

# EXPLOITING HOME ECONOMICS VOCATIONAL SKILLS FOR MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT

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## **Abstract**

There is no doubt that Home Economic education is an essential avenue for manpower development. It is because the society is not static but always in a constant state of change. It implies that for Home Economics education to be meaningful, it must be in consonance with the changing needs of the society. To be relevant in the present complexities and challenges in the society, the programme must be adequately taught for the realization of the set goals and purposes, This paper therefore highlighted the concept and objectives of Home Economics Education, career opportunities, factors militating against the discipline, the multiple roles it plays in manpower development and suggestions were proffered on the way forward.

## **Introduction**

The evolution of man has necessitated the need for a home. Many scholars had written severally, acknowledging the fact that the home at any time stands to be the strength of any nation. It reflects the social and economic status of the society. The first traditional lessons received by a child via the parents is from the home. This has undoubtedly made the home the cornerstone of any human development. Education for effective home and family living is a necessity for a sound vibrant society that is capable of standing the test of corruption, armed robbery, drug peddling, militant youths and other social problems.

Home Economics education is a vocational course which has a direct bearing with the home, the family adopting to the ever changing societal needs and improvement in the standard of living. The philosophy of vocational education is to educate the students to job orientation. National Policy on Education (1998) values vocational education as technical education. It is that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied sciences as well as basic scientific knowledge. According to NCCE (1996) the broad area of vocational education are Fine and Applied Arts and Home Economics Education.

Home Economics Education remains an unexploited avenue to redressing the nation's socio-economic and political woes. The overall family system on the society can only be achieved through the skill and knowledge acquisition in Home Economics for manpower development.

## **Concept of Home Economics**

The term Home Economics originated from the United States of America in 1899 at the Lake Placid conference: it was taught in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to only girls preparing for marriage and to some wives for better house crafts, home management and home making. Different scholars see Home Economics in different ways. To some Home Economists it is a skill and discipline like hygiene, sewing, cooking food and managing resources.

There is an erroneous believe that Home Economics is all about cooking, sewing and family living. The society we live in is dynamic and therefore Home Economics can no longer be considered a woman's work in the modern times of technological age. Ihindan (1996:43) defines Home Economics "as a field of study which is concerned with using developing and managing human resources for the benefit of individuals, families, institutions and the community now and in future". KahaJeu (1996:6) defines Home Economics as a field of study that deals with the relationship of man to his immediate environment and how he uses the available resources to solve man's problems and improve the living conditions of his family and the world at large".

American Home Economics Association (AHEA) (1959) in Olaitan and Agusiobo (1981) defines Home Economics as:

The field of knowledge and services primarily concerned with strengthening family life through: Educating the individual for family living, improving the services and goods. Used by families conducting researches to discover the changing needs; and the means of satisfying those needs; and furthering community, national, world conditions favorable to family and societal living.

Home Economics is the study of human and material forces affecting homes, families and the

utilization of this knowledge for the benefit of mankind. It places high premium on the welfare of the individuals and the improvement in standard of living of families and national empowerment.

### **Home Economics Education**

Home Economics education in its broadest sense is the acquisition of skills and knowledge, teaching people to do better those things that they want to do. Norman (1990) perceives Home Economics education as an evolution which helped men to evolve institution "Home," encouraged virtues of affection, courage, sympathy, and nobility and developed an appreciation of love for family, community, country and humanity as a whole.

Olaitan and Aguisobo (1981:4) stressing the need for a social philosophy for Home Economics state that:

The home of the past is not the home of today. The advent of formal education, civilization and technology has altered the structure and function of the home. For women to meet the changes of modern times, they need education that will cater for the demands of the time, such as knowledge of modern and scientific equipment in the home. Home Economics to meet such demands.

From these statements, training of the individuals for knowledge and skills are very essential for better home living. NCCE (1996) in order to make Home Economics education adaptable to the changing trends in the world puts the philosophy as that "which borders on the improvement of the quality of life of the individual, family and society in general".

It focuses on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies which family members require to satisfactorily improve family living. It identifies roles, aspirations and abilities of each family members as well as determines strategies towards achieving them.

NCCE (1996) states that "Home Economics makes use of courses in both applied and behavioural sciences such as Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Sociology, Applied Arts and Agricultural Science. In recent times the course has vested itself in industries attachment programme (ITF), in hotel and catering industry, food processing and packaging, clothing and textile and fashion design institutes. This will further enhance the required competences needed at home. The philosophy of Home Economics is clear. The acquired skills, knowledge, habits and attitudes are expected to be applied to the recipients' lives and others for purposeful living.

### **Objective of Home Economics Education**

The main objectives of Home Economics education is to prepare individuals for purposeful life and worthy members of the family. The National Workshop on Home Education (1976) came out with the following aims of Home Economics education:

1. To educate youth for family living.
2. To educate youth for the role of future home-makers, intelligent consumers and producers of goods.
3. To prepare young people for living a life in the home, community and nation.
4. To improve the goods and services used by the families.
5. To conduct research to discover and meet the changing needs of individuals and families.
6. To advance the community, national and world condition.

Agwasim and Yaroson (1985) state the broad general objectives of Home Economics in Nigeria as:

- (a) The satisfaction of the biological and social needs of the individual members of the family.
- (b) The attainment of high professional excellence by drawing for the maximum achievement of the ideal society.

In summary therefore, the unified knowledge in Home Economics Education helps in determining the needs of individuals and families and provides strategies on how to meet them. It seeks to improve goods and services used by families and individuals through effective home making and gainful employment

### **Career Opportunity in Home Economics**

Home economics education is a subject which is concerned with the careful management of human and material resources for the families, individuals and communities. The core courses offered in schools are as follows:

- a. Food and nutrition.
- b. Clothing and textiles.
- c. Home management.
- d. Child and family development.
- e. Home economics education.

The graduates of Home Economics especially at tertiary levels exposed to these courses must have acquired several skills, knowledge, habits and attitude that can help him or her self-reliant and empowering individuals for national development. Agwasim and Yaroson (1985) are of the belief that Home Economics as a vocational course makes individuals employable with unlimited opportunities. According to them the following summarize the careers available in Home Economics Education include:

Pattern maker, fashion designer, fashion illustrator, clothing retailer, interior designer, home service representative, food specialists, home economist in journalism, dietetic and nutrition career, educational representative, family and child development positions, careers in home economics research.

In the same vein, Abdul (1995) identified career opportunities in Home Economics as; teaching in Nursery and Day Care Centre, Landry services, fashion design institutes, interior decoration, soap and candle making, knitting and vegetable gardening. There are also tremendous job opportunities for Home Economics graduates in commerce, tourism and hospitality industry. Home Economics engages in research development and applicant manufacture, use and cure, commercial: rising human needs and improvement, resort a recreational industries for an effective production of manpower for the nation.

## **Factors Militating Against Home Economics Education**

### **1. The Name of the Course "Home Economics".**

Olaitan and Aguisobo (1981) stressing the need for a better name for the course and they opine that unfortunately the word "Home" as the new name of the field gave a wrong impression that Home Economics was mainly for girls.

The moment men hear the name Home Economics, the impression created is that it is a course for girls with the primary aim of cooking. The name of the course is no doubt constitutes a barrier for the male enrolment.

### **2. Historical Perspective**

Suleiman (1998) observed that, the pre-post independence periods of Nigeria had witnessed the teaching of Home Economics. Throughout the historical development of the subject, it had never included men which accounts for the reason why men have steered clear of the Home Economics Education. Therefore the discipline has no men's professional touch.

### **3. Lack of Fund**

Insufficient fund is provided in schools for the purchase of clothing and textile, foods, nutrition and home management, major equipment and materials needed for practical. Facilities are equally needed for nursery management centre to bring to life issues that are discussed in the classroom.

In some schools, the government provides all these while in others, the students are made to provide items needed for their practical. This financial involvement scares a lot of students from studying this course. It equally affects the proper implementation of the practical aspect of the programme. In Nigerian context, one of the problems of learning Home Economics is lack of fund. This makes students to develop "cold feet" towards this programme and they also complain of the complexity of the course. Where proper training is given, learners can establish small-scale businesses of their own having acquired the basic skills and knowledge in any of the three major areas. The only problem is in the areas of capital base. They could also find jobs in paid employment, such as extension officers, journalism, food processing scientists, welfare officers and business personnel and many others, (Olaosebikan, 1997).

### **4. Insufficient Time**

Home Economics being vast in nature needs double time to make learning possible and profitable. Insufficient time for practical lessons has greatly affected the programme. The stated contact works for practical lessons shows a minimum of two hours per week. This is not enough to allow proper and necessary instructions. A lot needs to be taught to the students. A minimum of six hours is needed or even eight hours per week for practical lessons to enable students keep abreast with all being taught. Agwasim and Yaroson (1989) stated that insufficient time-space in schools affects the amount of learning that students are exposed to. This makes a lot of students become not interested in the

programme and often complain of lack of jobs after completion of the programme.

## **5. Government Policies**

The mode of implementation of the Home Economics Education programme is not in accordance with the National Policy on Education. Frequent change of government and formulated policies affect programme implementation. Uzoezie (1990) agreed that lack of stable policies; unskilled implementation and supporting facilities are some of the problems of Home Economics. Most teachers are yet to be retrained for proper implementation of this vocational programme. This is not far from the fact that some inadequacies of Home Economics teachers make students to graduate from school ill prepared.

The general constraint however is the production of ill prepared and incompetent graduates who cannot apply the knowledge and skills even when employed in Home Economics related industries. The discipline is designed to improve the quality of life of an individual, the family and the manpower development in general.

## **Contributions of Home Economics and Manpower Development in Nigeria**

The home or family is the foundation on which a nation is built. A well established and built nation is a function of a well built home. Therefore, the proper operation and management of Home Economics Education explains the contribution of the discipline and nation's manpower development.

Home Economics education in the new millennium seeks to enrich this heritage by providing knowledge of modern science to be used to ease societal problems, to advance the national condition. Abionu (1994) noted that change in education can provide an alternative means of adopting economic measure to the needs and the demands of the domestic and foreign markets, hence each nation perceives technological achievement as a development imperative. Home Economics education is a part of vocational and technical education which provides a bed rock on which the socio-economic, emotional and matrimonial problems of the society have to be founded in this new era of manpower development, Home Economics is set to help human beings to live a self-rewarding and fulfilled life compatible to the society.

Afro (1997:7) believes that technological developments afford man the ability to utilize knowledge, skills, tools and social infrastructure for the production of much-needed goods and services. James (1997:4) enumerates the various business opportunities a Home economist can be engaged. They include hotel management, catering activities; snacks (cakes, buns, assorted bunds, bread, ice cream, textiles (tie and dye, batic), clothing fashion designs) knitting, soap making, interior decoration, laundry and home furnishing. The National Policy on Education (revised, 1989) states the aims of vocational education as:

- a) To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills that are necessary for agricultural industrial, commercial and economic development.
- b) To provide manpower who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and over population issues.

Home Economics is involved in preventive medicine. The application of the knowledge in the preparation of balanced diet which provides optimum mental, physical health and good nutrition for all the family members. This guarantees healthy growth, efficiency, productivity and meaningful living. This is to say that a home economist can work in the hospitals, health centres or as health counsellor.

Home Economics is a vast discipline which helps in improving living condition of the nation. It develops consumer products and education for their use (textiles, foods, clothing, housing, equipment and furnishing) as physical environment for human welfare. The knowledge offered by Home Economics in production and use of products in textiles and agriculture is enough to gain employment with textile industries and agricultural organizations and farms. Abdul (1995) is in agreement with this view that agriculture improved personal and commercial farming methods and consumer education will raise quality of agricultural products and increased demand for quality food industrial agricultural products. This is made possible through Home Economics extension services to rural areas. According to Afro (1997) agriculture has consequently bring awareness of improved seedlings, new methods of farming, high yield and increase a food supply to the populace, solution of environmental problems for the use of convenience of men.

- c) To provide trained manpower in applied sciences, and technology.
- d) To give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen,

technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant helping the graduates to participate actively and positively to national development. (Abdul, 1995).

## **Contribution of Home Economics to Social Development**

### **1. Human Resources**

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation which requires a harmonious living of these diverse ethnic groups if the nation is to provide development. Home economics teaches societal values which in turn promotes sound family life and social environment for human development. Olasebikan (1997) records that: Home Economics teaches people to live in harmony with each other, other tribes which in return affects natural development and increasing the manpower.

Home Economics helps families to cope with socio-economic changes, to be productive members of the society, preventing social problems which have their roots in the home, cooperate with agencies in reducing already existing family based social problems such as broken homes, delinquency, crimes, prejudice drug addiction, abandoned children.

### **2. Employment Generation**

Home Economics seeks to address the issue of poverty alleviation through skill acquisition. Robber and Gordon (1992) observe that "unemployment leads to poverty which is measured in terms of income especially wages and salaries. Agwasim and Yaroson, (1981) aptly put it that "Home economics tremendously job opportunities in this country". Contributing this view Abu (1996) and Olaosebikan (1997) intensify areas opened to Home Economists for employment as catering services, day care centre, laundry services, fashion design institute, interior decoration, soap and candle making, knitting, teaching and vegetable gardening. The economic development for an individual is an index of natural development.

### **3. Industry, Commerce and Tourism**

Home Economics engages in research development and application in textiles and clothing design, manufacture, use and care, commercial food processing and distribution, recognizing human needs and improvement resort and recreational industries. Home economists could take up appointment with these industries as food representative sales managers and as food processors (Abionu, 1994).

### **4. Airlines and Communication**

Home economists contribute to the natural development in this area as it trains the individual to fit into this area as professional to enhance the comfort of passengers through food services. A home economist can work in media houses as journalist in newspapers, magazines, radio and television for homemakers. The application of Home Economics research and development can provide manpower in all sectors of the nation (Agwasim and Yaroson, 1985).

## **Conclusion**

It is crystal clear that Home Economics plays a significant role in manpower development in Nigeria. No meaningful development can be achieved in any nation where there is political instability, high crime rate and disunity, Home Economics is a useful tool in eradicating societal ills, poverty and providing jobs to the citizenry. It is hoped that as the nation now gradually glides to a new era, more attention and encouragement shall be accorded Home Economics education for improved services in the development of manpower in Nigerian sectors.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made:

1. Home Economics, being a practical oriented course needs a lot of financial support to meet its objectives.
2. A well-equipped laboratory in each aspect of Home Economics is a pre-requisite for effective teaching and learning.
3. Home Economics staff should be re-trained to acquire more skills. This could be achieved

through workshops, seminars, and conferences to update the knowledge and skills of teachers.

4. There should be public enlightenment about the position and capabilities of Home Economics and job opportunities open to home economists.

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