

# THE VISION AND MISSION OF HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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## **Abstract**

Generally in the past, Home Economics used to be classed as a subject for those who could not manage much beyond the reading, writing and arithmetic levels or for those who were late starters, the never-do-wells or for the less gifted academically or a mere glorification of the daily routine of the necessary household chores. This paper highlights Home Economics as having the vision of telescoping the future through extrapolations and also as having the mission of striving to solve the most pressing problems of the future by carefully flashing back to the past, analyzing what happens in the present and also by forward looking reflection.

## **Introduction**

Men and women are recognizing increasingly that the complexity of living demand that they have some formal training if they are to solve the problem of family life with greater degree of ease and satisfaction. Home Economics Education at all levels is dedicated to the task of helping individuals learn better those behaviour patterns and skills that will enable them to fulfill effectiveK their roles as family members through educating the individual for family living, improving the good; used by the family, conducting research to discover and meet the changing needs of individuals and families, and furthering community, national and world conditions that are favourable for family living (Wakjissa, Eule, Datol, Padang, Amagon, Ntuhun, Langkuk and Ahupa, 2001).

The major concern of Home Economics is to prepare the families to live physically fit and socially acceptable lives in their community. It is also concerned with the social welfare of families. It is important that people understand their social values and goals, their economic, political and religious organization in order to be desirable members of their society. It strives to solve the most pressing problems of the present as well as those of the future. It is therefore committed to sustainable development. Home Economics constantly evolves and adapts to a world where the speed of change is increasing and this makes it relevant in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In recent years, the theoretical rationale and scope of Home Economics have moved far beyond the conventional image of sewing and cooking and have come to embrace all the challenges? facing individuals and families in present day society. New conceptual frame works for Home Economics are constantly being evolved. Its new models now focus on mutual sustaining interactions that link people and environments, and on the decisions that families make to creatively adapt and foster human development (Buolz in Anyakoha, 2001).

## **Perspectives of Home Economics**

National Education Research Development Center (NERBC) in Olaitan and Agusiobo (1981) [ posits that Home Economics is the application of many science and arts towards achieving a health] and happy home.

Mbah, Orhewere and Osifeso (2000) defined Home Economics as a well organized, designed, planned and executed programme that can help to develop such skills that will be used to improve the home and produce healthier and happy individuals.

International Federation of Home Economics (IFHE) (1988) defined Home Economics as being a body of theoretical knowledge based on exact science and humanities, and forms of practice, backed up by appropriate technologies. The American Home Economics Association (AHEA) in Anih Olaitan, Akubuilo and Anadi (1989) defined Home Economics as the field of knowledge and service primarily concerned with strengthening family life through educating the individual for family-living, improving the services and goods used by families, conducting research to discover the changing needs of individuals and families and the means of satisfying these needs as well as furthering living. Anih et al (1989) affirmed that Home Economics is a broad field of knowledge concerned with all phases of family life as it draws upon a variety of disciplines including the Humanities, Biological, Physical and Social science as well as Arts, and synthesizes from them the principles and guidelines

needed to improve the well being of individuals and families. Lemchi in Anyakoha (2001) views Home Economics as being an applied field of study built upon many disciplines for the purpose of achieving and maintaining the well being of individuals and families in an ever changing society. Enemo in He, Odukwue, Agbata and Chukwuerneka (1997) opines that the knowledge derived from Home Economics is useful for developing and equipping the participants with the basic skills and knowledge needed for self reliance and helps to contribute effectively to the socio-economic development of the family and the society. Olaitan et al (1981) posit that Home Economics Education seeks to provide knowledge of modern science to be used to ease home problems.

### **The Vision of Home Economics Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Home Economics strives to solve the most pressing problems of the present as well as those of the future. It is therefore, committed to sustainable development. Consequently, it constantly evolves and adapts to a world where the speed of change is increasing. It is flexible as it has the ability of being abreast of many other studies in terms of adapting to change. It, being a subject that undertakes the study of all aspects of home and family life, does prepare its learners to plan ahead of time so that they will not be outwitted by alarming and overwhelming changes that must occur in the society. There must always be evolution or emergence of new things with the passing of time. Fagbulu in Offorma and Ofoefuna (1998) observed that change is inevitable because of knowledge explosion, shifting values inter alia.

Home Economics is never indifferent to the uncertainties, anxieties and other problems that prevalently encumber family members. As new challenges evolve in the society, its scope necessarily broadens. Home economists are research oriented and objective in their practice. They try to keep abreast of new findings in science and technology. They are familiar with such issues of 21<sup>st</sup> century as sustainable development, environmental degradation, gender issues, global village, computer, information technology, internet, world-wide web (www) and so on.

Since the aspirations and needs of the society are never static but always in a state of flux, Home Economics Education is not only concerned with the present needs and aspirations of the society but also telescopes the future as the future needs can be gleaned and extrapolated from the universal march of human development. As it is dynamic and moves with or ahead of time, it applies every new knowledge and skill that evolves in the contemporary society to solving family, community, national, and global problems. It generates knowledge as well as uses concept from other fields and it applies this information to help individuals and families improve their lives for now and in the future.

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is an urgent need for solutions to the problems encountered by the families and all family problems have themes for Home Economics as a major delivery system for the family. It provides opportunities for gainful employments and in so doing ensures the future of the youths (Olaitan in Anyakoha, 2001). Okorie (2001) reiterated that Home Economics offers career opportunities at both professional and sub-professional levels in industry, teaching and research.

### **The Mission of Home Economics Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The basic mission of Home Economics according to Wakjissa et al (2001) remains that of helping individuals and families to improve their lives and the nation so as to build:

1. A free and democratic society.
2. A just and egalitarian society.
3. A united, strong and self-reliant nation.
4. A great and dynamic economy.
5. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

Home Economics goes a long way in:

Making every Nigerian a worthy member of the larger Nigerian family.

Developing necessary competencies for effective living.

Establishing fruitful and happy family relationship among family members.

Mbah et al (2000) state that the central mission of Home Economics Education now is family service, having the child as focal point. The preoccupation here is centered in the family as a

milieu in which individuals including the child grow and achieve their basic learning in preparation for a productive, rewarding and satisfying life. According to them the major concern of Home Economics remains:

To prepare students to be effective individuals and members of the family.

To educate youth for family living.

To educate youth for the role of future home makers, intelligent consumers and producers of goods.

To prepare young people for living a full well-rounded life in the home, community and nation.

To improve the services and goods used by the families.

To conduct research to discover and meet the changing needs of families.

To advance the community, national and world condition.

Brown and Paolucci (1979) redefined the mission of Home Economics as follows: To enable families both as individual units and as social institution, to build and maintain system of actions which lead (i) to maturing in individual self formation and (ii) to enlightened, co-operative participation in the critique and formulation of social goals and means of accomplishing them.

The mission of Home Economics Education can also be perceived in the reciprocal relationship existing within the family, especially in its natural and man-made environments. Home Economics help people to cope with problems rather than trying to change situations. It is the duty of the woman in the house to synchronize all endeavours within the family and develop a high coping ability. Routine and ordered life is the benefit of successful Home Economics and are attributes of great value. It is an exaggeration to say that the future of any nation lies in the hands of the women, for the salvation of a nation is in its youths and training of those youths is in the hands of the mothers. In line with Thompson-Crewey in Anih et al (1989) pointed out that Home Economics has the effective part in life within the family and community, the determination of the needs of the individuals and food, shelter and clothing and the means of satisfying these needs, as well as the improvement of goods and services used by families.

Home Economics involves more of resources management, and the ability to cope with all forces for and against the family. In Home Economics Education more analysis is being done in various ways to improve the frontiers of knowledge, including researches, seminars, workshops, conferences, social and extension services as well as planning and curriculum development.

Home Economics, according to Okorie (2001), is a highly technical and vocational subject which emphasizes the training of skills, desirable work habits and knowledge of the occupation.

All these traits promote self-reliance in the individual within the world of work. Since it is concerned with the quality of life within the family, it always considers the changing concepts, responsibilities of the family and as such runs after the social and technological development. He further stated that it is multidimensional and includes any discipline that directly or indirectly impinges on the home, on human development and human comfort, hence, Home Economics is the study and application of liberal arts, natural and social sciences and their application to everyday life. Wakjissa et al (2001) define that Home Economics programme aims at:

Developing the individual to his maximum capacity.

Creating a home and community environment conducive to healthy living.

Nurturing the young and fostering their physical, moral, mental and social growth.

Improving the services and goods used by the family, discovering the changing needs of individuals and family's means of satisfying these needs.

Acquiring intellectual and practical skills essential for better living.

Developing creative expression or worthwhile leisure activities.

Acquiring ethical ideals and appreciation for high standards.

## **Conclusion**

Practical training of people in any pursuit brings both immediate and lasting economic return. The absence of opportunity for creative work and for full expression is one of the causes of much present social and industrial unrest. The inability of our educational system to provide the youths with the demands of industries in its programme has led to turning out from schools of a rest-discontented generation of youths. Out of this unrest comes a demand for a more practical education which will help them to rise to the positions of leadership and responsibility.

Home Economics is a vocational and functional subject from which better socio-economic services are rendered for personal and national development. It does not anchor its study on the present but foresees future problems and makes provision for their solution. This makes it relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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