

PROMOTING HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION FOR POVERTY REDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The survival of any nation or people is predicated on the level of development. Where the standard of living is low, the nation is at risk of total collapse. Home Economics Education curriculum is adequately structured to meet the challenges of today. It is a vital tool which can be used to develop individuals. Home Economics Education is a field where opportunities exist for promoting self employment and employment in private and public sector of the economy for reducing unemployment and poverty in the country. This paper focuses on promoting Home Economics Education for poverty reduction in Nigeria. It highlighted government policy initiatives for poverty reduction, Home Economics Education and poverty reduction, the role of Home Economics Education in poverty reduction and factors that can hinder effective teaching of Home Economics for skill acquisition and poverty reduction. The paper ended with recommended ways of promoting Home Economics Education for poverty reduction among which is that Home Economics Education Programme should include more of vocational courses that will lead to skill acquisition and entrepreneurial skills to enable individuals meet the changes and challenges in the business world.

Poverty is the inability to attain a minimal standard of living measured in terms of basic consumption needs or income required to satisfy them. Poverty is one of the most serious problems in Nigeria today. Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa and the sixth largest oil producing country in the world with an estimated population of 150 million people living in both rural and urban areas. Poverty which is the inability of an individual or a group in securing the basic necessities of life such as clothing, food health, portable water and shelter, is deadly. It is a serious problem which has eaten deep into the fabric of African countries. According to Adebayo (2007) 40-45% of Africa's population lives in absolute poverty and 30% belong to the extreme poor. Those in absolute poverty live on \$2 per day while those in extreme poverty below \$1 a day. The World Bank Report (1999) placed Nigeria among the 25th poorest countries in the world (Adebayo, 2007). According to the National Planning Commission (2004) two thirds of the population is poor despite the fact that Nigeria is a giant producer of oil. Oyedokun (2003) observed that 70% of Nigerians live below poverty line and survive on less than \$1 a day. The United Nations

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Development Programme (2000) defined poverty as the denial of choices and opportunities most basic to human development to lead a long, healthy creative life, freedom, dignity, self-esteem and the respect of others. The New Encyclopedia Britannica (1981) saw poverty as lack of means to satisfy a person's needs for nutrition, housing, clothing and other essentials of life. The poor often lack essential assets such as good productive resources and capital. Their employment situation is insecure and fragile, their incomes seasonal and meager. The poor live in remote, unhygienic and resources-poor areas in distant villages and in appalling slums. Their poverty results from lack of incomes, poor health, education, social safety, nets and discrimination.

Poverty encourages corruption, drug trafficking smuggling, prostitution and all sorts of deviant behaviour in the society. Poverty depicts a situation without competence and subsistence needs. It is not just merely the conditions of not having enough money; it is a condition that relates to the absence of relevant skills for sustainable living. In the light of this, the paper looked at; government policy initiatives for poverty reduction, Home Economics Education and poverty reduction, the role of Home Economics Education in poverty reduction, factors that can hinder, effective teaching of Home Economics Education for skill acquisition and poverty reduction and ended with suggested recommendations for promoting Home Economics Education towards poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Government Policy Initiatives for Poverty Reduction

Various governments have in the past come up with schemes and programmes that will bring changes toward poverty reduction in Nigeria. Those schemes and programmes range from Operation Feed the Nation of the 1970s, the Green Revolution, the National Directorate of Employment, the Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) etc. These poverty reduction strategies are actuated by governments to reduce the effects of wants on the poor.

Despite all the efforts by various governments, poverty still creates both spiritual and physical crises in the lives of Nigerians. The spiritual crises cause one to see nothing good in another person's actions and this impact negatively on the economic, social, intellectual and material well-being of man. According to Adebayo (2007), Nigeria is a place where the teeming population finds life unbearable as they are unable to comfortably provide for the basic needs and enjoy good medical care, education and employable skills.

Since many Nigerians still live below the line inspite of all the efforts by the government to ameliorate the situation, the only option which can bring about change for this pathetic situation is skill acquisition by promoting Home Economics Education Programme in both secondary and tertiary institutions.

Home Economics Education and Poverty Reduction

The importance of Vocational education to developing nation like Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Equally, there is the need to urgently equip the youth with employable skills to minimize the problem of unemployment, shortage of man power for technological development and poverty. These needs are properly highlighted by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), National Policy on Education. Vocational Education is described as that part of the total experience of the individual whereby he learns successfully to carry on a gainful occupation. Olaitan (1996) pointed out that organized vocational education is concerned with the development of skills and success in any useful occupation.

Home Economics Education is a field of study that offers numerous occupations for individuals. As a skill oriented course, it possesses the capability of equipping individuals with saleable skills that make for self employment, self reliance and creation of wealth. It is an all embracing programme that focuses on the welfare of individuals and their families. It is a vocational and skill based education which prepares one for gainful employment, employer of labour, good family living, self employment and development of the society. It equips individuals to attain and live a useful and satisfying life. Home Economics Education is self reliant and contributes immensely to national development (Olaitan, 1996). Home Economics Education is that aspect of the total education programme that provides the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitude needed to perform in the business world as a producer or consumer of goods and services that business offers. Home Economics Education prepares students for the acquisition and development of skills and competencies, attitude and attributes which are necessary for efficiency of the economic system. It makes people to be job producers rather than job seekers (Audu and Abdulkadir, 2009). Home Economics Education contributes in some measures to the objective of self realization, so work offered in Home Economics Education enable the students to improve upon their ability to solve problems. Since a skill is necessary to be gainfully employed and fight poverty, Home Economics Education provides such skill for self employment, it enables students to acquire skills, knowledge and relevant attitudes necessary for self-employment or employment in specific business environment.

This is why Njoku (2002) reiterated that Home Economics Education is education for and about skills and business with primary purpose of preparing students for gainful employment in Home Economics occupations, which will help in poverty reduction.

The Role of Home Economics Education in Poverty Reduction

Home Economics Education is a conglomerate of courses that is concerned with the acquisition development and inculcation of proper values for the survival of the individual, the family and the society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Every individual aims at improving his economic status by engaging in self sustaining activities that are meant to uplift him to a higher level and remove him from poverty.

The basic mission of Home Economics Education according to Nwakwo (2004), is helping individuals and families to improve their lives through:

- *Training for necessary manpower in entrepreneurship.*
- *Development of improved skills, competencies, capabilities and utilization of workers employed in government and private sectors.*
- *Training and imparts of necessary skills to individuals who shall be self reliant economically.*
- *Provision of technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for economic development.*

The educational goals Audu and Abdullahi (2009) observed, go in line with the objectives of Home Economics Education, which include:

- *Empowering the individual with desirable skills knowledge and value to perform specific functions so as to become self-reliant.*
- *Helping him to appreciate the world around him and contribute maximally to the social and economic development of the nation.*
- *Empowering the individual in such a way that the individual will develop his intellectual capacity that would help him to make meaningful decisions in all spheres of life.*
- *Helping the individual to become a judicious spender and develop proper values for the achievement of healthy living and growth of the nation.*

The recipient of Home Economics Education is expected to have acquired basic expertise in a particular branch in which he shows special aptitude and interest. Home Economics Education prepares one for wage earning or for proper use of hands and head to earn a living using necessary vocational skills and ethics. It prepares one for survival as one can always fall back to the skills acquired in the course in times of emergency such as retrenchment. Home Economics Education is a means of reducing poverty in that it helps one to live happily in the environment by learning how to use the goods and services available to the family and by promoting sound attitude and adapting easily to newer technological developments (Nwankwo, 2004).

According to Audu and Abdulkadir (2009), graduates of Home Economics Education may establish in any of the following areas:

1. Clothing and Textiles: The following jobs are open to clothing and textiles major:

- Fashion designing.
- Clothing maintenance.
- Laundry services.
- Tie-dying and batik.
- Textiles and clothing merchandise.
- Pattern illustrator
- Craft work.

2. Food and nutrition related jobs are:

- Catering and hotel management.

- Opening snack centre or restaurant
 - Baking.
 - Food processing and preservation.
3. Child development and family relations: People majoring in this area can work at any of these:
- Nursery as a school director.
 - Proprietors of a private primary or secondary school
 - Director of social/welfare centre.
4. Home Management: Careers in Home Management include:
- Interior decorations.
 - Day care and nursery management.
 - Managing old people's home.
 - Vegetable and flower gardening
 - Extension worker.
 - Institutional home keepers.

Home Economics Education is a means of acquiring entrepreneurial skills and knowledge which will afford the recipients wide saleable opportunities needed to mobilize available resources to meet the desired self employment. The wide employment opportunities as identified makes it the only option which can bring respite for the pathetic situation of unemployment thereby reducing poverty through its credible skills acquisition programme in Nigeria.

Factors that can Hinder Effective Teaching of Home Economics Education for Skills Acquisition and Poverty Reduction.

The following factors according to Njoku (2002) can hinder the teaching of Home Economics Education for functionality and poverty alleviation:

1. Lack of political will by government to put in place policies and programmes that will promote Home Economics Education.
2. Inadequate supply of equipment and instructional materials.
3. Inadequate funding for meaningful technological breakthrough.
4. Shortage of Home Economics Education teaching materials such as current textbooks and journals.
5. inadequate security and maintenance of equipment
6. Poor societal perception of Home Economics Education.

Conclusion

Promoting Home Economics Education is necessary for Nigeria to get out of the current global financial crisis. That is, why this write-up tried to bring to lime light government policy initiatives for poverty reduction, Home Economics Education and poverty reduction, the role of Home Economics Education in poverty reduction, factors that can hinder effective teaching of Home Economics Education for skill acquisition and poverty reduction and recommended ways of promoting Home Economics Education for poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Recommended Ways of Promoting Home Economics Education For Poverty Reduction in Nigeria

This paper makes the following recommendations for promoting Home Economics Education for poverty reduction in Nigeria.

- a. Home Economics Education Programme should include more of vocational courses that will lead to skills acquisition and entrepreneurial skills which will enable individuals to meet the changes and challenges in the world of work.
- b. Home Economics Education by its objectives should provide the necessary link to employment generation.
- c. Home Economists should provide courses meant for poorer people to trade and utilize local resources.
- d. Home Economics Programme should be equipped and adequately financed to enable the programme obtain necessary materials for practical and productivity. This is necessary because learning environment should be a replica of the working environment (Olaitan, 1996).
- e. There is the need for entrepreneurial programme which will achieve self employment and productivity.
- f. Home Economics Education should be given appropriate status at all levels of education system to empower individuals and prepare them to become employers of labour and/or employees in private or public sector of the economy.
- g. Schools should allocate enough time to practical teaching in school time table.
- h. Government should put in place incentives in form of special allowance that will make Home Economics Education attractive and challenging. Kabir (2003) supported this when he recommended for a vocational teaching allowance.

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