

Delivery of Health Education through Distance Mode

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Abstract : *The Concept of distance delivery of the course material is very much new in developing countries. Extension of the scope of medical education is the global concern and strategy for meeting the need of different disciplines in the next century. In developing countries, limitations for ensuring infrastructure and resource personnel is a very vital problem for such educational programmes. Adoption of electronic education technology in distance mode is the most rational approach for such programmes. In the distance education mode, programme delivery means are neatly specified objective-based self-study modules, audio-video cassettes and counselling sessions. Assessment procedures are also made more learner-based with emphasis on continuous assessment procedures.*

Introduction

Health indicators are the major and prime indices to assess the development of any society or community. Health is defined as the 'complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely absence of disease or infirmity'. The concept of health now also includes a socially and economically productive life. It is obvious that socio-economic parameters are the major factors for development in a country like Bangladesh. Also it is correct that productivity is the means for development, and health is the determining factor for productivity. Health education has been identified as the main way to ensure health and hygienic conditions of any family. Health education is also one of the main components of Primary Health Care programme of World Health Organisation. We need to reduce the morbidity incidence and prevalences, the mortality indices, and increase average longevity and expectancy of life of the whole community. Present health status of the country has to be improved to combat for the next century challenges for health and economics. To ensure better understanding over these issues, to ensure better delivery of health services to the community and to ensure better reach to the health services for every citizen we need to have more consciousness on health and hygiene or to say a comprehensive health education programme.

Health Education (HE) is a broad, multidimensional and well-discussed issue in developing countries especially in Bangladesh. With current advances in different socio-

economic parameters, health education has been able to draw attention from all sectors of people in the community. Both urban and rural, elite and deprived communities demand their participation in medical world and hence, importance of health education attained top most score in all social surveys in Bangladesh. Health education again extends from training of rural 'dai' to training of the most skilled professionals through both formal and non-formal programmes that cover different sections of people in all strata. Health education in conventional methods cannot be delivered with perfection because of lack of infrastructure and sufficient number of teachers can cover countrywide teaching through electronic media without spending additional money for infrastructure, without putting any bar on number of enrolment, and without making admission procedures difficult.

Development of Instructional Material

Instructional material development is a basic prerequisite for effective health education delivery. Blackboard with chalk marker with few sketches were the first generation health education tools used by teachers. Later development of improved scientific inventions provided new dimensions to professional education technology. Classroom deliberations were performed with audio-video aids like cinema projectors, slide projectors, epidiascope, overhead projectors (OHP), etc. These are all conventional methods with several limitations in respect of communications and perfectness of delivery. All these are examples of what may happen in a class room teaching. But the world has become a global village with the evolution of information super high way, such as E-mail, Internet, etc.

In distance mode education delivery, texts are written in module form with easy language and rich illustrations. At the beginning of each programme, the learner knows the objective of the programme, contents of the programme, programme duration, nature of evaluation and assignments. Individual subject is called *course* and a course book consists of several units comprising few lessons in it. Each lesson is written with certain specific objectives and correlated to the time required.

Usage of Very Special Devices

Improved hybrids of computer reckoned into new dimensions of technical education. Introduction of CD-ROM for health education could summarize and concentrate thousands of topics, volumes of text within a disk, even newer is the multimedia CD-ROM device. Here we can display simultaneously sounds of the best teacher of the world with best drawn illustrations in different dimensions. With high definition computer versions, CD-ROM can be displayed very neatly. More newer is the introduction of LCD display device by which CD-ROM contents can be projected from monitor screen to the large projector screen with magnification.

After the introduction of Internet communication, education and information now are not solo property of any particular university or country, rather can be shared equally by everybody anywhere irrespective of geographical barriers or political beliefs. Entire

education materials, innovations, discoveries or information are set into the space waiting for reception and utilization by the person who desires to take them. Concept of 'Virtual University' is a reality now. Through Internet we can go through any of the unlimited branches of knowledge any time with our conveniences. Someone can reach within seconds to the latest deliveries from the best contributors in any subject from anywhere in the globe. This is now not only one way communication even, the student can participate in conversation with any teacher anywhere to get reply properly and precisely through Internet. This is a new dimension in the field of technical and health education. The whole of human development in the mother's womb can be learnt with motion pictures in any view at any stage by simply pushing of few buttons. Technology and inventions are adding new page everyday. To get the latest research information someone can use Internet communication most effectively, efficiently and very economically without any delay or deviations. In brief, global exploration into any branch of knowledge is quite possible sitting in front of a computer with Internet communication. These made technical and health education more comfortable and uniform to all over the world.

Educational television is another tool for usage in case of technical and health education. A very specific frequency band of satellite communication made this audio-video medium most useful for academic purposes. Education TV is the next century's 'University in Air' for technical and health education with also usage of magnetic book or other devices. Usage of VSAT or satellite for global discussion is available. Audio-video conferencing is another mode of technical education delivery in modern societies. In conventional method either learner-teacher, learner-modules, learner-learner interactions are at the primitive stage with limited access or exposure and also are not assured for quality control, since there is no uniform or standard rules everywhere. But in audio-conferencing or videoconferencing the exposure and access can be ensured for a quite large number of people from anywhere in the world. Discussions here are not repeated, bored or monotonous but rather are actual reflection of the learners' attitude and inquiries. For this reason audio or video conferencing has been marked as one of the most important medium for delivering technical and health education.

Conclusions

Demand for health education is rising with advent of the society to be prepared for the next century challenges of the universe. Pedagogical evolution through adaptation or adoption of technology is a successful answer for this preparation. Pedagogy and technology always maintains a closed cycle between them. Sometimes pedagogy invents technology and uses it. Whatever the relation might be, technical education needs technology much more than anything else. Technical and professional education starts from the day human being first could set fire by striking of rocks at cave life. While pedagogy started from the day human being could plan out to make weapons by sharpening of rocks. Such was the initiation of technology development for education. Development of language for communication is another great task that human being performed. After centuries together need for social structure and bondage came into active consideration. For maintaining a social life education was thought to be the most

useful tool at all stages and periods of social development. Development of technical and health education was attempted even in the earlier stages of society development. In almost all cases top most priority was always given to the technical and health education. With advancement of the society, newer technology replaced older devices or procedures of delivery of education. Technical education transferred in a longitudinal axis for quite long time where tutor would teach his secret professional or technical skill to one of his best disciples (One tutor one disciple model). Later on, conventional school system developed where one teacher teaches many student using instructional materials (One tutor many student model). Provision for better and improved health education is a worldwide demand now. Health education in any form is definitely a help to the community. Hybrids of computer, Internet, education TV and satellite media for education delivery can be exploited for efficient or effective health education.

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