SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OF HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION: AN ASSESSMENT

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Abstract
This paper discussed the school-community relationship, highlighting that school does not exist in a vacuum, that school exists in and as part of the community. The paper also discussed Home Economics education, its usefulness and importance to boys and girls, families, communities and the world at large stating, that, Home Economics cuts across Science, Social Science, Arts and Humanities and as such, its development in school is very necessary. The paper further discussed the prospects and challenges in the development of Home Economics education to include, communication, developing creativity and entrepreneurial skills among students and Role Model among others. The paper therefore concluded by stating that the school administrator must serve as both interpreter of the community’s aspiration concerning its school and as a leader in helping the community set its aspirations realistically and appropriately thereby suggesting what to do.

The school is a sub-group within the larger society and one of the most prominent agent of socialization. The school therefore exists in and is a part of a community. The school serves the educational needs of the community and draws support and strength from the community and any attempt for the school to reform its curriculum without involvement of the community is doomed to failure. The relationship between the school and the community should be a two-way relationship; the school management has a responsibility to keep the public informed about the needs, activities, and accomplishments of their school. And also, the school has the responsibility to uphold the public’s feelings, expectations, aspirations and ideas. This according to Connell (2001), is an effective school-community relations programme which leads not only to an understanding on part of the public about the school and the educational programme, but also to an understanding on the part of the board of education and other school personnel – and the public’s feelings towards the school and their expectations from the school programmes of which Home Economics Education needs to be developed.
It is very necessary for the school to involve the community in the development of Home Economics education and probably planning and developing its curriculum as issues of interest are worthy of comments. Hattam, McInerney, Smyth and Lawson (1999) and McInerney (2000), pointed out that parents participation take in to account from the perspective and interest of both the community and school. Parent involvement in the planning of Home Economics curriculum helps in the development of a well – equipped laboratory of Home Economics thereby enhancing learning and facilitating practical skill acquisition in the subject. Here, the community will be aware of the importance of Home Economics Education, how it develops individuals, helps family living and how beneficial it is to the community at large. The well planned and implemented curriculum in Home Economics would motivate the Community to help develop the subject into a full entrepreneurial Education where by the community can be developed economically. With this poverty will be alleviated through various areas of Home Economics which are full of bright prospects for investment. Young (1990) stated that, student’s ideas and decisions about the subject should be taken seriously in curriculum making. The parents are encouraged to ask their children to study the subject in tertiary institutions. The curriculum would explain why the subject is useful for both boys and girls. Young added that when the community is reasonably informed, she would make a good choice in voting for the development of the subject and thereby proceed to the education board to request for more qualified teachers into the school. Young concluded that the principal of the community school is most directly responsible for maintaining the relationship between the school and the community, he or she must develop a strategy for school community relationship which takes into account the community values, culture, norms and power hierarchy.

Basically, this paper takes a critical look at the school community relations and how to improve this relationship, the school as an entity, community, Home Economics education and it importance, prospects and challenges and the way forward.

The School and Community Relations

The relationship that exists between a school and the community have been variously debated among educationists and sociologists. Some have used the management principles derived from Economics to explain the kind of relationship that exists between the school and community. That is, a business oriented approach to school community relationship. According to Parawat (1996), students become clients, the principal becomes a business manager and the teachers are producers who need to be qualitatively controlled. The school as a business organization is now being pushed to compete for a share of the market and the community is seen either as a potential consumer of education product or potential contributor of income through marketing their products in school. This conception of school community relation is materialistic and does not take into view the moral value of education. Here the school is perceived in the community as a means to an end. The school has also been viewed as an integral part of the community rather than as an autonomous community within the larger society with a business relationship. Here, the expectation of the community is that the school
should be able to develop educational experiences that are sensitive to current, local, national and global events. Here the community is a significant educational resource that can complement and enhance learning for students. This according to Goodman (1994) means that the community oriented schools are able to draw on the intellectual, cultural, economic and social resources of government and non-governmental agencies and community organizations in addressing such issues as poverty, racism, homelessness, heath initiative, human right and the environment.

Regrettably, the Nigerian Community today perceives the school as a means to an end. The school is seen as a means to privileged position of authority in the society rather than centers of acquiring values, knowledge, skills and morals. The Nigerian society today emphasizes much on paper qualification, which leads to students engaging in various sharp practices like cheating in examination to obtain paper qualification. As the school is an integral part of the society whatever happens in the larger society is bound to affect the school community.

Since the relationship between a school and community has a two way traffic, the school in its attempt to carryout its own obligation and keep pace with the ever changing and technology driven world of information technology, the school must continuously adjust its curriculum and scope. Particularly in home economics. In an attempt to do this there might be a clash of interest between the established order and tradition of the community on how the school should implement this. Such clash must be avoided otherwise there is bound to be a problem in the school community relation.

Ways to Improve School Community Relationship for the Development of Home Economics Education.

There are several ways through which School community relations could be improved thereby developing Home Economics Education.

1. **PTA Meetings:** The parents Teachers Association meeting (PTA) is central to school community relations. It is here more than any other place that the community forms an opinion of the schools. The school PTA meeting provides a forum where much information about the school may be disseminated, explained and interpreted. PTA meetings provide a window into the schools for the community.

   The way PTA meeting is conducted and the provisions that are made for the public to attend will do much to enhance school community relations and the development of Home Economics. In agreement with this, Brennan (2006) indicated that student’s learning is enhanced when parents are involved in the school’s development, understand its curriculum, get involved in the learning process and are active participants in assessment and reporting process.

2. **Identification with Cultural Activities of the Community:** Schools are usually the center of cultural activities especially in small towns. The schools are usually engaged in dances and music to promote the positive aspect of the community culture.
This will not only enhance community relation but will also enhance the principal and teachers leadership quality within and outside the school environment.

3. **The Community’s Part:** The community on their own part should be willing to assist the school principal by serving as an advisory board for various programmes, organizing seminar which could enlighten the students and teachers on local history and industry. Social workers within the community should liaise with the Home Economics teachers to organize seminars for students about juvenile problems and the implication of early sex.

4. **Consultation and Dialogue:** This is also another means of improving relationship between the school and community which can enhance the development of Home Economics education. The school will encounter less opposition given the intimation of parents in discussing sexual related matters with their children. This is in agreement with Bernstein (1991) who posited that dialogue is a to and fro management, one must be responsive to what others are saying.

5. **The School Curriculum and Meeting the Community’s Needs and Aspiration:** The curriculum’s relevance is an issue which the school can not ignore if it must improve its relationship with the community. The changing nature of society will always affect the school community relation, for example a school curriculum cannot ignore the impact of science and technology in the world today.

**What About the School?**

School as an organization has become a root metaphor for school community relationships. To this effect Sergiovanni (1994), stated that many of the administrative functions, educational bureaucracies are devolved to school as they use management principle derived from economics. Consequent upon this also, Parawat (1996), opined that schools seek legitimacy by appearing rational, and means and chains are set in place to accomplish stated purposes and goals, for example through line management systems, strategic plans management schemes and standardized testing regimes which create an impression of control. In support of Parawat, Fielding (2000), stated that, schools are mechanism organizations that are primarily concerned with efficiency and effectiveness of what works rather than the moral purpose of education as teachers see themselves as teaching subjects, rather than the students. The authors added that schools need to use resources efficiently to maximize educational opportunities for all students as such organizational goals and business plans in schools should serve human ends, not act as means in themselves. This is also in agreement with, Sergiovanni (1994), who asserted that schools need to be grimed in educational theories which are more in tune with children and young adults than management principles. The author concluded that schools are pushed to compete for a share of the market and hence the community is either potential customer (parent) of education products, or the potential cohabiters of income through marketing their production in the schools.
The Concept of Community: A Practical Meaning

A Community is a social group with similar interests, social structure, values and lifestyles. In the community there is the connection of people not based on contracts but on commitments. A community is socially organized around relationships and the felt interdependence that nurture them. Community is confronted with issues of control but instead of relying on control, community rely more on norms, purpose, professional, socialization, collegiality and natural interdependence. According to Collins Concise Dictionary (1995), a community is seen as a group of people having cultural, religious, or other characteristics in common. A group of people having certain interests in common. Based on these definitions, Fielding (2000) viewed the community from a perspective of mutuality and reciprocity by stating that a community is not fundamentally about place, time memory, or even the belonging or significance of close relationship, and fidelity. The author explained that a community is rather the reciprocal experience people have as persons in certain kind of relationships, it is an experience of being that is alive in its mutuality and vibrant in its sense of possibility and that a community is a way of being not a thing. By the above definitions it therefore means that a community is a process in which human beings regard each other in a certain way and in which they relate to each other and act together in mutuality as persons, not as occupants, also that mutuality informed by the values of freedom, equality and understanding which conditions each other reciprocally.

Much About Home Economics Education

Home Economics is a field of knowledge and service primarily concerned with strengthening the family life. It is a field which synthesizes knowledge drawn from its own research from the physical, biological, social science, humanities and the arts, which applies knowledge to improving the lives of the families an individual.

Home Economics Education is defined by Babatolu (2010) as a skill oriented course, which possesses the capacity of equipping individuals with saleable skills that make for self employment, hence contributing greatly to the re-duction of unemployment problems in the country. It prepares individual to be self – reliant and employment of Labour instead of Job seekers. Home Economics is constantly evolving and adapting to a world increasing speed change. Anyakoh (2000-2004) explained the importance of Home Economics education as improving family life, by living a good, healthy and happy life in the family, community, nation and the world at large. The author further stated that it prepares boys and girls for home making and the jobs that require Home Economics knowledge and skill, teaches people how to care for themselves, for the home, and how to get along well with one another in the family and society. The author concluded that home Economics education teaches people how to spend their money wisely, how to plan, how to prepare, cook and serve a good meal and also plan, choose, make, wear and maintain good clothing.

Aims and Objectives of Home Economics Education

As stated in the National Policy on Education (2004), the objectives of Home Economics Education include:
1. To educate youths for family living
2. To educate youths for the role of future home makers, intelligent consumers and producers of goods and services
3. To prepare young people for living good well-rounded life in the home, Community and nation.
4. To improve the services and goods used by the families
5. To conduct research to discover and meet the changing needs of individuals and families.
6. To advance the community, nation and the world conditions.

Prospects of the Development of Home Economics Education

There are several prospects from the school and the community in the development of Home Economics education. Having explored its usefulness to individuals and mankind as a whole, the school, and the community can develop Home Economics Education in the following ways:

1. The principal has the opportunity to interact freely with the community thereby interpreting to them the school programme in the development of Home Economics Education.
2. The Community’s expectations of the school has to be determined, as the community might want to serve in the staff development planning committee. They may decide to be giving stipends to professional Home Economics teachers in order to motivate them.
3. The school has to communicate to the community through the P.T.A or other media, this will help the community to identify resource persons in the community who can establish a well-equipped Home Economics Laboratory for a useful living.
4. The school has to liaise with the community and arrange for parents to visit the school and see for themselves the need for the development of Home Economics education which will make them go back to their various community meetings and churches and solicit for the assistance. According to Charlton (1983), this act facilitates a positive school – community relations. The result will be the production of responsible young men and women who will fight against family crisis.
5. Parent Teachers Association is a very veritable and reliable group who can build and equip the Home Economics Laboratory to facilitate learning and acquisition of practical skills. As students go back home they will sit down and practice what they had learnt in school and during long vacations may form groups and produce items for sale which will eventually turn them to being enterprising, thereby curbing unemployment and other crimes.
6. Provision of a well established resource centers where modern books, tools, apparatus, equipment and other material resources are kept for research and reference purposes. This will ultimately update the knowledge of the teacher, enhance collaboration and increase both motivation and production.
Youths will learn to learn, learn to live and learn to make a useful living. They will be self-reliant, self-employed and carry out training programmes to train others. They will be career-oriented.

When the industries and community image group come together for this course, divorce, poverty, ritual killings, kidnappings, robbery and many more crimes not mentioned here will be reduced to the barest minimum and life in the society will be better.

**Challenges Facing the School-Community Relations and the Development of Home Economics Education**

There are some challenges that face the school community relations. These challenges are:

**Staff development:** This is the area of improving the welfare of the staff by way of incentives, study leave, increase in salary, allowances among others. Staff development is an important area in the development of Home Economics Education. According to Obamuna (2002), staff development is one area that has so much been neglected by school authorities on excuses of lack of funds. It increases teachers' capacity building by also making the teacher efficient. When a teacher is happy with the job, he teaches with all his mind, spirit, body and soul. The teacher makes the subject very saleable as in the case of Home Economics.

**Professionalism:** Put succinctly, professionalism is the pursuit of academic respectability involved in teaching which advocates ideas aimed at professional development of the teachers. As stated by Bloomer (1980), Professionalism means acceptance of responsibility, a person who is not a professional however well he may perform on his job, if he feels no deep involvement with it or is indifferent to and accepts no responsibility for his level of success or failure can with unmixed feedings abandon his task at anytime. This Maduewesi (2002) added, leads to students being exploited financially, materially or opportunistically.

**Role Modeling:** Appropriate role modeling is needed in Home economics. This role model could be males or females who have aspired to professorial positions in Home Economics in our institutions of higher learning. These role models show good example and are able to present the subject as a labour potential area which generates a lot of employment outside thereby contributing a large percentage to the size of labour force in the society thus boosting the economy of the Nation. Academics are role models who excel not only in academic performance, but also in attitude and social behaviour (Madulewesi 2002).

**Provision of a Well Established Resource Center:** The provision of well designed and equipped resource center where modern Home Economics text books, Journals, tools, apparati, equipment and other material resources are is very vital. This will ultimately
update the knowledge of the teacher, enhance collaboration and increase both motivation and productivity as new knowledge and knowledge shared will go a long way to raise quality of the profession.

**Development of Creativity and Entrepreneurial Skills Among Students**

Home Economics is an essential vocational subject that is aimed at developing creativity and entrepreneurial skills among the students. This of course, according to Olodi(2000) is among the concerns of Home Economics educators. It is aimed at teaching learners how to use available resources in their environment to improve their homes, families and society life. For this aim to be achieved, it requires creative teaching. As noted by Uko-Aviomoh (2005), to teach creativity, teachers should use a variety of instructional materials and techniques, engage in series of research so as to be adequately equipped to deliver their lessons creatively and provide learners with such opportunities to learn beyond classroom learning or lecture hall.

**Conclusion**

The relationship between the school and the community can not be under scored. School is established in a community for the people and so it does not exist in a vacuum, the school exists in and is a part of community. The school serves the educational needs of the community and draws support and strength from the community. For example we have schools like Uyo High School in Uyo. In this school there are some buildings which were built by resource persons from Uyo such as the Utuks and the Joescos. Any effort to improve the school or to undertake reform without the involvement of the community is doomed to failure. There must exist a good working relationship between the school and the community. The school has as its responsibility to keep the community informed about the needs, like the establishment of Home Economics Laboratory and resource center to enhance Home Economics Education, the school activities and its accomplishments. Also the school has to be alert to the community feelings, aspirations and ideas. The school is an agent of socialization which should liaise with the community to preserve the beliefs, and norms of the community. An effective school community relations leads not only to an understanding of the educational past of the community about the school and the educational programme, but also to an understanding on the part of the educators and school personnel of the community’s feelings toward the school and their expectations of the school programme especially in the area of the development of Home Economics Education. The complete and unlimited dependence of each one upon the other in the central and critical area of personal existence is the basic fact of human existence. Therefore, the school administrator must serve as both an interpreter of the community’s aspirations concerning its school and as a leader in helping the community set its aspirations realistically and appropriately.

**What to Do**

1. The Community should construct blocks of class rooms or hall for Home Economics center or a resource centre in the school, donate an electric
generator, employ staff and place them on PTA scale of salary, this would motivate both teachers of Home Economics and students to teach and learn the subject.

2. The Community could also sponsor the building of the Home Economics Laboratory with the help of the PTA and other well meaning groups or organizations in the community can furnish the laboratory with the necessary and basic equipment and infrastructure

3. The school must enter into a dialogue with the community to discuss ways of attracting and bringing government and non-governmental agencies to help in the development of Home Economics Education in the school.

4. Through good communication network between the school and the community, the media agency could be brought to publicize the need and importance of Home Economics Education to the community in order to facilitate its development in the school.

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