g., cars. (iii) Specialty Goods which

are products for which there are no acceptable substitutes in customers' mind; some medicinal plants may fall into this category, especially for people who believe more in herbal medications than orthodox medication. And (iv) Unsought Goods which can also be divided into two: *Regularly Unsought Goods* e.g. coffin; and *New Unsought Goods* e.g. all new product; some medicinal plants may also fall into this category, especially those whose curative powers are not known yet or of whose existence consumers are not aware of. On the other hand, there are *Industrial goods*. These are goods acquired with a view to making other products from them. Industrial goods can be divided into six namely: (i) *Installations* which are heavy capital items such as: plant, machinery, and mainframe computers; (ii) *Accessories* which are smaller capital items used by the organization for its business operations e.g. desktop computers, photocopiers; (iii) *Raw Materials* such as cocoa, some medicinal plants used for the production of drugs; (iv) *Components parts and materials* such as button, log, cork, semi-processed medicinal plants, etc. (v) *Operating supplies* such as: papers, light, fuel, stationeries; and (vi) *Business Services* which are services that support the management and operations of a business, e.g. banking services. Every product has its life cycle which is divided into four stages, these are: Introduction, Growth, Maturity and Decline, and medicinal plants just like other products go through these stages. In order for the product to attract the attention of the target audience/market, it must be well packaged i.e. it must be appropriately designed for target market and be eye-catching. A good packaging must also be: suitable to product; compliant with retailers' requirements; promotes image of enterprise; distinguishable from competitors' products; strong, convenient, and well-designed. It is important that the marketer includes the trademark on the package; this is because it is the trademark that distinguishes one company's goods from those of another (Dibb, Simkin, Pride & Ferrell, 1991; Achumba and Osuagwu, 1994; Kotler, 1995; Adeleye, 2003).

Price is unquestionably an incredible and powerful marketing tool. Price is the only element of marketing that involves revenue (Kotler, 2004), so its impact can be dramatic. Price is what an individual gives up in order to obtain something. It is consideration

of what the customer exchanges that is of value to him (e.g., money or time) for the product (Beckman *et al.*, 1992; Koontz, 2004). Price need not be monetary, it can simply be what is exchanged for the product or services; thus it could be: time, energy, or attention. Pricing is the process of setting a price for a product. Given its importance to revenue generation, marketers must ensure that they set a price that serves the customer well so as to maximize organizational profits (Kotler, 2004). Marketers must also be certain that the pricing objectives they set are consistent with the organization's overall objectives and marketing objectives. Inconsistent objectives cause internal conflicts and confusion and can prevent the organization from achieving its overall goals. Organizations normally have multiple pricing objectives some short-term and others long-term, for example, the pricing objective of gaining market share is normally short-term because it often requires the firm to price its product quite low relative to competitors' prices. Thus, to compete effectively in the dynamic business environment, an organization should have one or more pricing objectives for each product (Dibb *et al.*, 1991; Achumba and Osuagwu, 1994; Kotler, 1995; Adeleye, 2003). Once the products have been produced they have to be distributed in places where the ultimate consumers can obtain them.

Place is also called distribution and it refers to all organizational activities that make the product or service available to the target consumers/customers (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). There are different channels of distributions for products. Basically there are channels of distribution for consumer goods, which are five in number, and channel of distribution for industrial goods, which are four in number. Irrespective of the channel used, basically there are two categories of channels of distribution. The first is the Direct Channel of Distribution: This is the most direct method of distribution; it is a channel strategy that does not use intermediaries (Hutt and Speh, 1989; Dibb *et al.*, 1991; Achumba and Osuagwu, 1994; Kotler, 1995; Adeleye, 2003). It entails moving the products from the manufacturer(s) to the consumer(s). There are also Indirect Channels of Distribution: This is the distribution of goods and services from the manufacturers or producers to the consumers through

the use of middlemen or intermediaries (Hutt and Speh, 1989; Dibb *et al.*, 1991; Achumba and Osuagwu, 1994; Kotler, 1995; Adeleye, 2003). However, in order to effectively reach the target audience, the marketer needs to communicate with them.

The promotion element of marketing focuses on communicating with the consumers/customers. Promotion is the all-inclusive term representing the broad field of marketing communication (Lancaster and Massingham, 2001). Promotion includes advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, publicity, public relations, direct mail, and the Internet (Dibb *et al.*, 1991; Achumba and Osuagwu, 1994; Kotler, 1995; Adeleye, 2003; Koontz, 2004), and refers to the various methods of promoting the product, brand, or company. In order to promote the product or service to potential clients more effectively, it is necessary that the marketer has full knowledge of the product, its characteristics and consumer groups (Lancaster and Massingham, 2001). This is especially important in the case of medicinal plants, given the fact that there are different varieties of medicinal plants that perform multiple functions and are consumed by different people. In a nutshell, promotion deals with all the activities that communicate the product or service and its merits to target customers and persuade them to buy (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). In order to communicate effectively with customers/consumers, marketers make use of the promotional elements. For effective marketing communication, these elements are combined; this combination is what is referred to as the promotional mix or promo-mix, or the marketing communication mix. The components of the promotional or marketing communications mix can be broadly divided into two, namely: personal selling and non-personal selling - comprising advertising, sales promotion, publicity and public relations (Beckman, Kurtz & Boone, 1992; Stanton and Spiro, 1999; Lancaster and Massingham, 2001).

METHODOLOGY

The exploratory research approach was adopted for this study. A survey research was conducted using the observation and personal interview techniques. Judgemental sampling was used to select the

location of major medicinal plants markets in four areas in Nigeria, namely: Lagos, Ogun, Abuja and Delta States. This is because not all markets in Nigeria have large numbers of marketers of medicinal plants. 206 marketers of medicinal plants in our purposive sample drawn from the selected areas were interviewed on a one-to-one basis regarding their knowledge of the four Ps of marketing and how they practice their marketing activities using these concepts. The direct observation technique was used to see how these marketers of medicinal plants conduct their marketing activities. The personal interview technique was adopted because it was discovered that this was the most effective method of getting data for the study given the low literacy level of most of the marketers of medicinal plants in Nigeria.

FINDINGS

The following findings were made:

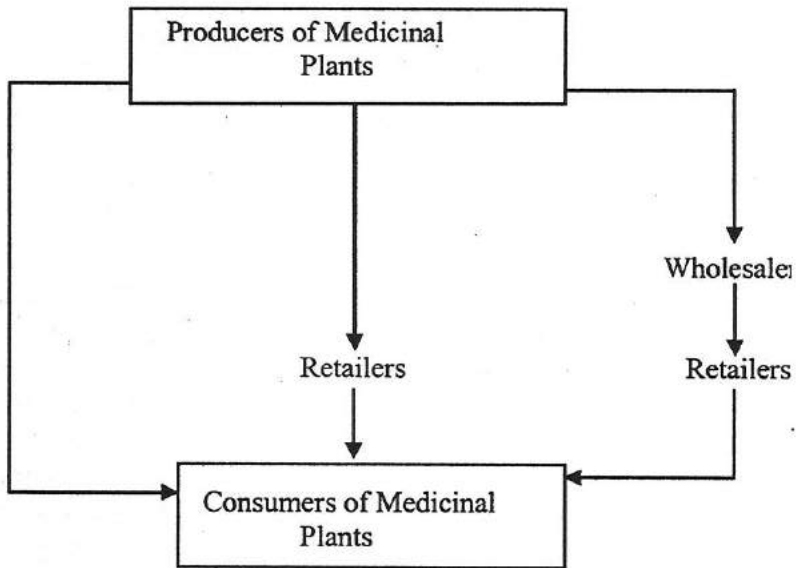
Product: Medicinal plants could be considered both as consumer goods (i.e. when they are purchased for immediate consumption) and industrial goods (i.e. when they are purchased with the aim of producing other goods) and, like any other products, they also have a life cycle. Marketers of medicinal plants in Nigeria have not made effective use of the packaging aspect of the product strategy; this is because very few of them package their products in a standardized way. Majority of the Nigerian marketers of medicinal plants adopt a kind of ad hoc packaging strategy in the sense that the products are packaged based on consumers' demand; in most cases, it is only when the prospective customer comes that the products are prepared and packaged based on customer/consumer specification. As such there is the problem of identification since the consumer places his/her trust on the marketer regarding the ability of the product combination to satisfy his/her needs. In a nutshell, the validity of the product preparation depends on the expertise of the marketer and his diagnostic ability.

Price: With regards to the price element, it was discovered that the pricing objective of most marketers of medicinal plants in Nigeria is that of profit maximization. To achieve this objective, they adopt

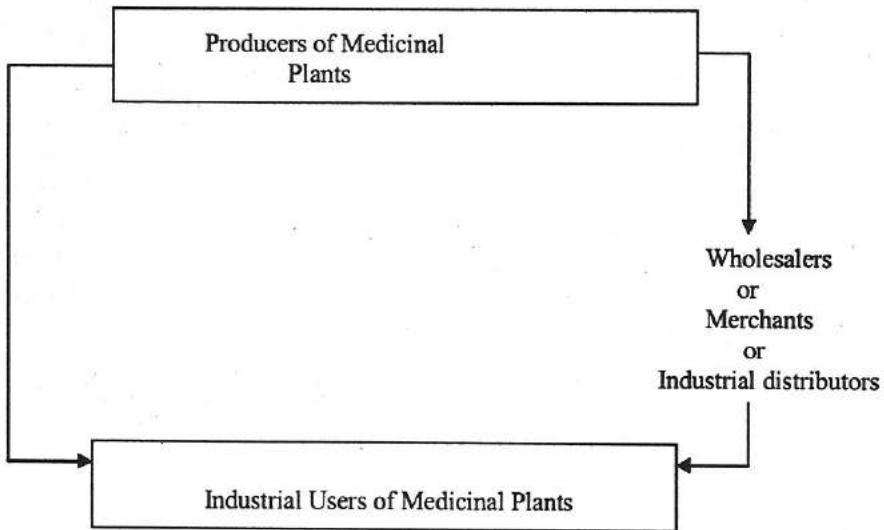
a strategy of differentiated/discriminatory pricing whereby the price of the product varies according to their perception of the ability of the prospective consumer/customer to pay. Thus, there is no standard price for a particular kind/quantity of medicinal plant; only very few of the marketers that have formal business establishments have standardized prices for their products.

Promotion: The promotional aspect of marketing is the communication network that links the consumer to the product. Most marketers of medicinal plants in Nigeria have not appreciated the potency of this element of marketing; as such they have not been promoting their products. This is perhaps because most of them may be either illiterates or semi-illiterates and do not have theoretical knowledge of these basic marketing concepts. Only very few of them invest in promotional activities and these are basically those that are registered formally as business ventures such as Yet Kem International, etc.

Place: Most marketers of medicinal plants in Nigeria adopt the multi-channel distribution strategy. They mostly use the direct channel and producers – merchants – consumers when the medicinal plants are industrial goods, while they use the direct channel and orthodox channels when the medicinal plants are consumer goods. Also, there are specialized markets which operate during specific days of the week where the wholesalers/dealers/distributors of medicinal plants gather; the producers who usually operate from the forests/bushes where this medicinal plants are available all transport the various species of these plants to these specialized markets from where the retailers go to get the specific types of medicinal plants that will satisfy their customers/consumers segments. The channels of distribution of medicinal plants in Nigeria are illustrated in figures 1 and 2.



Source: Figure 1: Channel of Distribution for Nigerian Medicinal Plants - Consumer Goods



Source: Figure 2: Channel of Distribution for Nigerian Medicinal Plants - Industrial Goods

DISCUSSION

When developing product strategies, it is important that the marketer take into consideration the product's life cycle and the positioning of the product in the market; positioning has been a basic marketing tool for many years (Hemsley, 2007). In the absence of government price controls, pricing remains a flexible and convenient way to adjust the marketing mix. In most situations, prices can be adjusted quickly—in a matter of minutes or over a few days; because so many complex issues are involved in establishing the right price, pricing is indeed as much a art as a science. Thus, marketers irrespective of the products they are dealing in, be it medicinal plants or any other consumer or industrial products, must master the art and science of price setting. Place or channels of distribution decisions affect other marketing decisions (Kotler, 2004) hence, marketers of medicinal plants should think critically about the channel of distribution to use and select the one that is most suitable for their products, while taking into consideration product perishability and packaging. In making promotion or marketing communications decisions, marketers should always bear in mind the fact that different consumer groups will respond positively or negatively to an organization's marketing communications, hence marketers need to conduct consumer behaviour research to assist them to identify the promo-tools the target market will respond to favourably (Lancaster and Massingham, 2001). This is applicable irrespective of the type of product marketed. This study has clearly shown that marketers of medicinal plants in Nigeria are deficient in the area of promotion. Thus, there is a need for more effort to be placed on this important element of marketing.

CONCLUSION

Successful marketing is getting the right product in the right place, at the right price, and promoting it so that everyone knows about it. To achieve this objective, marketers need to implement and have the right mix of the four Ps: product, price, place and promotion (Lancaster and Massingham, 2001), irrespective of the kind of product marketed, be it medicinal plants or services. Marketing is important for anybody dealing in medicinal plants because knowing

the market and what users want and providing a quality product or service is vital to the success of any organization. Though it has been discovered that most marketers of medicinal plants in Nigeria do not have standardized product packaging, engage in little or no promotional activities, have differentiated/discriminatory pricing policies and adopt mostly the product philosophy of marketing. Their distribution channels are adequate but the lack of little or no promotional efforts makes it virtually impossible for the prospective consumer/customers to reach them since they may not be aware of the products or their abilities to satisfy their needs and wants.

Marketers of medicinal plants should realize that there are many influences on the market, most of them beyond their control, such as changing technology, government policy or competitor's activities; some will pose threats to them while others will offer opportunities. However, this study has revealed that marketers of medicinal plants in Nigeria are not yet optimally utilizing the basic marketing strategy elements and marketing philosophy. To this effect there is a need for the Nigerian government, through its entrepreneurship development program, to organize enlightenment campaigns aimed at educating marketers of medicinal plants about the basic elements of marketing strategy and how they can effectively use them to achieve their goals thereby making the sector more vibrant. This is important given the economic importance of medicinal plants in both developed and developing countries (Odugbemi, 2008).

Further studies can be conducted to determine the relative importance of the traditional marketing elements in the marketing strategy of medicinal plants in the Nigerian business environment using the Analytic Hierarchy Process Model. This will enable the marketers of medicinal plants in Nigeria to know the importance they should attach to each traditional marketing strategy so as to optimally allocate their resources. Also, further studies could also be conducted on an Investigation of buyers' or consumers' perception of the marketing of medicinal plants in Nigeria. This will enable marketers of medicinal plants to know how to develop appropriate strategies to satisfy buyers' or consumers' needs.

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EFFECTS OF ACTIVITY-BASED TRAINING WORKSHOPS ON PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' AWARENESS, KNOWLEDGE AND INTENTION TO USE INTEGRATED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Ishola Akindele Salami

Abstract

Experience in the past workshops in Nigeria shows that the majority of the resource persons adopted teacher-centred methods to deliver their papers and this has not been found effective most especially when the workshop is about skills acquisition and the number of participants is large. This informed the adoption of activity-based strategy to equip the participants of the National workshops organised by Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) for Early Childhood Educators on the use of Integrated Early Childhood Development Curriculum (IECDC). The workshops were organised thrice so as to cover the whole nation at Lagos, Imo and Edo States. The learning of the participants was measured in terms of awareness, knowledge and intention to use the IECDC. The post training behaviour of the participants revealed that huge differences were recorded in the awareness, Knowledge and intention to use IECDC compare to their pre training behaviour. It was recommended that strategies that will actively involve the participants should be adopted by the resource persons in workshops that meant to impact skills acquisition.

Keywords: Workshop, Skill Acquisition, Curriculum implementation, Activity-based strategy, Curriculum awareness, Knowledge of curriculum, Intention to use, Early Childhood Educators, workshop resource persons

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Introduction

The place of curriculum in the formal education system is so paramount that without it, there will be nothing called formal education. In fact, one of the factors sustaining western education as a system is curriculum. The level of success that an educational system may attain, what is required to attain such level of success, how such requirement may be presented, and what barometer to be used in determining whether or not that level of success has been attained are all essential components of a good curriculum. Dushi (2012) describes curriculum as the warp and woof of the whole educational process. In this regard, it is clear that any education programme can be assessed based on the curriculum used. A good curriculum package, if well and religiously implemented, has a greater chance of achieving the educational goals.

Some of the benefits of a curriculum to educational system include the provision of the philosophy upon which the education system is based; the guiding of the educational process and activities; and the provision of a yardstick with which the development of the recipients could be measured. Curriculum also reflects the trends in the rise or otherwise of the standard of the educational system (Dushi, 2012). If properly followed, there should be a smooth process to the achievement of the stated objectives.

There are additional benefits of curriculum meant for the education of young children, especially children in preschool. There have been argument by some scholars that children below age 5 do not need to go to school for formal education (Postman, 2012). Some have even argued that children's rate of learning begins to diminish as soon as they start going to school (Postman, 2012). But with a well developed curriculum guide for children, one is able to show why children should be in school at that age of their development. The fact is that if the curriculum is not followed, there is the possibility that the education of young children would be handled like that of grownups. Temple and Raynolds (2007) have expressed the opinion that a high quality preschool programme exceeds most other educational interventions, especially those that

begin during school age, including reduced class size at primary classes, grade retention or youth job training.

The newly developed curriculum-Integrated Early Childhood Development Curriculum (IECDC)- is a curriculum guide for the education of children in Nigeria prior to their entry into the statutory primary education. A lot of Early Childhood Education principles were considered in the development of the curriculum. Some of these principles are the holistic development of the child; developmentally appropriate practices; multiple intelligences and the ideas of constructivism. All these make the features of the curriculum a little complex and require proper training for whoever is going to use it. These features, according to the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2007), still need to be reviewed and areas requiring in-depth attention are discussed below.

The whole curriculum is divided into two sections, namely curriculum for children ages 0-3 years and curriculum for children ages 3-5 years. These sections make it possible to apply the principle of age appropriateness in the principle of developmentally appropriate practices. Each of these sections is presented under eight (8) themes, namely physical development, affective and psychosocial development, cognitive development, food and nutrition, health, water and environmental sanitation, safety measure and protection issues (one would have expected the themes to be different from learning domains as used here). These eight themes could be further divided into two broad parts—those that are content to be delivered to the children and those that are meant for the caregivers/teachers and the parents. The section for age 0-3 years is treated to reflect what is expected at 24months and 36months separately.

Every theme is broken down into a number of topics (one would have expected this to be sub-themes). Each topic is presented under the following headings: performance objectives (parent/caregiver, child); content, activities (parent/caregiver, child); teaching/learning materials and evaluation guide.

This is done so that the preschool teacher can identify the theme to be taught at what age level, the topic for each week, what should be the behavioural objectives, the content to be delivered, the activities

to be planned for the children, the materials to be used and how to evaluate the children learning. The complexity of the curriculum makes it impossible for the preschool teachers to see the benefits and strength of this curriculum.

There is a popular saying to the effect that a good curriculum in the hands of a bad teacher has already failed. This implies that teachers must be well trained on the delivery of the curriculum of any educational system. Besides, at the level of curriculum development, the implementers—the teachers—must be carried along in order to ensure that proper implementation of the curriculum is guaranteed.

Again, the features of the newly developed IECDC require that teachers are carried along for proper implementation of the curriculum. This is paramount because there is a radical shift from what the teachers are used to as preschool curriculum and what we have now. Besides, almost all the preschool teachers in the public schools are not trained as early childhood educators. These teachers are those with NCE and Degree qualifications in Primary Education studies. These set of teachers were transferred to preschool section of the public primary school to assist in the education of the preschool section. This was done without the consideration of the knowledge of the teachers about how preschool children learn. Therefore, for proper implementation of the newly developed curriculum, those teachers working at this level of education must be trained.

The necessity for the training of the teachers was felt by NERDC, the producer of the curriculum, hence national training programmes were organized to train the officials that handle Early Childhood Education matters in the ministries, the caregivers and the preschool teachers. Resource persons across the nation were invited. The objectives of the workshops are summarised as follows:

Awareness among the Users of the Curriculum

After the production of the curriculum, it was made available in all the NERDC branches across the nation for ministries and schools to buy. From 2004 to 2010 very few schools were aware of the existence of the curriculum. This fact was also confirmed during the workshop where almost all the participants declared that they had not seen

the curriculum before coming. Many of the participants had to buy as many as possible after the training for their respective schools. This awareness is highly important because it is the first thing that should be done for the curriculum to get to the end users.

Appropriate Use of the Curriculum

The workshops were to take the participants through the contents of the curriculum. The meaning and how to apply every part of the curriculum were covered. Despite the fact that a large proportion of the participants had at least NCE qualification, there is need to remind them about a lot of facts regarding curriculum and what the components stand for. How to plan the weeks' activities around a theme, how to break a theme to sub-themes for daily activities, how to select, derive and state behavioural objectives at Early Childhood Education level and how to evaluate children learning were adequately dealt with. The effects of the workshops were felt during the workshops' activities. A majority of the participants studied Primary Education Studies (PES) and not Early Childhood Education (ECE). This had negative effect on what they knew and how they thought children should learn. Therefore, a lot of misconceptions were corrected and the developmentally appropriate practices were exposed to the participants.

Uniformity in the Preschool Practices in both Privately and Publicly Owned Schools across the Nation

Many preschools across the nation have relied on various textbooks published by various authors for what to teach the children. How to teach solely rests on the experience of the teacher and the school management. Because of these, there have been varieties in the preschool practices, the content, assessment technique and the school setup. The workshops were carried out so as to equip the ministry officials with the common practices that will be allowed in the nation which have been planned and presented by the government body established for this purpose- NERDC. With this, the Ministry of Education in every state will be able to guide and monitor the preschool practices in both public and private schools under their supervision.

As good as this government plan about this workshop is, it can only be effective if the participants were able to learn effectively. Effective learning calls for the adoption of appropriate teaching strategies. Experience from national workshops organised by National Teacher Institute (NTI) to retrain Basic Education teachers on innovative instructional strategies so as to be able to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) reveals that a majority of the classes were held just like normal lectures in higher institutions. A majority of the resource persons adopted teacher-centred method of 'presenting and explaining' strategy. It is no wonder that a majority of those strategies and skills taught the teachers since 2006 can hardly be found in our school system today.

A workshop meant to equip participants with skills should be carried out using learner-centred strategies. The participants should be allowed to learn actively, and if possible, they should learn through hands-on/mind-on activities so as to make the learning functional (Dada, Granlund and Alant, 2006; Epstein, 2007; Marley, Levin and Glenberg, 2010). Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2004) defines workshop as a meeting of people to discuss and/or perform practical work in a subject or activity. The tone of many workshops in Nigeria is just like a lecture which is contrary to its meaning. It was against this background that the resource person invited to this workshop tried to determine the effect of activity-based method training workshop on the awareness, knowledge and intention to use integrated early childhood education curriculum by preschool teachers in Nigeria.

This study, therefore, was carried out to examine the extent to which the workshops will be able to achieve the following goals:

- a. To create awareness among the participants about the existence and the nature of the IECD curriculum across the nation.
- b. To instil in the participants the knowledge of the IECD curriculum in terms of the elements, arrangement and the provisions.
- c. To train participants on how to make use of and develop in them the intention to use the curriculum.

Methodology

This study was built into the training workshops organised by a National body known as Nigerian Educational Research and Development council (NERDC). Therefore, a descriptive survey research design using qualitative data was used to determine the impact of the training strategy on the awareness, knowledge and intention to use the IECD curriculum among the participants by measuring their pre and post training behaviour.

The population of the study was the entire participants in the training workshops in Ikeja, Lagos State (11th-14th October, 2011), Owerri, Imo State (14th -16th February, 2012) and Benin City, Edo State (27th – 29th November, 2012). The total number of the participants at the three workshops was 220. Since the population was clustered, all of them were involved in the study.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured interview. This interview was a self-designed instrument comprising two sections. Section A contained items such as the name of the respondents, their status, (that is, whether classroom teacher, school owner or ministry officials) and the state and the local government of the respondents. Section B of the instrument contained ten (10) items that cut across the awareness, the knowledge and the intention to use IECD curriculum. The instrument was validated by scholars in the field of Early Childhood Education, Curriculum and instruction and test and measurement. To complement this, a pocket tape recorder and digital camera were used to capture the activities and responses of the participants.

Three major activities were planned for every presentation which lasted for 2hours during every workshop; Firstly, exploration of the IECD curriculum. Ten (10) minutes is assigned for this activity after which the participants were allowed to present their findings and questions were asked to guide them. After presentation, the resource person quickly reminded the participants about information on element of curriculum and skills needed for the use of the curriculum for just 15 minutes. Second activity, a group activity was staged- Plan a lesson activity for age 0-2years. It is during this activity that the participants put into use the skills of setting behavioural objectives, selection of content, planning lesson activities

and setting evaluation items from the curriculum for age 0-2years plus. The activity used to last for 20 minutes and 10 minutes for presentation. The third activity is just like the second but this time, the lesson is plan for age 3 to 5years plus.

The administration of the instrument was built into the training programmes in form of questions and the responses were recorded. Some of the questions were asked before and after workshop activities while some were asked during the activities. Almost every participant was given room to share his/her view about every question. This is achieved by asking for contrary opinion after several answers must have been given to the question under discussion. Information collected was analysed using qualitative analysis. Item by item responses of the participants to the questions were analysed based on the research questions.

Awareness of the Participants about the IECD Curriculum before and after the Workshops

In order to address this, firstly, the participants were asked to bring out the IECD curriculum since they were informed to come with it. It was glaring that the participants were not aware of the existence of the curriculum because their responses were: 'Which curriculum?', 'We do not have it', 'it is not available in our schools', 'where can we get it' and so on.

Again, in order to confirm the lack of awareness of the participant, they were asked from where they have been getting those things they teach the children. The two major answers were given to this are 'from textbooks' and 'as given to us by the head teachers'. To follow this up, the participants were asked why they did not attempt to buy the curriculum from the nearest NERDC office. But the participants' answers were that they were not aware that there was any curriculum; that the curriculum was not introduced to them and that they were not informed about this curriculum.

The responses of the participants revealed that they were not aware of the newly developed curriculum before coming to the workshop. This was supported by the address delivered by the

Executive Secretary to NERDC, Professor Obioma G. (2011) at the first workshop in Lagos. In his words:

It has been observed that many ECD educators/teachers do not know how to use the IECD curriculum for effective delivery of ECD programmes in schools. In fact, many of you do not even aware or use the curriculum at all (page 2)

This could be as a result of the fact that after the curriculum was developed, it was not made available to the schools. The NERDC officials informed us that the Ministry of Education in all the states were informed about the curriculum and they were asked to get copies for their states from the nearest NERDC office but it was only Lagos State that responded to the call. The Ministry was supposed to distribute the curriculum to the schools.

Copies of the curriculum were available at the workshop centres for sale and the participants bought as many as possible. When the question about their awareness of the IECD curriculum was asked at the end of each workshop, the responses were in the affirmative. With this, it was affirmed that the workshops were able to create awareness about the IECD curriculum among the preschool teachers across the nation, hence the awareness of the participants after the workshops were seriously different from what it used to be before the workshops. This was achieved as a result of the various ways by which different resource persons used to expose the participants to the curriculum in question. Particularly, the author of this paper used activity-based which was learner-centred. Through this, the participants were made to study the curriculum, did some activities with it and were able to judge how relevant and suitable IECD curriculum is. Many research findings have shown that this type of activity-based instructional strategy is very effective in training people on given skills (The Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner, 2002; Macdonald and Twining, 2002; Reshetova, 2004; Dada, Granlund and Alant, 2006; Epstein, 2007; Marley, Levin and Glenberg, 2010).

Level of the Participants' Knowledge about the Curriculum after the Workshops

In order to have insight into the impact of the workshop on the participants' knowledge about the curriculum, three questions were asked at the beginning and at the end of each workshop. The first question asked to address this was for the participants to identify the elements of a curriculum. Out of the three different workshops, no one was able to identify the four elements of a curriculum in the right order. The erroneous answers given include 'syllabus', 'scheme of work', 'lesson plan', school subjects like 'English language', 'Mathematics'. But only one participant in the three workshops was able to mention 'objective' and was unable to mention any other element.

Another question here was for the participants to identify where the sources of objectives highlighted in the curriculum were. Only one participant from Lagos was able to mention 'from the society'. Other responses were not right. Some of such were 'the text books', 'the school subject matters', 'from the syllabus and the scheme of work', 'from the teachers' and so on.

The third question to address this was for the participants to state hypothetical behavioural objectives. Of all the responses, only one that was considered technically correct and developmentally appropriate to the level of preschool children was 'By the end of the lesson, pupils should be able to count up to 20 appropriately'. Others were either not correctly stated or are developmentally inappropriate. Some of these are 'At the end of the day, students should be able to know how to count', 'by the end of the lesson, pupils should be able to define family', at the end of the lesson, pupils should be able to explain different types of family'.

But at the end of each workshop, the same questions were asked and the responses were as presented. On the question about elements of a curriculum, majority of the participants was able to identify the element of curriculum as objective, content, methodology and evaluation. Besides this, the participants were made to identify where these elements were placed in the IECD curriculum-the second and the third columns on each page present the objectives; the fourth column presents the content; the fifth, sixth and the seventh column

present the methodology and the eighth column presents the evaluation were the correct responses given.

On the question about the sources of curriculum, after taking the participants through the curriculum, they were able to identify the sources of curriculum objectives as the society- Societal culture, norms, beliefs, needs; the needs of the recipients and at times, societal problems. The participants were also able to explain each of these to their best understanding.

When asked to state hypothetical behavioural objectives, participants were able to state behavioural objectives that were derived from the suggested objectives which also satisfied the conditions of a good behavioural objective and developmental appropriate. They were able to use measurable terms, the action words and the objects of the actions were stated; they were able to state behavioural objectives with givens and criteria and finally they were able state objectives that care for the average learners. The following are scanned examples of the stated objectives got from the participants:

Objectives GROUP 1

- ① By the end of the day's activities age 3 children should be able to:
- (i) Say the name of at least 2 family members like father, mother, sister, brother, etc.
 - (ii) Identify father, mother and children in picture books
 - (iii) Sing and dance to the song "members of the family"

Behavioural Objectives GROUP 3

- ① By the end of the day activities in age 4 children classroom, the children should be able to:
- ① Identify at least 3 living things around the classroom.
 - (ii) Sort out toys based on the primary colours.
 - (iii) Paint living objects in colours of their choice.

Group 7

- 2 At the end of the day activities, age 4 children should be able to:
- i tell his/her age / date of birth in a clear language.
 - ii at least use two-word sentence to tell the occupation of the father or the mother
 - iii demonstrate how to take his/her measurement using the measurement on the wall.

These scanned objectives are few from the numerous objectives which the participants were able to state in the group activities given to them. They were able to state these types of objectives because they had been taken through several examples by the resource person through an activity-based strategy. A close examination of these objectives shows that they had become aware that behavioural objectives should cut across all the developmental domains. Not only this, they were now aware that children learning should not be passive but hands-on/mind-on activities should be adequately planned for them. This finding corroborates the position of scholars like Richardson (1997), The Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner (2002) and Reshetova (2004) that activity-based strategy facilitates the learning of new skills, knowledge acquisition and the gaining of experience through active participation of learners in the process of knowledge acquisition.

The Extent to which Participants Exhibit Intention to use IECD curriculum in their Various Schools

To address this, two questions were asked at the end of each workshop. The first one was to seek the perception of the participants about appropriateness of the IECD curriculum to Nigerian children. The participants at the end of each workshop demonstrated love for the curriculum and reacted both in words and actions. In words, some of their comments were 'The content of the curriculum is appropriate and good for our children but to get it in our schools is the problem', 'Why is Government not distributing this curriculum to all schools so as to ensure its compliance?', 'In fact, it should be enforced on all privately owned schools at the point of seeking approval for the school' and so on.

In the action of the participants, it was observed that the entire curriculum brought down to the three workshop centres were always not enough for the participants to buy. The three workshops always ended with uproarious discussion between the participants and the NERDC officials about where the curriculum could be bought. The official (to be specific, the Director, Special Programme Center, NERDC, Dr. Kate Nwufo) used to add to her closing remarks that

the participants should visit the nearest NERDC branch office in their states for more copies.

The second question formulated to address the intention of the participants to use the IECD curriculum was to seek how they will ensure that the curriculum is strictly followed in their schools.

The participants who are teachers demonstrated their commitment to ensure that their schools make use of the curriculum since then. They promised to suggest further training to other teachers that were not in the workshop to the school administrators and that they would be ready to train their colleagues. Participants that were Desk Officers in the SUBEB offices also promised to suggest state level training to more teachers and that the curriculum would be made available to every registered school in their respective states. Those participants that were private school owners also promised to train their teachers on how to make effective use of the curriculum. However, they were not all totally convinced about the implementation of language of instruction policy because they felt it was contrary to what the majority of the parents wanted.

All these reactions by the participants revealed that they (the participants) intended to use the curriculum in their school. This could be as a result of the fact that they have not been using any comprehensive, integrated and holistic curriculum like the IECD. Also, it was made clear that the curriculum was published by the only governmental body in the country that was assigned such role- the NERDC- in collaboration with UNICEF. The minimum standard for Early Childhood Development centres in Nigeria was based on this curriculum (NERDC, 2007). The implication of this is that if there is any curriculum guide to be enforced in the nation, it is no other one than the IECD. This might have changed their attitude towards its use.

Conclusion

The rationale behind this study is to determine the effect of activity-based training workshops on the learning and skills acquisition of the participants. Nation-wide Workshops organised by NERDC on Training Early Childhood Development Educators/Teachers on the use of Integrated Early Childhood Development Curriculum were

used as avenue to carry out this study. The learning in this context is measured in terms of awareness and knowledge of and intention to use the IECD curriculum. The workshops were carried out three times, first in Ikeja, Lagos State; second in Owerri, Imo State and the third in Benin, Edo State. The participants from the Northern states of the country were made to come to Owerri and Benin because of security issues. Activity-based strategies were used for the presentation by this author in the three workshops and the entry behaviour as well as the post training behaviour were measured qualitatively using structured interview. The post behaviour showed not only better awareness, increased knowledge and good intention to use the IECD curriculum but also revealed participants' active involvement. Therefore, activity-based training workshop is considered highly effective, especially when the workshop is on skill acquisition.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proffered for workshop organisers, resource persons and NERDC in particular in order to make future workshops an avenue for participants' effective learning:

- ❖ The resource person delivering papers in a workshop on skill acquisition should consider activity-based strategies as the best instructional strategies that could be used. Though this will demand more from the resource person, there will be effective learning because the participants will be actively involved.
- ❖ Though at the end of each workshop, there was significant evidence that the participants had learnt a lot from the workshop, this might not be enough to ensure that the aim of the workshop has been achieved. It will be an ideal situation for NERDC to carry out a follow-up study to some sampled schools across the nation so as to ensure that the IECD curriculum is being used as expected and that the skills taught in the workshops are adopted.

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