
HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION: AN INSTRUMENT FOR ALLEVIATING POVERTY AND JOB CREATION FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN STATES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The issue of Africans Living with the Scourge of endemic poverty is not a recent trend. This is for the fact that poverty is one of the major factors defining the underdeveloped and developing third world societies world-wide and Africa in particular especially Nigeria. Several factors have been identified in this study as being responsible for the perpetuation of poverty in African states. These include increase in population, poor Education, corruption, war and armed conflicts, illiteracy, poor agricultural practices and Land owning policies, poor water, sanitation and health among others. This paper discussed the concept of poverty and highlighted on the capacity of Home Economics Education to create job opportunities, develop skills and promote self-reliance to alleviate and reduce the poverty level, to promote individual and family living standards, which will in turn reduce communal clashes among communities. The paper therefore, suggested that these African states especially Nigeria should look inwards for the solution to their poverty through Home Economics Education by learning skills in different areas of the subject for empowering and making them self-reliant. Recommendations were also provided.

In any country especially in developing nations, there is a great demand for economic development. Economists have debated whether education is a pre-requisite for development or vice-versa. Whichever is the case, we believe that human resource development and improved standard of education are closely related, for one cannot proceed very far without the other. Throughout history, education has been the most

logical way in which human being can be developed starting from the elementary school to the university Level.

Marshal (2006), emphasizing the importance of education as a national economic investment, pointed out clearly that the most valuable of all investments is that of human capital. Oguntoye (2007), pointed out that human capital plays a significant role in the upliftment of the economy and that there is a positive relationship between “education and productivity and between productivity and earning”.

Taylor (1962) cited in Makama and Ponde (2006), indicated that in whatever direction we look at education, we find that education is a powerful means of social progress and stressed the fact that any one working with it (education) is working probably with the most powerful instrument man is yet to device for his own improvement. The case of education as an economic development rests on practical ground; educated people who are involved in economic activity generate increased wealth.

African states have since been accused for neglecting this aspect of development and as such, have remained relatively poor. Their lack of investment in human capital is clearly stated by ward (1973) cited in Makama and Ponde (2006), when he said that:

“Poor countries enter upon the process of developing a modern agriculture and industry with some notable exception, they invest too little in human capital relative to what they invest in non human capital. Skills and knowledge useful in their economic endeavor are neglected as they concentrate on new plants and equipment. Thus an imbalance arises and as a result they fail often by a wide margin to attain their optimal role of economic growth”.

Home Economic education is geared towards equipping individuals with saleable skills that will make every individual self-reliant. It exposes individual to many occupational areas of skills in craft work, clothing, manufacturing, tailoring, fashion designing baking, laundry, hotel management, street food vendor, nursery school management, costumes, catering, food manager, product developer, institutional and Home management and supporting services and so on (Anozie 2002).

What is expected of the developing nations is an increase in human development for there is no other type of investment known to man that will produce a greater return per unit, and create wealth and job than investment in home economic’s education. This paper attempts to discuss how Home economics education can be used

to alleviate poverty and create job for economic development among the African States especially Nigeria.

The Concept of Poverty

The term poverty is a very wide concept. Poverty is a situation or condition of hopelessness and a condition of being poor and wretched. Mohammed (2006), asserted that poverty is a state of perpetual want, absence or inadequacy of the basic and essential means of survival: Hewent further to described poverty as a conditioning which an individual cannot maintain or sustain him or herself in accordance with the living standard of his group or community hence making him or her unable to achieve physical and mental efficiency for the purpose of useful functioning to oneself and the community.

Dyikuk (2006), defined poverty as a situation in which people live below a predetermined standard value in terms of income and conditions of living, hence the notion and description of individuals and nations as being poor. He further said that about 50% of Africans live below poverty line and that about 70% live in rural areas with no infrastructures like roads, water supply electricity and so on. Most of the poor people who live in rural areas have extended families with no work to do. They depend on rural farms that hardly sustain them. He also further defined poverty as the condition in which a person is unable to meet minimum basic requirements of food, health care, housing, education and clothing (Dyikuk, 2006).

Anyakoha (2006), cited UNDP (1997), that the universally accepted definition of poverty recognizes three (3) types of poverty namely:

- (1) Absolute poverty or destitution.
 - (2) Relative poverty
 - (3) Material poverty.
1. Absolute poverty means, the inability to provide for the physical subsistence to the extent of being incapable of protecting human dignity. These include food, clothing, shelter, portable water, health services, basic education, public transportation and work. People at this level have meager income and their marginal propensity to save is zero, and according to Anyakoha (2006) their lives are short and brutish.
 2. Relative poverty means that, there is the ability to satisfy basic needs as well as other needs. It could also be seen as condition of having fewer resources or less income than others within a society or country as compared to worldview averages”

3. Material poverty implies lack of ownership of physical assets such as land animal husbandry e.t.c.

Poverty could be viewed as pronounced deprivation in well being that is to be poor is to be hungry, to lack shelter and clothing, to be sick and not cared for, to be illiterate and not schooled. Poverty is thus a condition of human existence where resources for meeting basic human needs are extremely limited or inaccessible. Civil Agenda (1999), also described poverty as a situation of material and non-material deprivation mainly characterized by the following aspects:

- a. Lack of access to health services
- b. Poor or inadequate Education
- c. Lack of basic needs i.e shelter, clothing and sanitation.
- d. Physical and psychological experience of violence and insecurity.

1. **Lack of access to health services:** The general contention has been that there are acute poverty levels proportionate to many low income countries and many of these are found in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Dangai (2004), Research showed that about 1,150 million poverty ridden people live in Africa (the developing countries) of the world, and that the bulk of the poor are in the rural sector when compared with those living in the urban areas. This situation is applicable in Nigeria also, poverty remains a critical problem and continues to pose a great challenge to the African populace.
2. **Inadequate education:** Many African states (Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Cameroon, Sudan Egypt, Niger, Chad, Kenya, Ghana, Angola, South Africa; Namibia and so on have no access to education due to high level of poverty. Many are half educated, and it is more dangerous to give a large sector of people half baked education.
3. **Lack of basic needs:** Many African states lack inadequate shelter and this has given birth to over-crowding, poor sanitation, feeding problem and disease transmission in many homes in Africa. Lack of sustaining these basic needs gives birth to poor health which finally cripples the entire living process of the people of African. Hence good health is a crucial issue in poverty eradication; all efforts must be made by African leaders to meet the basic needs of the populace.
4. **Physical and psychological experiences of violence and insecurity:** There is high increase in physical and psychological experiences of violence and insecurity in African states as a result of high level of poverty. More crimes are recorded; there is high incidence of child rape, religious crisis, communal crisis, stealing and

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robbery attack. All these happenings have created psychological fear and insecurity among African populace.

5. **Poverty in the African content: causes and consequences/effects:** In Africa the causes of poverty mainly concern the reasons behind the low wealth and productivity of the poor or conversely the shortage and inflation of the goods they consume. Even though the general characteristics of underdevelopment are not common to all these undeveloped African countries, yet a broad answer to the question; “why a poor country is poor,” is implicit in these characteristics. A number of these characteristics are both the causes and consequences of poverty.

The following factors analyze the natural causative relationship that inhibits development thereby engendering poverty in the African States.

1. Increase in population.
2. High level of unemployment rate
3. War and Armed conflict
4. Mismanagement of land/land laws
5. Misuse of money
6. Corruption.
7. Education (half baked Education.)
8. Poor government policies.
9. Human Resources.
10. Poor health/Disease condition. (ill health, death.)
11. Over population.

Few of the causes will be discussed as follows:

1. **Education:** Education is also a major problem when it comes to poverty in African States especially in Nigeria. Elementary education is scattershot, even in the wealthiest nations. There is a high illiteracy rate, education and training must help the unemployed, under-employed and youth at risk to move from being unskilled or redundant in one kind of economy to contribute productivity to a new economy. Learning a trade, being skillful will help in developing the individual to be self employed. The lack of education goes in both directions, without education Africans are more likely to be poor and due to poverty they are unable to have equal access to education.

In many African countries, children are still required to pay to rent their own benches and desks because the schools are so poor. That does not take into account the cost of the most basic school supplies such as paper, pencils, books, chalk and small chalk boards. So, it is easy to understand why so many families are forced to

choose which child or children will have access to education in their family, while the others remain at home to help either in the house or in the field.

2. **Over Population:** Many families in Africa are large. As there is virtually no birth control for women this leads to high birth rates in Africa. They need the children to work on the farm and to help care for the family. On the other side, the negative implication of the above is that with many children born, there will be pressure and stress on the existing facilities with less opportunity for the provision of more of these facilities. As a result of this there will be rampant growth of slums and shanty towns with only few gaining access to the poorly existing infrastructures. Hence the impact of population pressure on social life of the people cannot be over emphasized. In the midst of the above, poverty will continue to exist in Africa except if African states will embrace the truth and go back to the root by diversifying the curriculum so as to cater for differences in talents and to anticipate the variety of opportunities open to the students after completing their course of study. The curriculum should be designed to equip the students to live effectively in this modern age of science and technology; equip the individual to have knowledge in a trade, understand the skills, become competent and have the aptitude that will enable him/her fit in entirely for work or business that will enable him to be employer of labour to reduce poverty. That can be achieved through vocational home economics education. If that is done, African states will reduce their dependence on the G7, G8 or (GROUP OF EIGHT) as they are called which constitute an international forum for eight industrialized nations who gives aids to African States and other developing countries, let's look at China for example, who took a bold step in training every citizen of China through learning of a trade which will make every individual competent in his chosen field. Every citizen of China as of today is well-developed and skillful in a trade. FDKN (2013) shows that knowledge transfers in the People's Republic of China is largely responsible for China's Current technological and economic exploits. Report revealed that knowledge transfer termed in China as knowledge exchange is a phenomenon that occurs in all directions. The question is why can't all the African State Leaders especially Nigeria explicitly promote skills training for its populace.

All African state leaders should take a bold step in introducing knowledge transfer and should be well developed and skillful in a trade. This will make every individual to be d useful to himself and to his society and nation at large.

3. **Concept of Home Economics Education:** Home Economics is a field of knowledge and services p rimary concerned with strengthening the family life through educating the individual for family living, improving the services and goods as used by families, conducting researches to discover changing needs of the

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individual and families and the means of satisfying these needs (Fleck 1974 cited in Unomah, 2005). Ogbone (1998), Home Economics is a dynamic field of study whose central theme is hinged on the improvement of the lives of everyone in the society.

4. **Importance of Home Economics:** Generally home economics is that aspect of education which emphasizes the acquisition of practical skills applied and scientific knowledge as well as the right type of attitude for gainful employment in a society. Baba, (2004), highlights the following aims of home economics education as:
 - a. To educate youth's for family living.
 - b. To educate youth's for the role of future home maker, intelligent consumers and producers of goods.
 - c. To prepare young people for living a full well rounded life in the home community and nation.
 - d. To improve the services and goods used by the families.
 - e. To conduct research to discover and meet the changing needs of individual and family.
 - f. To advance the community, nation and world conditions.

Looking at the aims of home economics' listed above, the benefits of home economics' skills can not be over emphasized. If embraced in all African states educational system and individual education students will attain these home economic skills, thus every individual that under goes through the home economics' education is automatically empowered all round, to be self-reliant and African states especially Nigeria will not be necessarily dependent on other nations for her economic needs and development.

These skills when acquired, provide job opportunities for individuals after graduation such as in fashion designing, interior design, tailoring, dress making, catering, tie and dyeing, craft work, clothing manufacturing, baking, laundry, hotel management, nursery school management and so on. This will assist in making individuals self-reliant and will reduce unemployment within the African states.

If half of the African populace are equipped with vocational home economic skills, African states/Continent will have enough man-power and achieve her goal of nation building which is concerned with bringing about widespread literacy, modern scientific methods, technological innovations, social, cultural and economic development of the nations. Knowing full well that Education is the aggregate of all the processes by means of which a person develops abilities, attitudes, and forms of positive value in the society in which he lives (Ayanni, 1997).

5. **Home Economics Education an Instrument to Alleviating Poverty and Job Creation for Economic Development of African States:** The mission of home economics in Africa is to facilitate the process of individual families and communities becoming more responsible for improving their well-being in relation to their economic, social, cultural, political and physical environment (Home Economics association for African (HEAA 1993).

Home Economics subject is both a body of theoretical knowledge, based on exact science and humanities, and forms of practices, backed up by appropriate technologies. It's area of activity is the development, use and management of human and material resources for the greater welfare of individuals, families, and human society in it's entity (international federation of home economics (IFHE) 2003).

The ultimate goal of home economics is to improve the quality of life and bring about human progress. Home economics by its very nature is dynamic and pro-sustainable development. It helps individuals and families to solve the enormous problem that confront them, including those relating to job creation, child rearing, family, nutrition and health, shelter, clothing, management of family resources to meet family goal etc. home economics can utilize the produce from agriculture, process and prepare them appropriately and utilize them for poverty alleviation. Home economics can contribute to poverty alleviation and job creation for economic development through various ways which include:

- a. Creation of jobs and preparation of individuals for employment to alleviate poverty.
- b. Developing new Technologies for house holds.
- c. Evolving appropriate income generating activities.
- d. Preparation for h
- e. ome-making.
- f. Utilizing home economics to alleviate poverty in African states.

6. **Creation of Jobs and Preparation of Individuals for Employment to Alleviate Poverty:** These are numerous careers for which home economic's can prepare individuals. These careers are related to the various areas of home economics education. They include: clothing and textiles occupations: tailoring, fashion designing, laundry, batik/tie dyeing, leather work, toy making, modeling, bridals consulting, clothing merchandising, beauty care and hair-dressing, weaving/knitting, teaching, research etc. food and Nutrition occupations: dietetics, nutritionist, catering and Food services, hotel management, food technology, (processing, packaging and distribution of foods) bakery/confectionary, teaching, research etc." Home management/family living and child development

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occupations. Interior decoration, institutional housekeeping, advertising/promoting, baby-sitting, child care, auxiliary nursing, and nursery/day care etc.

7. **Evolving Appropriate Income Generating Activities:** There are numerous income generating ventures that can evolve through the various areas of home economics. These include toy making, assorted crafts production, cottage industries, etc. Home economists can evolve various income generating ventures for students/individuals which can be taught so that they can have improved income. This is vital in all the African states because lack of income and assets to attain basic necessities (Food, Shelter, clothing, and acceptable levels of health and education) have been identified as a vital cause of poverty (World Bank, 2001).
8. **Utilizing Home Economics to Alleviate Poverty in Africa:** Based on the multiple career jobs that can be obtained from studying home economics education, the writer is of the view that if home economics education house craft/domestic science/consumer science as some African States refer to it, if given priority in our primary, secondary, tertiary institutional school levels with high emphasis on practical and skill oriented work, potentials of every students will be highly sensitized and maximally exploited for the benefit of the future. Investment in the skills and strength of the people cannot but lead to a viable economy and a sustained national development in Africa. This is because nations with self-reliant citizens concentrate their national efforts on technological development researches, inventions and discoveries that will enrich every one. On the contrary African countries with poor and uneducated citizens, especially Nigeria are dragged backwards in their bid to help satisfy the basic needs of their people. This explains why such countries have greater part of their national expenditure on social/consumable goods leaving little or nothing for developmental projects.

Simply put Home Economics education furnishes one with the skills, initiative, and capacities to liberate oneself from the shackles of poverty and makes one depend on one's own resources rather than on others which invariably returns it's cost many folds to the national economy and this makes for a sustainable and lasting national growth and development in African states.

The effectiveness of the above is dependent on the societal perception of the subject whether or not, it is an instrument for poverty alleviation. Therefore, there is need for awareness campaign for the African populace, especially the Nigerian populace to change their negative perception about home economics education. The government and educational administrators have their roles of intensifying their supervision for adequate teaching of the subject while government must make efforts to improve funding, provision of tools and equipment and work space for

practical lessons. Other incentives may include regard for the subject, promotion of the teachers, refresher courses and in services training for the teachers.

- 9. Implication for Home Economics Teachers:** Poverty eradication is one of the enormous challenges for home Economics teachers. Home economics teachers must do much more than the mere cooking, stitch and sewing as Olaitan and Agusiobo (1998), have stated, that home economics has moved far beyond the earlier emphasis on cooking and sewing. Since all members of the family group are simultaneously concerned, the scope and function of home economics have been greatly extended. “Emphasis” according to Anyakiha (2006), should be on skills that can enable graduates not only become effective and efficient family resource managers but also enable them to be gainfully employed and or engage in viable income generating activities”

Home Economics programmes should be able to prepare graduates who can open up and sustain small-scale business. It is therefore important that home economics programmes should prepare entrepreneurs so as to create job, improve living standard to alleviate poverty.

Conclusion

The importance of home economics education to the empowering of individual needs cannot be over-emphasized. Home economics education not only helps in the preparation of skilled and knowledgeable citizens but also helps in developing the societal status of any society. Home economics is a prerequisite for a buoyant and modern economy.

From the analysis above, it is obvious that home economics education has a great role to play in the socio economic development and alleviation of poverty in African states especially in Nigeria. If properly utilized, the potentials of home economics education are enormous, since its control and focus is on the family and its welfare. This shows that if home economics teachers work hard, government improves funding, and the general negative perception of the public towards home economics is changed, then home economics subject can really go a long way to alleviate poverty in African states especially in Nigeria.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this paper, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should improve the economic condition of its people by designing and implementing suitable and effective programmes to eliminate poverty (especially courses in Home Economics).

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2. Vocational home economics schools should be well-equipped by the government to enhance skill learning.
3. More vocational centres should be established by government, co-operative societies, philanthropists, etc
4. Home economics teachers must prove their skills and knowledge through public display to reduce the general negative perception of the public that home economics is an inferior discipline.
5. In-services training or refresher courses on skill acquisition and effectiveness in teaching methods for home economics teachers must be regularized.
6. Government at all levels must improve the funding of home economics as well as the provision of tools and equipment.
7. Home Economics education should emphasize more research on how to alleviate poverty through the home economics subjects.
8. Government should provide job opportunities and help people qualify for them.
9. For effective acquisition of skills, government has to introduce innovations into home economics curriculum at all levels. That is, more practical skill lesson must be emphasized at primary to tertiary levels.

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