
Vocational Home Economics Education: A Veritable Tool for Self Reliance, Poverty Eradication and Sustainable National Development

Augustina Oladokun

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v21i3.12>

Abstract

The increasing rate of poverty, unemployment and retrenchment and so many other social problems is worrisome. However, unemployment is not peculiar to Nigeria alone but to other third world countries. This paper examined the objectives of Home Economics education as it is geared towards improving the standard of living. It looked at self-reliance, poverty Eradication through Home Economics Education, and the role of entrepreneurship in economic development. It also examined Home Economics income generating business ventures in the major areas of Home Economics for employment and wealth creation for sustainability. The paper concluded and recommended, among others things, that entrepreneurship education be made compulsory at all levels of education and soft loans be made available to graduate for business set up.

Keywords: Self-Reliance, Poverty Eradication, Entrepreneurship, National Development

Introduction

Vocational education in Nigeria has now become so important that it is the fastest growing education market hoped to bring about great and dynamic economy in the nation. This education that is now being sought by everyone including the government of Nigeria for a dynamic economy, has always been a part of livelihood of Nigerians.

Anyakoha (1992) pointed out that vocational education involves in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, as well as acquisition of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupations. Home economics is a vocational subject, as a vocational subject, it equips individuals with appropriate skills and competence to live and contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. As a unique and dynamic field of study, it has its central theme hinged not only on the improvement of the lives of individuals, families, communities, but also on the world.

Olaitan (2001) opined that Home Economics, a skill oriented field of the study possesses the capacity of equipping individuals with saleable skills that makes for self-employment as well as helping individuals to attain a useful and satisfying life. Nwabunwanne (2006) noted that skill training and development contributes largely to the development of survival competencies that can enable individual to face modern challenges. However, Home Economics has the responsibility of improving the life of individuals and families through job creation, self-reliance and poverty eradication.

Objectives of Home Economics Education

Home Economics education is geared towards improving the standard of living of the people. Olaitan and Agusiobo (1983) gave the objectives of Home Economics Education as:

- To educate youths for the role of future homemakers, intelligent consumers and producers of goods.
- To educate youths for family living
- To prepare young people for living a full well –rounded life in the home, community and nation.
- To improve the services and goods use the family.
- To conduct research to discover and meets the changing needs of individuals and families.
- To advance the community, nation and world conditions.

From the objectives of Home Economics education enumerated above, it is clear that Home Economics is a very important subject that contributes to the development of every nation. When the welfare of every family is improved, there will be national development. Home Economics prepares individuals to work and earn an income which will eradicate poverty. Home Economics Education creates wealth, brings economic security and good health.

National Development

National development is synonymous with economic development. It is the improvement of material welfare especially for persons with the lowest income, the eradication of mass poverty with its correlates of illiteracy, disease and early death, changes in the composition of inputs that generally include shift in the underlying structure of production away from agricultural towards industrial activities (Kindleberger and Herrick, 1987). It is a known fact that the strength of a country is dependent on the level of development. Nwogu (2009) observed that a country's well-being depends on its economic development. Igweh (2008) described development in terms of reduction in the levels of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and income inequality. National development encompasses social and political development as well as economic development which is defined as the attainment of a number of ideas, modernization such as a rise in productivity, social and economic equality, improved institutions and values. Economic development is thus an important part of general development in any society. The main aim of economic development is to raise the standard of living and the general wellbeing of the people in an economy where almost everybody can be self-reliant.

Self-Reliance: A necessity for Economic Security

Igweh (2008) observed that when somebody acquires skills in any occupation, such person can establish his or her own business and even employ others. Such person Igweh added is self-reliant. Self-reliance according to Bassey (2007) is that which pre-supposes the attainment and autonomy without necessarily resorting to begging and borrowing. Self-reliance takes a man from:

- A liability to an asset
- A complainer into a master planner
- A collector to a distributor
- A pensioner to a pioneer.

Many persons have talked about self-reliance and its gains for national development. Self-reliance according to Egbon (1995) is an agency and a catalyst for economic recovery since it raises among others, the social capacity of the country for technological problem solving. It implies inward looking and independent transformation of local environment for self-sustaining. Mbanefoh (1988) stated that self-reliance involves getting people to utilize optimally more confidence in their new ingenuity and reduce their level of dependence on international organizations and foreign countries, while attempting to attain a better life for themselves. Being self-reliant makes you an entrepreneur who achieves steady supply of his needs and one that diversifies his resources to reduce dependency on others for assistance. Skill acquisition is a pre-requisite for self-reliance and wealth creation.

Home Economics education as a vocational subject equips individuals with appropriate skills and competence to live and contribute meaningful to the development of the society. All Home Economics subject areas practical oriented and requires mental and physical ability to manipulate and achieve the desired end results. Graduates of Home Economics while at school were exposed to

training in industries where practical skills necessary for self-reliance were taught. Such training under the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) is intended to widen students' scope and to expose them to ideal work environment for on the job training. Home Economics training as a vocational subject is business-oriented. It calls for entrepreneurial training among students on how to efficiently make use of available scarce resources in the optimization of production and profit as well as planning. During training, the three domains of learning such as the cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills are encouraged. Psychomotor skill is the most employed as it is required for the production of goods and services. Motor skills are very much needed and required by an entrepreneur in the industry. Osuala (2004) contended that entrepreneur's special attributes like intelligence, creativity, initiative, innovativeness, and resourcefulness should better be developed through formal education in order to reduce the scourge of poverty. Home economics education is readily available and timely to reduce and eradicate poverty to the barest minimum for the recipients. This is so because a lot of occupational areas in Home Economics such as Clothing and Textile, Food and Nutrition, Home Management and other related areas will provide job for the recipients and others who are willing to work with the recipients.

Poverty Eradication through Home Economic Education

While poverty is ravaging the economy at an alarming rate, progress towards curtailing the menace is moving rather slowly. The World Bank (2000) defined poverty as a multi-dimensional phenomenon encompassing inability to satisfy basic needs, lack of education, vulnerability to shocks, violence and crime, lack of political freedom and voice. Poverty is a plague affecting people of the third world countries. Poverty is dehumanizing, degrading and unimaginable to those who have experienced it. It reduces man to the lowest realm of human existence and sentences him to perpetual life of unhealthy,

squalid and miserable conditions of human existence. Although poverty varies in its magnitude, the level of poverty in Nigeria is characterized by widespread unemployment and shortage of food. Okunmadewa (1997) opined that poverty is a state in which people lack the purchasing power, insufficient access to social and economics services and limited opportunities for income generation.

Home Economics aims at providing individuals and families with skills to help evolve solution from problems for their own sustainable survival. Home Economics a skill oriented field of study helps at improving the quality of life through effective development and utilization of human and material resources of the society. It encourages the expansion of knowledge and development of skills in all the study areas to eradicate poverty. Such areas are Food and Nutrition, Clothing and Textile, Home Management, Interior Decoration, Consumer Education etc. To eradicate poverty students must be exposed to education that is functional and saleable that will make them self-reliant. Vocational education in Home Economics is geared towards the production of the educated man who can effectively work with his head, heart and hands. Such education develops the economy and crave for self-reliance and self-sustainability.

Ocho (2005) stated that central to the eradication of poverty is the initiation of good education system. A good education system is costly, but no amount of expenditure is too much for the production of an enlightened citizenry capable and willing to contribute to the growth and development of the nation.

The Role of Entrepreneurship in Economic Development

Entrepreneurship refers to the creation of small or medium size business by an entrepreneur. An entrepreneur on the other hand, is a person who makes money by starting and running a business especially when it involves taking financial risks (Hornby, 2001).

According to Nkwodimmah (2010), entrepreneurship can be described as creative and innovative responses to the environment which may take place in any area of human endeavour such as business, industry, Home Economics, Agricultural Education and services of all types in order to form a small scale business.

To Umemezie (2010), entrepreneurship involves the capacity to find out and evaluate business opportunities, gather the necessary resources and implement actions to take advantage of the opportunities guided by high achievement motivation. The work of entrepreneurship is a task or duty of the entrepreneur. The entrepreneur does not have to work alone. If the entrepreneur plans well, the business can grow to an enviable extent where he will have to employ people to work for him while he plays the role of a supervisor or director. In as much as an entrepreneur is the owner of his business, he should provide jobs for other people praying for growth (expansion) and sustenance of his business venture.

Osuala (1998) maintained that entrepreneurship development could lead to:

- * Stimulation of nation's economy
- * Creation of employment
- * Reduction of rural urban migration
- * Provision of practical training opportunities
- * Stimulation of rural resources
- * Income generation and redistribution
- * Better standard of living, and
- * Fostering of large scale production

Home Economics Education and Entrepreneurship

Unemployment in Nigeria has been a source of great concern to government and the citizenry in its character of sustained ascendancy. Its attendant consequences have put the nation in danger of underdevelopment and threat to life. Social disturbances which may

be as a result of unemployment have now cascaded into armed robbery attacks, political thuggery, kidnapping, prostitution, assassination to mention a few. However, entrepreneurship education is indispensable to any country for the development of its economy. Idoko (2010) stated that since up to 40% of the employment created in Nigeria is through self or “own account” employment, it is vital that graduates of tertiary education are prepared to create their own employment rather than just the acquisition of skills. Entrepreneurship enhances self-employment or self-reliance and this promotes economic prosperity and foster national growth and development.

According to Ogbene (2006), unemployment, can be greatly reduced by increasing opportunities for more jobs through Home Economics occupations. She enumerated the following career options which can keep the graduates of Home Economics gainfully employed in the absence of paid employment. The Home Economics business ventures for income generation and wealth creation include:

Food and Nutrition

- * Catering services, Restaurant Management
- * Bakery- Bread making, snacks, cake making and decoration
- * Fast Food business
- * Ice cream and yogurt business
- * Preparation of soya milk and other fruit drinks.
- * Jam making

Clothing and Textiles

- * Fashion and Designing
- * Dyeing and batik making
- * Embroidery
- * Crocheting and knitting
- * Weaving

- * Fabric and clothing accessories merchandising
- * Fashion school operation.

Home Management

- * Laundry and dry cleaning
- * Housekeeping
- * Soap and body cream production
- * Rug cleaning services

Child Development

- * Nursery management
- * Daycare centres
- * Baby sitting
- * Children's clothing merchandising

Interior Decoration

- * Event planning and decorations
- * Interior decoration
- * Making of crafts

These areas of skill training give boost to family income generation and economic security.

Conclusion

No meaningful poverty eradication can be achieved by any nation, in any nation without effective and efficient vocational education in Home Economics, since it is a discipline that offers great opportunities for self-reliance and job opportunities. At this era of mass retrenchment of workers, unemployment and global economic melt-down, graduates should look inward and create jobs for their livelihood. As government cannot provide job for all, it is pertinent that graduate should be encouraged to be self-employed and assisted

with soft loans to start their business and also employ others to reduce the number of unemployment which usually lead to social vices.

Recommendations

This paper recommends that:

- * Entrepreneurship education should be given a more practical orientation rather than theoretical knowledge.
- * Entrepreneurship education should be made compulsory at all levels of education to prepare scholars for self-employment.
- * Soft loans should be provided for graduates who are ready to set up their businesses to enable them put their plans into action.
- * Training and retraining should be encouraged to enable entrepreneurs move with the times, by attending seminars and workshops while on the job.

Augustina Oladokun

Home Economics Department
College of Education, Agbor
toladokun@yahoo.com

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