

THE NEED FOR TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIALS
FOR THE HEALTH TEAM
in AFRO-EMRO-SEARO Countries

Report of
Consultation, W.H.O. Geneva, 18-19 December 1975

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

The 25th Assembly requested the Director General to carry out a feasibility study of whether the Organization should prepare and publish textbooks (WHA 25.26)

In August 1975 Dr Tejada-de-Rivero, Assistant Director General, wrote to the Regional Directors of AFRO, EMRO and SEARO to elicit their views on the needs for teaching and learning materials and the role of WHO. As a result of positive replies from all three Regions a consultative meeting was convened in Geneva on 18-19 December 1975 by Educational Communication Systems, Division of Health Manpower Development.

The consultative meeting surveyed the present position in the three Regions and discussed methods of identifying specific, priority needs as the basis for planning and implementing remedial action at country and regional levels.

This report of the consultative meeting includes a suggested checklist for the identification of needs for teaching/learning materials.* The meeting wished to emphasize that the collection of information should be seen as merely a necessary first step towards planning and implementing effective and coordinated action. The collection of information should thus be carried out as simply and as quickly as possible.

REVIEW OF PRESENT POSITION IN THE REGIONS

Quite apart from the well known cultural, economic, educational, political and religious differences it was made clear that there were specific differences in available finance, as well as in design, production and distribution facilities in relation to teaching/learning materials. Examples cited ranged from the recently established National

* For the purpose of this consultation, it is recognized that material does not necessarily mean a textbook. With the increase in modern understanding of learning, it is recognized that learning materials may be in many forms - programmed units, packages, manuals, audiovisual components, etc. - each adapted to the demands and constraints of both subject and student. For this reason, in a forward planning programme, "materials" include all those educational aids which are relevant to the needs of the teacher, learner and the practitioner.

Book Trust in India and ample printing and publishing facilities in SEARO, to lack of such facilities in AFRO. Although both regions reported a lack of expertise in the design of suitable educational materials, there was common recognition of the need to produce materials that would meet local requirements. It was agreed that material produced in other countries, for example in the industrialised countries, was no longer entirely satisfactory. There was also a universal lack of materials for the education and training of lower categories of health staff and especially of village health workers.

AFRO had already identified a number of priorities and was ready to solicit expert and financial assistance towards the design and production of materials. EMRO was interested to obtain advice on how a more general survey of needs could be planned and implemented. SEARO saw the role of WHO as that of a catalyst to enable individual countries to help themselves, so that a needs survey would identify priorities and indicate areas where WHO could play a useful part. All regions reported a strong interest in the creation of locally applicable teaching/learning materials.

It was made clear that the identification of the various national and international facilities for design, production and distribution would greatly enhance a more rational and economical deployment of available resources. For example, collaboration at the national level would involve private industry as well as the ministries of education and health. At the international level, examples of potential collaboration were cited in relation to UNESCO. A number of cases were described by the UNESCO participant wherein excellent printing and reproduction facilities in Africa were being used at less than 20% of capacity. Such facilities were related to the educational and commercial sectors, and would not normally be considered in a survey restricted to the health sector. He also quoted examples of the intelligent use of the mass media for cheap, effective dissemination of learning materials. In West Africa, the party newspapers, issued weekly, reached every village in the country, and provided ample space for educational messages.. Similarly, the radio, especially combined with distributed materials, could be an excellent way of

furnishing continuing education of the health team.

The experience of the PAHO Medical Textbook programme, not only in its planning and financing, but also in its current expansion and change in direction, was of considerable assistance to the group. The lessons learned during the past few years helped to indicate the lines to be followed in the development of a new regional programme.

To get started as quickly as possible with the production of educational material for which there is already an identified need, it would be desirable to include a small sum, (e.g. \$30 000-\$ 60 000) for educational materials in the Regional Office budget for the next programme budget cycle (78-79). This would permit production of a few manuals with limited press runs of about 2 000 copies each and issued under some title such as AFRO (EMRO, SEARO) Educational Manual Series. If demand on a regional or interregional basis so warranted, additional copies could be financed for sale through the Publications Revolving Fund.

SURVEY OF NEEDS FOR TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIALS

It was suggested that surveys could be used for a number of purposes:

- (a) To enable individual member countries to define priorities, to plan and implement action, and to prepare well documented submissions for assistance from international agencies or internal funds.
- (b) To enable each region to identify priorities and common requirements as well as available facilities towards planning and implementing action, as well as to seek financial and practical assistance.
- (c) To enable WHO as a whole to coordinate action with its own resources, with finances obtained from elsewhere and with the collaboration of other UN agencies.

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The above range of uses was seen to indicate that the depth of an enquiry into needs, and the type and volume of data to be collected, would have to depend on the intention of any particular survey into the needs for teaching/learning materials. In no instance should the collection of information become an activity in its own right; it should always be seen as merely a means towards rational decision-making.

The checklist set out in the following pages is an effort to categorize some of the more likely kinds of data that will need to be collected, but it should be emphasized at the outset that not all kinds of data need to be collected in all cases. Clearly the teaching and learning materials needed by the apprentice village midwife or health worker in remote rural areas will be different from those intended to keep a provincial malaria team chief, already well schooled in his trade, abreast of new developments of interest and concern to him. In fact, in most instances, the less information collected the better, provided the information is carefully related to the kind of student or teacher it is intended to help. A small body of useful and relevant information is much more likely to form a workable basis for operation decisions.

The checklist will probably serve another useful purpose in some countries by making it clearly apparent just how little of this information is available and how much it will be necessary to improvise and innovate if useful materials are to be produced at a reasonable price.

(A) CHECKLIST OF SUGGESTED TYPES OF DATA FOR SURVEYS OF NEEDS

(1) Choice of Teaching/Learning Materials Required

Teaching/learning materials are only a part, though an integral part, of any process of learning. Thus the choice between types of learning materials, if there are options, may require more detailed collection of certain types of information. Materials are required for three different

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categories of consumer: the teacher (both to reinforce his knowledge of his specialist subject and to assist him in his vocation as a teacher); the student during his basic training; and the health worker whose needs are for reference during his service, for advanced training and/or re-training, and for his continuing education. In the succeeding paragraphs, the "student" refers to the learner whether he be in training or in service.

(i) Job Description/Task Analysis

What will he be expected to do in actual practice, in what situation, with what equipment, and in what relationship to other health personnel?

(ii) Profile of Student

What is his educational background? Is he literate? Has his previous learning been based on listening, reading and/or practical work? What is his level of education and facility for learning? What can he do already?

(iii) Learning Objectives

What intellectual and physical skills will he need to acquire? (e.g. problem-solving, acting as a member of a team; what must he remember, what must he be able to explain?).

(iv) Teaching/Learning Methods

What methods are most likely to provide him with these skills? (lecture, group discussions, individual study including reading, audiovisual illustration, practical exercises, project work, etc.)?

(v) Constraints or Limitations

How many students have to be trained? What time is available for training? What space is available? How many teachers are available? Are the teachers trained in educational methods?

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Some or all of the above questions may have to be answered before it is possible to decide what types of teaching/learning materials should be provided. For example, within the constraints of cost and local feasibility, audio tapes may be more appropriate than books for the semi-literate health workers and simulation models may be more appropriate when a practical skill is to be acquired. However, not infrequently a combination of learning methods and thus a combination of learning materials may be called for.

(2) Preparation of Teaching/Learning Materials

Here it will be important to explore practicability in terms of production and cost. The latter may depend on whether or not such materials can be used in more than one country or region.

(1) Existing Materials

What exists already for the specific job? Is it appropriate and up-to-date? Can it be modified or adapted? Can it be used with existing facilities (e.g. buildings, equipment)? Is it financially feasible? How can it be obtained? How and by whom can it be reviewed or assessed? Is it imported or indigenous material?

(11) Material to be Createda) The Market

How many students are likely to need it? Is it appropriate for use in more than one country/region? Is one copy required for each student? How quickly will it go out of date? Can it be easily updated? Are teachers equipped for and conversant with the effective use of the chosen format?

b) The Production

Are subject specialists available to provide the content?

Are educational specialists available to design the materials?

Are production facilities available locally, nationally, regionally, or inter-regionally? Can production facilities be provided more readily/economically by private industry, different government agencies, international agencies?

What is the cost of design/production likely to be?

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(iii) Responsibility

Who has responsibility for the selection, design and production of materials (Health or Education Ministries, medical associations, universities, etc.)

(3) Distribution of Teaching/Learning Materials

In some developing countries this entire section may be academic because it is the government who acts as prime distributor. In these cases if the government is unwilling to solve these problems, the feasibility of the project will be in doubt. If distribution is to be considered, these are some of the factors that should be taken into account.

- a) How is distribution organized to ensure minimum delay, minimum wastage, and maximum coverage of potential users at country, regional and inter-regional levels? Will private, governmental, and/or international agencies be more efficient?
- b) How is information disseminated on available materials to ensure that potential users are kept up-to-date?
- c) How can import taxes be avoided or minimized.

(B) ORGANIZATION OF SURVEYS

It was suggested above that such surveys into needs for teaching/learning materials could be conducted at different levels of detail, according to the purpose of each enquiry - whether for one type of health worker at a specific level of learning, whether for all aspects of education and training of all members of the health team in a given country, or whether for a global survey in a number of regions.

In all instances the survey should provide only sufficient information to enable rational planning to be undertaken. In the experience of the group the circulation of detailed questionnaires would be unlikely to be a practical approach, if only because their analysis is bound to be a laborious, costly, and time consuming task that is seldom justifiable in terms of the information gained.

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Where possible, the survey should be based on the analysis of data already available from government and educational sources. This can be verified and extended through selected inspections by a consultant. It was noted that both EMRO and SEARO wished to employ a consultant for both the collection and analysis of data, while AFRO preferred to use a consultant for the analysis of data only.

To assist regions in the selection of consultants, the Group considered the following to be desirable individual qualities.

The most important attribute should be a demonstrated ability in problem-solving, preferably in the developing world, and in making do with available facilities so as to turn out the best possible product at the least cost. The consultant should be familiar with conventional and modern educational methods, but not be so obsessed with the latter so that he is unable to adapt to local educational situations.

Prior experience as a WHO consultant in a developing country would be an asset.

CONCLUSION

Evidently, the method employed by each region and the extent of the programme of work will result from an individual assessment of needs and priorities. The possibilities for external funding (e.g. the PAHO programme and the American Development Bank) will depend on the existence of a soundly based plan of action; and such a plan must be founded on a survey of needs and resources. The first stage must therefore be the conduct of such a survey. This would not of course prevent the further development of existing plans for design, production and distribution of materials - as described by AFRO, EMRO and SEARO, including the possibility of immediate budgeting of funds for regional educational publications. However, the group considered that the eventual aim should be a coordinated programme in which the most economical use was made of all the existing resources, both within and outside the health sector.