

HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION: VOCATION FOR SELF RELIANCE

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Abstract

Unemployment in our society is on the increase. One observes that even graduates who have acquired some skills find it difficult to get jobs. Because of this problem, parents are becoming conscious of (he courses which their children read in school. This paper looks at the nature of Home Economics as a vocational course which tries to inculcate skills necessary for self-employment and self-reliance. The vocational nature can be seen in three broad areas discussed in the paper. Furthermore, the paper hies to unveil the career prospects available in Home Economics and it sees the course as a powerful tool for reducing unemployment in the society. Based on the above, recommendations were made on how to improve Home Economics and create awareness of the subject.

Introduction

Home Economics education is the study of all the elements of family living - individual development and interpersonal relationships. It can also be seen as the process of teaching Home Economics courses (Food and Nutrition, Clothing and Textiles and Home Management). According to International Federation for Home Economics (I.F.H.E.) 1978, "Home Economics education .is concerned with using, developing and managing human and material resources for the benefit of individuals, families, institutions and the community now and in future."

Home Economics education is a diversified area of study encompassing the things we do everyday. It is a people oriented subject that moves with the rapidly changing world, it has also been described as the only profession and body of knowledge which focuses on the family as its core and nucleus and works predominantly in a preventive, educative and developmental mode. Anyakoha (1992) viewed Home Economics as a subject that deals with all aspects of family living, drawing knowledge from many disciplines, such as Biology, Physics Social Sciences, Humanities, Arts and unifying the knowledge drawn to teach people how to do the following: determine the needs of individuals and families for food, shelter and clothing, seek the means of satisfying these needs, improve the goods and services used by families and become responsible and effective members of the family and community through effective Home making and gainful employment. Therefore, it follows that Home Economics is a part of general education which embraces other disciplines in its scientific application to solving social, economic and psychological problems of domestic life for better living standard.

Eze (2001) also revealed that Home Economics is capable of preparing youths and adults for entering into various Areas of Home Economics occupations. This shows that as a vocational subject, Home Economics education contributes to man power development by equipping individuals with reliable occupational skills, which lead to self-reliance. As a vocational subject that promotes self-reliance because of its skill oriented nature, the Federal Government has included it in the curriculum for primary, secondary and tertiary schools. The subject has many career opportunities for school leavers and also prepares individuals for happy family living.

Aspects of Home Economics

Home Economics has at different times been referred to as "Domestic Science", " Home craft" and "Home Science". Its point of focus has been the individual, family and society. According to Fleck (1974), areas that should be encompassed by Home Economics include family relationships and child development, consumption and other economic aspects of personal and family living, nutritional needs of members of the family, selection and care of clothing and its psychological and social significance. She added that Home Economics should also include other aspects like textiles for clothing and for household, housing for the family and equipment, furnishing for the household and art as an integral part of everyday life.

Tale (1969) identified twelve separate interrelated fields in Home Economics and they include;

1. Clothing construction on designing and theory.
2. Child development and family relations.

3. Communication
4. **Food** - its preparation, management and technology,
5. Family and community health welfare.
6. Housing.
7. Household equipment.
8. Interior design and decoration.
9. Textile design production and management.
10. Human Nutrition and Dietetics.
11. Family Economics and Home Management.
12. Education.

This shows that Home Economics is a diversified area of study which encompasses what we do in every day living. Careful study of the various aspects enhances the quality of our environment which in turn improves standard of living.

Home Economics according to Ebo (1987), is a very broad field which embraces separate but inter-related subject areas and helping students to think intelligently and make meaningful decision on facts of life. To Ebo, the subject is divided into three major areas: Food and Nutrition, Home Management, Clothing and Textiles.

Anyakoha and Eluwa (1991) identified the three broad areas of Home Economics, thus:

Food and Nutrition: This deals with all aspects of food like purchasing, preparation, serving, preservation, chemical composition of food stuffs, function of different food nutrients in the body, types and quantities of food nutrients required by people of all ages in varying states of health and level of activities, cultural food habits and foods for special occasion. It also covers therapeutic nutrition.

Home Management: Draws richly from the principles and practices of the other components of Home Economics. It equips the students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for effective management of the home. This covers housing and household maintenance and care, interior decoration and furnishing, family living systems, house nursing and first aid, childcare and development, mother craft and consumer education.

Clothing and Textiles: Seeks to prepare the students with skills meeting their own clothing needs and those of the other family members. It covers basic techniques in textiles and clothing, wardrobe clothing, clothing repair techniques, laundry processes, dyeing techniques and home dry cleaning.

All the aspects of Home Economics are studied as a single subject in the junior secondary school and it is compulsory for both boys and girls for the first three years. In the senior secondary school, an aspect could be studied as one of the elective vocational subjects. While in the Colleges of Education and Universities, it is studied as Home Economics.

Available Careers in Home Economics Education that Leads to Self Reliance

The National Directorate for Employment (1986) stated in its objectives, the need to make young school leavers self-reliant and self-sufficient. Their programmes include the training of students and the provision of loans after training to enable such students to set up small-scale projects on their own. Some of the occupations included in their programmes are catering, tailoring fashion and textiles designing, interior decoration; these are all Home Economics careers.

According to Kolade (1990), Home Economics Education careers include the following:

Catering and Hotel Management

Students in this field are involved in food service management in hotels, schools, universities, hospitals and airlines. They may take up posts at management level or as catering supervisors in industry and commerce or the social services, when there are such opportunities. But when the opportunities are not available, they can operate their own catering services as most of them do these days. There are so many canteens or food joints around these days. Snack shops where fast foods like chinchin, meat pie, egg rolls are made and sold. These people make a living through these vocations and are today employers of labour.

Kolade (1990) elaborated on some food and nutrition related careers that secondary school leavers can set-up on their own in the absence of government employment as restaurant (food is ready), snack shop and confectionery.

The Government of Edo state recognizes the importance of skill oriented careers (vocations), and this has led the first lady, Mrs. Eki Igbinedion to open up vocational centers in which subjects like catering, fashion and designing, hair dressing, interior decoration are being taught to people to enable them earn a living through self employment to reduce the problem of unemployment.

Clothing/Fashion Designing

A cloth/fashion designer creates ideas and applies them in the production of functional and; beautiful apparels and accessories to meet the desires of men, women and children. There are many people who are in this vocation today both educated and non-educated. They create designs to suit men, women and children hearing in mind our weather and culture. These designs are competing favourably with foreign which are usually very expensive, no wonder the Government of the day has placed a ban on imported fabrics. This will create more markets for our locally produced fabrics and designs and encouragement for those in the clothing and fashion industry and for others to join.

Our people have been found to be very creative in design production and styling and these designs have good market value even outside the country. To show the boom in fashion industry, there are many fashion homes today and there will be more tomorrow, because people who are into it have no cause for regret.

Dietetics

A dietitian applies the science of nutrition and management in the feeding of individuals or groups. A therapeutic dietitian supervises the food services in a hospital, instructs patients in a clinic on proper selection of foods and works with doctors and nurses to maintain and improve the nutrition of patients.

These ones can also be self-employed by opening up a clinic where he or she operates as the consultant to handle nutrition problems such as obesity, underweight, overweight, diabetes. There are many centers today and they are doing very well and are also employers of labour. Most of them are also distributors of these Golden Neo-Life Diamite (GNLD) food supplement drugs.

Home Making And Interior Decoration

The students there are taught aspects of Home making which involves imparting skills which enable them to develop values, have good human relations and provide satisfying setting for family living.

Anyakoha and Eluwa (1991) also noted that home management can prepare the students for the profession of home making and wage earning at the same time. Students who offered home management, according to Anyakoha can set -up day care centers; clothing repair. services, dry cleaning services and flower/vegetable gardens of their own. There are many flower gardens in Benin city today and they are making it as people troop in and out to patronize them.

Interior decoration is another area that is fast gaining ground. The business is thriving and many people are going into it. One does not need huge capital to start. It involves use of colors, arrangement of furniture and use of flowers, balloons, ribbons and materials to make a place or house look beautiful.

Through the knowledge acquired in home making also many people are into production of different home used products such as vim, detergents, soaps, pomade, shoe polish and starch. These are big time distributors, marketers and employers of labour.

Home Economics Teaching

A Home Economics teacher gives instruction at the pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions on home making, different aspects of family life or related personal problems. Those who have knowledge in this area can on their own open schools either pre-primary, primary, secondary or adult education centers in which catering, home making fashion designing, clothing and textiles and interior decorations are taught. There are many of such places today around and they are doing well. They do not wait for government to pay them salaries before they eat and are employers of labour. Most of them will not ever take job employments from the government even when they are offered one.

The above careers show that Home Economics is a vocation that promotes self-reliance. It enhances the individual and the community at large by solving the problem of unemployment which is a common feature in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Home Economics education should be seen as a powerful tool for reducing unemployment, providing more jobs and thus increasing productivity. It is a course that provides employment for young school leavers, adults and re-employment for adults who are retrenched and retired.

Recommendations

1. Home Economics should be made compulsory for boys and girls in and out side the school.
2. Government should provide learning experiences that can update and upgrade knowledge and skills of the teachers through in - service training programmes.
3. The existing curricula of Home Economics should be continuously revised as a result of changes in the practices and skills requirements in the workplace.
4. Government and NCOS should open more Home Economics centers where people can come and acquire skills to earn them living and make them self employed.
5. Government and NGOS should spend more time and money to equip the laboratories and libraries to enhance Home Economics education.
6. The public needs enlightenment programmes to erase the erroneous thought that Home Economics is meant for girls and that it is just cooking and sewing.
7. Soft loans should be given to those that have been trained in this area to set up their own businesses to encourage them.

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