

ABSTRACT

Towards The Design Of A Professional Training Programme:
An Examination Of Competencies Underpinning The Practice Of Health Educators
In Trinidad And Tobago.

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Health educators in Trinidad and Tobago are demanding additional professional training to cope with their role of encouraging healthy lifestyles. Against this background of a demand for training, this thesis examines the training needs of health educators in Trinidad and Tobago by reviewing their perceptions on competencies required for practice, the impact of training on current practice and their preferences for future training.

A qualitative perspective using a case study approach was used, with the unit of analysis for the case being university trained health education officers employed in the public sector in Trinidad and Tobago. The theoretical framework was informed by theories and perspectives on adult learning and continuing professional education.

Emerging from the data was the perception that intrinsic characteristics, such as caring and nurturing, are as important as extrinsic skills such as interpersonal and research skills to health education practice. That notwithstanding, the skills practitioners appeared to be using most were events planning and lecturing. With

regard to preferences for training, the responses were focused on the duration of training, delivery modes and training methodology.

Conclusions drawn from the data are firstly that there is a gap between skills and competencies taught, and those exhibited in practice. Secondly, while there has been training in foundation areas attention should now be given to short-term training in new areas, as and when needed.

It is recommended that “metacompetencies” be considered necessary attributes and be incorporated in continuing training. Consideration should also be given to training that is focused on supplying timely, in-service, situation-specific skills and knowledge.

Keywords: health education; health educators; health promotion; professional training; adult education; experiential learning; meta-competencies.