

# REAPPRAISING HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOR FUNCTIONALITY AND SELF RELIANCE

*Patricia A. Okoh*

## **Abstract**

This study was designed to suggest how Home Economics can be reappraised in primary education for functionality and self reliance. Home Economics is a vocational course that is designed to assist individuals to acquire skills from the wide range of career opportunities it can provide to make them self reliant. The teaching of Home Economics as observed is poorly handled in primary schools with little or no instructional resources to go with it. The importance of Home Economics and its weaknesses were also x-rayed for redirection towards skill acquisition, job creation and self reliance for pupils in primary school who may decide to set up small or medium scale businesses.

## **Introduction**

Home Economics is a dynamic field of study that respond to changes in the society. It is the study of the proper management of the family and the home in order that the basic needs of each member of the family are met. (Akanbi, Bello, and Eyisi, 1990). Specifically, the Importance of Home Economics according to Anyakoha (2008) are;

- (1) It teaches people how to live a good, healthy and happy life.
- (2) It prepares people to use what they have (resources) to get what they need.
- (3) It prepares boys and girls for home making.
- (4) It helps people to develop their abilities.
- (5) It prepares people for the jobs that require Home Economics knowledge and skills.
- (6) It can help people to start their own business.
- (7) It teaches people how to care for themselves.
- (8) It teaches people how to care for their homes.
- (9) It teaches people how to spend their money wisely.

- (10) It teaches people how to plan, cook, serve and eat good food.
- (11) It teaches people how to plan, choose, make, wear and maintain good clothing.

The importance of Home Economics for functionality and self reliance is vital in achieving the national goals and objectives of education at both primary and secondary levels of education as stated in the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, 2004).

Primary Education in Nigeria is of major importance. The Nigerian system of education (6 – 3 – 3 – 4) is a pointer to this fact. The 6 – 3 – 3 – 4 system of education means six (6) years of primary education, three (3) years of junior secondary education, three (3) years of senior secondary education, and a minimum of four (4) years of university education to obtain the first degree. (Orona, 1998).

## **Concept of Primary Education**

According to Coventry and Nixon (1999), the word primary means; first in time, order, or importance (of a school or education) for children below the age of eleven (11). Corroborating FGN (2004), primary education is the education given in an institution to children aged 6 – 11 plus. This determines the success or failure of the whole education system. Hence, “Primary Education” refers to the first stage of the total process developing human ability and behaviour. Olorunmonei (2006) noted that the first social process in which one achieves social competence and individual growth carried on in a selected control setting is instructionalised.

### **The Goals of Primary Education**

The goals of primary education as listed in FGN (2004) are;

- (1) To inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively.
- (2) To lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking.
- (3) To give citizenship education as a bases for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society.
- (4) To mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child.
- (5) To develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment.
- (6) To give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity.
- (7) To provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

Ogwazor and Nwaham (2008) stated that primary education was aimed at producing citizens that are capable of using their heads, hands and hearts for the overall socio-economic improvement of the individuals and the nations at large. Pupils could set up small businesses at this age and become self reliant.

### **Home Economics in Primary Schools**

The subjects in primary school curriculum include Home Economics. It is a vocational course. Home Economics is one of the primary school subjects that require special teachers because of the special skills required. Curriculum in education setting is viewed as all the experiences, which are provided to the students under the direction of the school (Okafor, 1988, Oyekan, 2000). The organization and presentation of instruction documentarily passes through the curriculum syllabus – scheme of work lesson plan network (Oyekan, 2000). Curriculum of schools

should be designed so that the products can be useful to themselves and the society at large.

Home Economics curriculum is available from primaries one (1) to six (6). It has however been observed that despite the wide popularity and recognition given to this noble profession in the national policy on education, many primary schools do not offer Home Economics. It is also observed that professional Home Economics teachers are lacking in most schools and where Home Economics teachers are available, they are not treated as special teachers as stipulated in primary school curriculum. They are made to teach other subjects in addition to Home Economics. In most schools, it has also been observed that instructional resources (materials) are not provided e.g. food laboratory, clothing laboratory or home management resident. Many primary school pupils do not know how Home Economics laboratory looks like. Home Economics teachers under this situation do not see the need to teach the pupils practical Home Economics in all the aspects.

### **Functional Education**

Functional education according to Zeilberger (1999) have several meanings depending on the country concerned; she stated that in the United States and in Germany, the adjective “functional” refers to education that comes spontaneously from the influence of the environment; it is a kind of undirected, “natural” education, that is different from the deliberate, goal – oriented education, that is directed by man.

In Western Europe this term refers to education that comes from the child's needs, and that uses the child's interest as a mechanism for activating him towards his desirable activities; its purpose she added is to develop the life of the mind, that acts from

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the wholeness of organic life, with relation to practical life in the present and in the future.

Functional instruction or teaching according to Zeilberger (1999) takes as its starting point the activity of the child and it is based on a practical work-plan that is intended to have the child master the subject-matter. The subject matter to be taught is considered according to the importance in the life of the human in his childhood and adulthood. The instruction is based on phases in the life of the pupil; the county, the environment, the daily life. Home Economics curriculum and instruction is fully in line with the above stipulation for functional instruction or teaching.

#### **The Principles of Functional Education**

Zeilberger (1999) identified some of the principles of functional education as;

- (1) One has to judge the child from the standpoint of his own world-view, and to describe him in terms of concepts drawn from his experience and to teach him according to his criteria; one has to relate to him like a person that ought to be respected and nourished.
- (2) The functional education is based on the natural need of the child to enquire and know, to observe and to work, and especially to play; it strives to arouse in the child spiritual longing, like the love of the good and of work, that will not come by force, but rather in a free atmosphere and in suitable living conditions; for that purpose, the school should create a lively and happy environment, where the child will act enthusiastically.
- (3) The educator should get to know properly the child's interests and the changes that he undergoes as he grows up physically and emotionally; hence the teacher should adapt his teaching to the natural growth of the child.
- (4) One should not demand from the child an action, unless he has a natural need for

it. In order to activate the child, the teacher has to place the child in conditions that will naturally induce the action, by satisfying a need. The motivation of the child should not be external (fear of punishment or hope for a reward), but internal (out of genuine interest in the discussed question and in the activities connected with it).

- (5) The education will develop the intellectual and moral abilities of the child rather than force-feeding him many facts, that are quickly forgotten, or are accumulated in the memory like a foreign substance, without any connected to his life.
- (6) An "active school" is needed, where the classroom would be a kind of laboratory. The art of the teacher will be reflected by his ability to bridge between the studied material, that is not very attractive, and the natural needs of the child: "the best way for achieving this goal is play".
- (7) Because the child must in the future live in a social framework, one must introduce the child to work and to subjects that prepare for social activity.
- (8) One should no longer have examinations that are but a burden on the memory; instead one has to introduce an "achievement summary" that were achieved during the school year. For that, the teacher has to use diagnostics and tests, in order to check his own teaching method and to summarize the achievements of his students.

A Functional Home Economics is very important. Home Economics is practical oriented and contributes to national development. Anyakoha (2008) pointed out that Home Economics is focused on improvement of family living since it is the

basic unit of the society and nation. When the welfare of every family is improved, national development is promoted. She also added that Home Economics;

- (1) Prepare individuals to work and earn income. It reduces unemployment in the country.
- (2) It reduces poverty in the country.
- (3) It contributes to food production, processing, preservation and preparation. It therefore promotes food security.
- (4) It helps to promote health of citizens.

#### **Careers in Home Economics for Self Reliance**

Ogbene (1988) noted that Home Economics is a self-reliant and dynamic field of study whose central theme is hinged on the improvement of lives of everyone in the society. Therefore, it is the right tool for self reliance.

Home Economics related business/career opportunities for self reliance are:

Food and Nutrition: Dietetics, Nutrition, Food service, Catering, Hotel Management, Teaching, Research, Food Technology.

Clothing and Textile: Designing, Pattern illustration, Beauty care and Hair Dressing, Dressmaking/Tailoring, Dry Cleaning and Laundering, Modeling, Fashion Merchandizing, Weaving, Fabric Dyeing, Teaching, Research.

Home Management: Interior Decoration/Designing, Institutional Housekeeping, Advertising and Promoting, Baby-sitting, Child care, Social Welfare Work, Teaching, Research.

Other Careers include;

Home making, Home Economics Extension, Journalism. (Anyakoha, 2008).

#### **Reappraising Home Economics for Functionality and Self Reliance**

To reappraise according to Coventry and Nixon (1999) is the continuous estimation of value or quality of anything. This includes Home Economics. Home Economics teaching should be

reappraised regularly for functionality and self reliance. Home Economics should be functional. Ovute (2005) stated that Home Economics can help individuals (male and female) acquire basic skills needed for gainful employment and family living. This will make room for self reliance. Umeoduagu (2008b) stated that the curriculum of science education should be revisited at all levels to incorporate new knowledge and requisite problem solving skills. This equally affects Home Economics because it is a science subject.

Home Economics teaching should be reappraised towards activity based and child centred where pupils have direct contact with what they are learning. Bamide (1985) stated that it provides first hand experience which guarantees learning of the most vital and most lasting qualities. There is no-gainsaying that primary school is where the sound base for education is laid, Umeoduagu (1993b) suggested that science at the primary school level should commence with the art of exploration, observation and interaction with the environment. Home Economics is also a science subject and should be tailored towards this direction.

Home Economics must move with the times. The issue of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) should be introduced in the teaching of Home Economics. Reappraising Home Economics towards ICT will make teaching and learning more meaningful. Ekwo (2005), opined that the huge advances in ICT can enhance education and social change in the form of programmes to upgrade the quality of in-school instruction to reach pre-school and out-of-school children and to teach basic literacy, numeracy, survival skills in health, nutrition and agriculture to adults. Udensi (2006) added that computer interconnected with telecommunications are very effective

when education becomes independent of the location of the learners. In the words of Umeoduagu (2008a), introduction of modern technologies will help to concretize learning taking cognizance of the current issues of globalization and the acquisition of global skills.

Practical demonstration by Home Economics teachers should be a major focal point in reappraising Home Economics teaching for functionality and self reliance. Teachers who studied Home Economics at Nigeria Certificate on Education (NCE) or above should be employed to teach the subject in primary schools. Education in the word of Umeoduagu (2003) should produce within a society, a crop of people who having been empowered with requisite skills and knowledge are able to utilize all such for the betterment of the society. This will enable the pupils in primary school to learn the required skills for self reliance from their teachers. Umeoduagu (2009) also added that we need a disciplined mind, positive attitude to work, and patriotism to bring about national development in Nigeria.

Reappraising the issue of laboratory and its equipment matters in teaching of Home Economics for functional education and self reliance to be achieved. Obasigie and Orumwense (2010) pointed out that the government in fulfilling her objective of reducing educational cost have over the years been under funding educational sectors and hence science laboratory are under-equipped (in the case of primary schools, there are no laboratory and no equipment), they also added that due to a chronic inadequacy of science equipment, nation wide, (Home Economics inclusive), has led to teaching such subjects theoretically and only explaining the practical aspects verbally-without actual experiments or practical being carried out. This will not make room for functional education and self reliance because the skills explained are not practicalised.

### **Conclusion**

The issue of self reliance is very paramount in this era of unemployment in the country. Reappraising Home Economics education at the primary school level is a very timely step because it will help to expose the weaknesses of Home Economics despite the wide recognition as skill acquisition course in the National Policy on Education and nip it in the bud.

### **Recommendations**

Having exposed the strengths and weaknesses of Home Economics in helping individuals to be self reliant, the following strategies if implemented could help achieve the purpose.

- (1) Home Economics teachers in the primary schools should be made to teach Home Economics alone from primary one to six for proper skill acquisition.
- (2) Well equipped laboratory should be provided by the government. Government can also partner with individuals, parents and co-operate bodies if they cannot do it alone.
- (3) Emphasis should be layed on practical demonstration to enhance skill acquisition for self reliance.

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**Patricia A. Okoh**  
**Department of Home Economics,**  
**College of Education, Agbor**  
**In Affiliation With Delta State**  
**University Abraka.**