

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION OF (FLATS) MEDIA MATERIALS
FOR INFORMATION DISSEMINATION ON THE
BETTER LIFE PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

This paper is of the view that the need for instructional materials cannot be over-stressed in the activities of the Better Life Programme. What these materials are and how they could be systematically produced and utilized in an instructional setting are clearly analysed.

INTRODUCTION

The Better Life Programme (BLP) is a laudable effort and its success is already gaining ground in all the thirty states of Nigeria. The involvement of the governors' wives including the incumbent chairperson, wife of the Nigerian Head of State, Mrs. Mariam Babangida would go a long way to improve the conditions of the rural dwellers in the country.

A cursory look at the objectives of the Better Life Programme would reflect on the following aspects of life:

- (a) --- an attempt to improve the living condition of women, particularly those whose life pattern still falls under such conditions which require urgent development.
- (b) Hence, the need to develop Nigerians living in the rural areas implies that these peoples' social, economic and political as well as health lives have to be given the needed attention.

The above stated objectives can be achieved a lot easier through communication.

What Communication Is

Communication can be described as a structure of thought brought into action. According to Field (1970) ... a great deal of communication takes place which is not couched in formal language. Hence, communication may be verbal or non-verbal. Art according to Field, Communicates (externalized) --- which means that it is possible to communicate without mincing words. Communication can be expressed in many ways-by sight through visuals, by bodily expression through gestures and by assuming varied postures.

Communication according to Morgan and King (1956) is "signals made by one organism that have meaning for other organisms and thus affecting their behaviour". Communication as applicable to the Better Life Programme (BLP) would involve the act of imparting information which is expected to give a positive or a negative feedback. Therefore, to communicate effectively on the programme of Better Life, the channels of communication have to be clear.

Fine art is a form of non-verbal expression which can be used as a form of communication such that all categories of people can relate to. The literates, non-literates, children and adult would benefit from communication through forms of artistic creation. In the fine art, communication is expressed in form of lines, colours, tone and shape,

mass etc. Whereas in the sciences, communication involves the use of most or all the senses - the eyes, the nose, the body surfaces etc. Because art is visual, it has been effectively used to back up scientific findings and exploration, such as the exploration of the Universe in the 1960s by the American astronauts in space ships. The exploit of the solar system and man's stepping into the moon are other examples of areas where art has helped to communicate better with man. The possibilities of making abstract concepts understood by heterogenous set of people would involve the use of the little 'media' of posters, the flip charts, pictures and bill boards.

Posters and flip charts could be effectively used to communicate with the rural dwellers on the Better Life packages, with very little cost. Their comparability with film strips and projectors makes the flats more viable for instructional purposes. When compared with the use of radio and television, posters and charts are very cost-effective. Most parts of the rural areas in Nigeria are yet to have electricity installation. This would make the use of television and radio less effective for campaign purposes with the rural dwellers.

For clarity sake, let us explain some terms like "design" "and" instructional materials", as they affect the educational setting as well as the industries.

Design of Materials

Clerk (1974 p. 27) says design encompasses those qualities of an article which contribute to its

effectiveness in manufacture or use. A design can be simply described as drawing or outline from which something, for example products can be made. Design is also applicable to the general arrangement of a picture or a book; it affects the patterns, the arrangement of lines, shapes etc. and generally, a design can be referred to as a mental plan. A designer can therefore be described as a professional graphic artist who plans, creates and produces designs.

In the theory of advertising, skills are required in order to communicate objectives, specified by the marketing plan. According to Jerkins (1973, p. 4) products are designed with the intention of persuading potential consumers to buy. In order to be successful at persuading buyers, learners, or observers, the graphic artist must ensure that his designs perform fairly well the following functions:-

- (a) it must attract attention.
- (b) it must command interest.
- (c) it must create desire.
- (d) inspire conviction and
- (e) be provocative.

It has been attempted to summarise lucidly the roles of a designer in a generalized environment. This is applicable to the designers in the factory, those in the printery unit of Learning Resource Centres, Media houses etc.

The designer in the media house for example is involved in the production of educational graphics, in animated films and in typography. He is a resource person with the ability to visualize and originate ideas. He is also involved in the preparation of artwork.

Equipment: The graphic artist will make use of some or all of these materials in carrying out his work. The table ease and board, papers of variety of thickness, colours, pen sets, 2B and HB pencils, brushes, slide rules, gum, cutter, Scotch tapes, scissors, mounting papers and cloth, tracing papers, designers' sets, paper gum, films, camera, screen ink, printing materials like organdi, stencils, and lettraset and a host of other materials.

The Importance of Instructional Materials

The importance of the use of instructional media/materials have been confirmed by Dale (1969) Schramm (1977) Hawkrige (1966) and many other researchers. They have confirmed that radios, photographs, film strips, slides, audio tape etc. can supply concrete basis for conceptual thinking. These materials have been found to be very useful if learning interest were to be increased. Similarly if learning is to be made more permanent or if it is to stimulate self-activity in rural dwellers, instructional materials would definitely be required.

Variety of Instructional Materials

Teachers, most often depend on the following most commonly used instructional materials:

Charts, pictures, models, objects, specimen, paper cut-

outs, puppets, maps, globes, and other various adhesive boards.

Some other instructional materials which could be used by the implementers of the Better Life Programme include hardwares like tapes, radio sets, recorders, television sets, videos etc. Also in another category, there are Visual instructional aids like projectors, pictures, films, chalk boards, etc. However, efforts will be made here to discuss the soft wares and the methods of producing just a few of them like the posters, the flash cards, the bulletin boards etc.

Suggestions for preparing Instructional Materials

- (i) Use low cost, locally available materials. Teaching aids can be produced from almost anything that one can lay his hands on. Just by developing the attitude of collecting things like pictures from magazines, newspapers, posters, calendars, match boxes, bottle caps, shells, stones, leaves, strings, wires, pins, pen heads etc. all can help in producing simple instructional materials with very little effort.
- (ii) Make use of very simple teaching aids which suit the message they intend to communicate. If you want to be understood, you should make use of very simple aids that can clearly convey your message.
- (iii) The instructional materials that are effective are those that encourage the spirit of discovery

on the part of the learners, they should be the type that the learners, would want to do, want to see, want to listen to.

Sometimes the rural dwellers would need to be involved in the creation of these materials. By involving them they are indirectly developing their skills and experiences which require passing to others. Besides that, the opportunity to participate actively in the teaching-learning process would be to the advantage of the learners.

It is very obvious to state that no instructional material can compete with reality. Whatever instructional material the Better Life Programme implementers may need to use, must be very close to reality, because the use of realia would create a better learning experience for the rural women. It is thereby suggested that whenever or where-ever the real experience exists, be it accidental or created within the immediate environment rural dwellers (learners) should be made to see, touch, feel and smell the objects. This idea is better than any other suggestion already mentioned above.

Flip Chart

A good and well prepared flip chart should contain not more than 10 to 12 charts. The cards should be stacked in order and not more than one card should be shown at a time. The presenter should prepare illustrations so that they face the learners. It is usually better to allow a learner to flip the chart while the presenter (teacher) reads out the written message. The flip chart is useful, in that,

information or skills to be taught can be presented in sequence. The materials required are:

- (i) - papers, pencil, paint, cardboards brown papers, brushes, ink etc.
- (ii) - a piece of plywood of about 40 cm x 50 cm
- (iii) - 2 bottles and 2 wing nuts

Steps in preparing a Flip Chart

- Step i - Choose a topic that will give you the opportunity to produce it on a flip chart.
- Step ii - List all the points that are required for enlightening the rural women on the selected topic.
- Step iii - Describe all the points or tell a story about the points.
- Step iv - Arrange the story in a logical sequence
- Step v - Think about visual description and look for drawings or illustrations to match the designed sentences or phrases
- Step vi - Use old calendars for your flip chart. You will have to glue the drawing or illustrations on one side and the sentences or phrases on the other.

Posters

Posters are a useful way of transmitting a message related to health matters. In the classroom situations and outdoors, a poster can be made and used to get the attention of the people for the purpose of reminding them of an idea, a topic or a concept, or a method of a healthy

practice.

The simple guidelines to be followed when making a poster are as follows. A clear message requires a simplified idea. If words are to be used, they should be short, clearly written and easy to read. Next, the topic of the poster must be related to the subject-matter. The example of breast-feeding in the culturally accepted way for example would, portray a mother with her full breast expressively directed at the baby's sucking mouth. You will find that the presentation of the subject-matter relates very well to our local customs, beliefs and ways of breast-feeding. So also must you make your poster to be immediately apparent. The words, the illustrations, should be eye-catching and very easily understood. And lastly for a poster to be successful it has to be displayed in a place where it can easily be seen.

Achievements of Implementers

So far, the enlightenment programmes of the Nigerian rural dwellers (for women in particular) are still in progress. It is also of note that emphasis on Better Life Programme has been directed towards improving the social life and the economic standing of women in the rural areas. In parts of Ondo State for example, the local method of processing cassava into 'gari' has been improved upon by the implementers of the Better Life Programme. They are noted to have donated machines for processing cassava such that rural women now process their raw product in a more hygienic and acceptable way. Also in parts of Oyo and Osun

States, the implementers of the Better Life Programmes have encouraged the processing of maize, Palm oil and gari.

In the areas of Nigerian arts and culture, at least in the Southern States, cultural dances and traditional plays have been encouraged. Every visitation of the governors' wives were accompanied by a troop singing and dancing in the traditional sense in order to welcome the visitors. Similarly, Nigeria's traditionally made attires like the 'Aso Oke', the "tye and dye" materials and batik clothes production have continued to gain popularity in many parts of the country.

SOME OTHER CHALLENGES

Rural Dwellers and Healthy Living

In order to bring about a faster development of Nigerian rural areas, there would be the need to redirect the attention of rural women to healthy living. 'Health they say is wealth'. The implementers of the Better Life Programme would need to mount up campaigns on healthy living condition. Areas like water storage system would need improvement. The water purification techniques simply could be communicated to a large population of people through the use of a step-by-step diagramatic visuals on posters and flip charts on how this vital aspect of life style could be achieved. Examples through demonstrations can then be carried out in the villages while the posters are left behind as parts of the ongoing campaign strategy through instructional materials.

Similarly, instructions on protection from getting

infected with air and water borne diseases as well as some other communicable diseases can as well be illustrated in sequence. Deadly diseases like measles and cholera for example can be explained with simplified illustrations. Hence, the problem and possible preventive measures can also be communicated to the rural dwellers until noticeable amount of knowledge has been acquired. In order to live a healthy life style, there will be the need to eat a balanced diet. This discussion will be incomplete without giving examples of what media can do in bringing about an improved production of food for the rural dwellers. The Better Life programme implementers should focus attention on food crop production.

Food Crop Production

Most of the meals that Nigerians eat comprise the starchy food stuffs with the green leaves. The use of media can disseminate useful information on the required diet that people should eat. The classification of food types can be produced on posters and charts for mass campaign purposes on the need to eat improved diets. When you educate a woman you are indirectly educating the masses. The Better Life Programme implementers should encourage women in the rural areas to become aware of the need to eat the reasonable quantity of food so that the concepts of eating the correct and balanced proportion of food stuff could be passed to their offsprings.

The rural and urban women can become more enlightened through instructions being communicated through the media

of posters, diagrams, charts and pictures.

It is known that rural dwellers are mostly peasant farmers. Both male and female now go to the farm, as a result of the economic recession. The Better Life programme implementers through the use of low-cost media can communicate on seedlings. The improved preservation techniques, and the improved methods of planting can be highlighted on charts such that production can be increased. Concepts such as number of seeds to be planted in a space area, the measure of fertilizers to be used per plant per acre, how the fertilizers should be applied in order not to over-saturate the plant, all can be taught through selected media, and the inexpensive ones would be preferred, since the use of film strips, slides etc. may be found too expensive and cumbersome. Since access to women in rural areas may become difficult for the mobile films producers because of difficult access routes, illustrative ideas which communicate precise strategies on 'flats' could augment the demonstrations on technological know how.

CONCLUSION

The programme of 'Better Life' that was ushered in, in recent times have various advantages for women living in the rural areas. A lot of effort is still being made to bring about the best of the rural dwellers. Both money and human effort as well as material resources are being exhausted in ensuring that the campaign turns out to become very successful. Although few women who are in the fore front of this programme are aware of the several loop holes

that beset the laudable Better Life Programme, the implementers should be more aggressive at driving their objectives home, and hence achieving more favourable results.

It is suggested that campaigns should be mounted with full force so as to increase awareness of Nigerians generally about the need for the 'Better Life Programme'. The rural dwellers who are supposed to benefit from the programme should be encouraged to make use of the golden opportunity which is being opened up for them.

Implication for Designers

Designers of communicable materials, the instructional designers, fashion designers and the lay artists have much to gain from the 'Better Life Programme'. As it can be seen, governors' wives need fashionably designed dresses in order to improve their looks and their status. The rural dwellers can take a cue from what they see the governors' wives put on. The locally made 'adire' has become a thing of fashion; designers should design to the tune of our acceptable tradition so as to encourage the rural dwellers. Technologists and engineers are encouraged to design more usable and durable machines for agricultural product processing.

The instructional material designers need to be more aggressive at making sure that posters, flip charts and other flats are considered in communicating information at this austere time.

Artists are encouraged to make efforts at recording the events of the period of the "Better Life"

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