

**STRATEGIES FOR USING HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION AS A PANACEA FOR SUSTAINABLE WEALTH CREATION IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The paper examines the Strategies for using home economics education as a panacea for sustainable wealth creation in Nigeria. It views home economics as a vocational subject that equips learners with relevant skills and knowledge based on theoretical and practical activities in specific trades and vocations for gainful employment and wealth creation. On need or rationale for home economics education, through training and specializations, home economics help its recipients acquire knowledge, training and experience in money management, consumer education, food and nutrition, housing design, clothing, textiles, family studies and human development as important aspects of life and living which are inherent in the subject areas. It identified as major challenges or limitations to quality home economics education in Nigeria: Poor planning and implementation of curriculum, Lack of important facilities and designated laboratories, Inadequate offering of home economics at all levels, inadequate funding, and Negative cultural influence among others. The paper concluded that, the global qualitative analysis of the concept for “home economics” at all levels would imply that the concepts of “home” and “everyday activities” should concentrate on individual aspects of sustainable quality living (way of life). It recommended among others for increased funding towards HEE in Nigeria, so that research and development, acquisition of appropriate and up-to-date equipment and tools and general maintenance and management of HEE institutions could be achieved.*

**Keywords: Strategies, Home Economics Education, Sustainable Wealth Creation.**

**INTRODUCTION**

Home Economics Education (HEE) is a ‘field of study and profession situated in the human sciences applying the Arts, Social and Pure Sciences and a range of other disciplines to achieve optimal sustainable living for individuals, families and communities. According to Collins English Dictionary-Complete & Unabridged (2012) home economics, domestic science or home science is a field of study that deals with the relationship between individuals, families, communities, and the environment in which they live. Home economics courses have been important throughout history because it gave women the opportunity to pursue higher education and vocational training in a world where only men were able to learn in such environments. In modern times, home economics teaches people of all genders important life skills, such as cooking, sewing, and finances. With the stigma the term “home economics” has earned over the years, the course is now often referred to by different terms, such as “family and consumer science (FAQ, 2015).

As a profession, it is meant to prepare learners for careers based on theoretical and practical activities in specific trades and vocations for direct development and expertise in the techniques that can serve as instruments of technological growth and development (Amkombe, 2000, Pendergast, 2005; McGregor, Pendergast and Turki, 2011). According to the Pakistan Home Economics Association (2008), Home Economics as a discipline functions to extract usable information from various social and physical sciences and delivers it to the profession of homemaking, to strengthen and empower individuals for quality life and home making.

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The International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE, 2008), presents an international understanding of Home Economics as “the study of household management to achieve the highest quality of life” through the teaching of vital and culturally integrated theory and practice of human capacity building for the attainment and sustenance of effective family and life competencies. McGregor (2008), views HE from the definitions and explanations above and simply puts the meaning of Home Economics as the best scientific exposure to available knowledge and skills for the optimum functioning of homes, betterment of family members and quality living within the society; deliver it to consumers for them to become informed about consumerisms as individuals, families and communities, in order to make judicious decisions in their daily life activities. An important feature of home economics education is its orientation towards the world of work and emphasis on the acquisition of employable skills. This accounts for its unique role in sustainable economic development of a nation (Usen, Eneh, & Usen, 2014). Home Economics education addresses life skills such as healthy food & cooking skills, health & wellbeing, safe hygiene practices, sustainable diets, good use of resources, food storage techniques and many more (McGregor, Pendergast, Seniuk, Eghan, & Engberg, 2008). Through Home Economics, individuals and families are empowered to improve their every-day living (McGregor, et al., 2008).

According to Mureithi (as cited in Usenet al., 2014) in order to achieve sustainable development, Nigeria must offer a variety of courses in such disciplines as technical, vocational, professional and home economic education because the country needs a balanced distribution of manpower for all professions so that the vast population of Nigeria can contribute to economic growth by participating in different professions. Training and capacity building for both men and women is a key priority for poverty reduction in order to address the lack of appropriate skills and capacity both within the private and public sectors (Muthui, 2019). Similarly, Armstrong (as cited in Usenet al., 2014) defines training as the formal and systematic modification of behaviour through learning, which occurs because of education, instruction, development, and planned experience.

Basically, if people lack in technical skills, knowledge and entrepreneurial skills, the natural resources will tend to remain unutilized, underutilized or even miss-utilized. Similarly, Jhingan, (as cited in Usen et al., 2014) argued that undeveloped human resources are an important obstacle to economic development of the least Developed Countries. According to Jhingan, the economic quality of production remains low when there is little knowledge of available natural resources, possible alternative production techniques, necessary skills, existing market conditions and opportunities, and institutions that might be created to favour economizing effort and economic rationality. Today more than ever the role of home economic education is critical because of the changes taking place in the world. Rapid technological changes and globalization have made training of the workforce a prerequisite in any nation that wishes to survive.

### **HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION (HEE)**

Home Economics education is a skill - oriented course which cover a wide scope of learning. It is a field of knowledge that draws information and skills from core subject areas of the arts, sciences, humanities and other related subjects. Collins English Dictionary-Complete & Unabridged (2012) defines home economics, domestic science or home science as a field of study that deals with the relationship between individuals, families, communities, and the environment in which they live. Its philosophy borders on the improvement of the quality of life of the individual family in particular and the society at large. It focuses on acquisition of skills which family requires to satisfactorily improving family living. Hence, Ukpore (as cited in Usen et al., 2014) defined Home Economics as a dynamic field that assists man with knowledge to adapt to his environment through effective utilization of available human and material resources. Saka (2001) noted that Home Economics as a vocational subject equip students with relevant skills and knowledge for gainful employment and wealth creation.

To Ejinkeonye and Uloko (2010) referring to Okoli and Okpala HEE is the study of the laws, conditions, principles and ideals, which concerns man's immediate physical environment on the one hand and with his nature as a social being on the other hand as well as the relationship between the two factors. It is both a body of theoretical knowledge based on exact sciences and humanities and forms of practice backed up by appropriate technologies. Its 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 its entirety. It strives to solve the most pressing problems of the present as well as those of the future (Ejinkeonye&Uloko, 2010).

In the same vein Anyakoha (2000) pointed out that, Home Economics as a vocational subject has increased awareness on skill acquisition for its graduates with the aim or intention to quicken their power for self-employment ventures. Home Economics education has a definite role of preparing and equipping students with skills that increase their chances of finding a job after school. It also equips the students with knowledge and skills they need to set up their own businesses. Thus, Anozie (2006) identified nineteen occupational areas of Home Economics Education through which students can become self-reliant and consequently create wealth for the economic development of the nation. These include craft work/soft furnishing, clothing manufacturing, tailoring services, fashion and designing, baking, opening snack shops, laundry services, industrial cafeteria management, hotel management, restaurant management, street food vending, rug cleaning services, interior decoration, nursery school management, hair dressing saloon, soap and pomade making, pattern making, day care centre and dyeing. Therefore, for our purpose home economics is a vocational subject that equips learners with relevant skills and knowledge based on theoretical and practical activities in specific trades and vocations for gainful employment and wealth creation.

### **RATIONALE FOR HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION**

According to Coon (1964), the origin of HEE in New Zealand and Australia could be traced to the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the teaching of manual training to achieve mind, eye and hand coordination. HE at that time was taught with the intention to make future generations to live better than the present one based on: the emancipation/empowerment theory which stemmed from the need for a new field of study that could help the home, the family and women in particular to have more control over lives and to reinforce the notion that a 'woman's place is in the home', and ensure that women continue to take primary responsibility for house-hold and child-care tasks (Cotic, 1999). Though training and specializations differ, all home economists acquire knowledge, training and experience in money management, consumer education, food and nutrition, housing design, clothing, textiles, family studies and human development as important aspects of life and living which are inherent in the subject areas. Depending on institutions, the program of study may be called Home Economics, Human Ecology, Family Studies, Nutrition and Food Sciences, Consumer Studies, Home Science and Management, Family and Consumer Science among others.

For example, Nigeria's government 7-point Agenda or seven major government issues accommodate power and energy, food security and agriculture, wealth creation and employment, mass transportation, land reform, security and qualitative and functional education can best be achieved through quality home economics education (Ejinkeonye&Uloko, 2010). The concept of the agenda is targeted in particular to the essential needs of Nigerian poor and to which overriding priority should be given. Home Economics help individuals in developing knowledge, skills and attitude, for managing self and the household. The following major areas make up Home Economics: Family Living, Clothing and Textiles, Housing and Interior Decoration, Consumer Education and Home Management (Anyakoha, 2009). Through Home Economics, better family life is enhanced, thereby achieving the purpose of 7-point Agenda.

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### **HISTORY OF HOME ECONOMICS IN NIGERIA**

Home Economics was introduced to Nigeria about 150 years ago, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (1873) by Christian Missionaries who used it to win people into Christianity. The programme of study was initially called 'Domestic Science' with contents such as knitting, baking, sewing and general housekeeping for the basic purposes of :

- I. Preparing young ladies for marriages so they could become dutiful wives and effective mothers.
- II. Creating a platform of empowerment for wives of Catechists, Lay Readers, and Church Wardens.
- III. Ensuring that housekeeping in Vicarages and homes of Pastors was done with utmost cleanliness and modernity through the use of labour saving tools and equipment that were not popularly seen or used in Nigerian homes at that time.

With several names adopted by nations, some irregularities came up and threaten the programme till the Lake Placid Conference of 1889 where a common name 'Home Economics' was agreed to as the one that best described the domains of scientific education and professionalism for the programme, both in contents and operations. Specifically, the choice of name was explained thus; "... 'Home' connotes the shelter and nurture of children and development of self-sacrificing qualities and strength to meet the world; while 'economics' suggests the management of this 'home' on economic lines as to time, energy, and money" has grown from household training to academic/professional endeavours run in the 3 tiers of education in Nigeria. HEC as a profession should ordinarily assist the nation to empower her citizens through the abundance of inherent skills as precursors to self-actualization, job creation and poverty reduction.

### **CHALLENGES TO QUALITY HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

Whereas the African Union Draft (2007) in its strategy to revitalize home economics education noted that it is the education and training put in place to "acquire the practical skills, know-how and understanding necessary for employment in a particular occupation, trade or group of occupations" Home Economics like other Vocational Education and Training (VET) have been left to the periphery in policy making been embraced because people tend to view them in ways that negate their relevance and importance (UNESCO, 2008). The UNESCO convention 2007 described home economics education as 'all forms and levels of educational process involving, in addition to general knowledge, the study of technologies and related home sciences, the acquisition of practical skills, know-how, attitudes and understanding relating to occupations in the various sectors of social life and the home. Federal Republic of Nigeria (NPE,2004) stated among others the aims of Vocational education as that which would provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce to solve environmental problems; and give trainings that would impart necessary skills leading to the production of skilled young men and women with intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of their immediate and extended environments. Contrary to the above, HEC at the tertiary level, the expected outcomes of education should lead to technological and socio-economic advancement: but HE is seen, as education and training meant for those who have failed in societal 'important programmes of study'. On this note, the following have been identified as major challenges or limitations to quality home economics education in Nigeria:

1. **Poor planning and implementation of curriculum:** Despite the relevance of HE to the individual, the family, the society and national development due attention has not been paid to its planning and implementation by curriculum developers and policy makers for consistent review and for formal transfer of knowledge and expertise along the dynamism of knowledge for homemaking; which happens to be the oldest and most important of all professions. No wonder, the society is enveloped with high rate of divorce, child abuse, mass unemployment, kidnapping and several youth restive activities because our households and the society still encourage mistrust, insecurity and poverty.

Home Economics education and profession which should be used as a platform to eradicate poverty and enlighten the society through its programmes is not receiving deserved attention from government and policy implementers. In order to ascertain the level of neglect and put forward possible solutions to the challenges facing qualitative tertiary institutions in Nigeria, a census of the issues concerned and their implications for contemporary development need to be carried out.

2. **Lack of important facilities and designated laboratories:** Many institutions lack important facilities like designated laboratories for the core areas and divisions of HE- Foods and Nutrition, Clothing/Textiles, Home Management and Child Development. A few of our tertiary institutions that boast of available laboratories lack adequate and functional tools and equipment. It is disheartening to note that in most of the schools, appropriate equipment are lacking and students only sit for examinations in these courses to fill the required number of units for the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) and the National Examination Council of Nigeria (NECO). Many classrooms and Lecture theaters do not have enough and safe furniture items, Staff and students experience irregular supply of energy, water and other basic amenities, hence the poor quality of training and the production of 'half-baked' graduates.
3. **Inadequate offering of home economics at all levels:** In Nigeria, vocational and technical subjects are not offered at all in the primary school, even at the secondary school level, vocational subjects are offered as elective subjects whereby a student is allowed to choose only one out of three (Agricultural Science, Fine/Applied Arts and Home economics. This confirms that the huge expenditure in the educational system only emphasizes formal education for white collar jobs as against 'education for self-reliance and job creation which vocational education provides.
4. **Inadequate Funding:** According to the report of a World Bank study carried out by Ziberman (2002), has given credence to the fact that inadequate funding is a major issue affecting the quality of training and product of Home Economics, VET programmes and virtually all training systems in Sub-Saharan Africa including Nigeria because both trainers and trainees have to contend with the reality of grossly diminishing government funding of education programmes because such funding which have been seen as ad hoc and arbitral.
5. **Negative cultural influence:** Negative cultural influence resulting from stereotypes have also led to gender imbalance in the enrollment for HEC in tertiary institutions because males do not want to be found in 'societal named feminine professions', stigmatization and 'name calling of few male Home Economists and resultant discouragement have inadvertently made HEC 'a female dominated' profession lacking the required masculine 'back-up' for its voices at different forums of governance. Come to think of it, how would a society that believes a programme could only lead to perfection in cooking and eating ever choose to allocate appropriate funding for such a programme or plan to employ the graduates of such programmes when everybody in the same society can cook! Obviously, it is what people cherish that they keep.
6. **Low capacity building for curriculum Developers:** Issues with Capacity building for curriculum planners and implementers are major instances that have impacted negatively on the growth of HE profession in Nigeria. Many teachers are not given opportunities of post qualification exposures and experiences that would opportune them to mix and cross-fertilize with colleagues across the globe and benefit with contemporary research findings and frontiers of knowledge that could help them to improve on their work output. A teacher that does not have a sound access to information either in the print or electronic media of the subject matter would definitely not have the competence or improved skill to communicate concepts effectively in a changing world of knowledge dynamism.

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7. **Inadequate qualified teachers:** Demand and supply of teachers is another germane issue within our educational system. While Pendergast (2005), identifies a projected shortage in the number of trained home economics teachers globally as a significant barrier to learning in home economics. The Nigeria situation is a sharp variance in which HEC graduates stay home/loiter the streets for years in search of jobs after graduation. This scenario is a reflection of how the society views the relevance of HEC to national technological development.

Therefore, education ought to have some instrumental values harnessed into a development plan that would provide conditions for the acquisition of knowledge not only for 'its own sake', but for the sake of humanity's recovery and rebirth give credence to the essence of HEC as a profession that could achieve the above. Home Economists should see themselves as professions with a sole responsibility to refine lives by acting above and beyond all manners of pessimism that may result from societal neglect, stigmatization, ignorance and wrong notions that attempt to make the profession less important/relevance to national development. Rather, we need to pride ourselves as ambassadors and uplifters of the 'most important' aspect of human programmes that could help the family, community, nation and the global village out of its numerous youth restiveness, economic mismanagement through self-reliance, quality living and livelihood. We need to bring our academic and professional training to bearing as we see the family as the basic unit of any society to which we owe the responsibility of quality living that would rid the World of its numerous human problems. It is in the light of the above that Bangura (2005), aptly stated that endogenous educational development begins at a point when people start to pride themselves as worthy human beings/professionals who are inferior to none; and where such pride is lost, development should begin through its retrieval and restoration. In addendum, Bangura (2005), sees the role of education as that which ought to respond to historical injustice by encouraging in learners a sense of "pride" in their communities and knowledge systems which will in turn, set in motion the needed developmental processes.

### **STRATEGIES OF USING HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION AS A PANACEA FOR WEALTH CREATION**

According to Ejinkeonye and Uloko (2010) through Home Economics Education, individuals can create wealth and employment, thereby, reducing unemployment which is the major problem in Nigeria leading to poverty. The poor living standard affects the quality of social-economical entreties in Nigeria and that inequality extending to governance could harm citizens' morale off the terrain of Nigeria's identity. Wealth creation includes the ability to put aside some money on regular basis as savings (Igba&Tgba, 2007). Wealth creation according to Oldadeyi (as cited in Ejinkeonye&Uloko, 2010) is being creative and very imaginative. It can only be achieved if one is employed. Ejinkeonye and Uloko (2010) assert that Home Economics Education offers different employment opportunities that help to create wealth to include:

1. Teaching in nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary levels, depending on one's qualification provide individuals with source of income,
2. Involving in Home Economics extension works by running out-of-school educational programmes like going to the interior areas to give useful services to individuals, families and society on areas related to the improvement of their lives, provide individuals with source of income,
3. Holding managerial positions in different types of institutions such as in colleges, universities, residential halls in universities and colleges, hospitals, restaurants, e.t.c, also provide individuals with source of income,

4. Working for newspapers, journals, magazines, televisions and radios; often in charge of food, clothing, consumer education and other areas relating to Home Economics, provide individuals with source of income,
5. Sewing garments for people, provide individuals with source of income,
6. Creating new designs for garments (fashion), fabrics/textiles and clothing accessories, provide individuals with source of income,
7. Developing paper patterns for sale, provide individuals with source of income,
8. Taking care of people's hair and performing other beauty treatments, provide individuals with source of income,
9. Working in hospitals, helping with diets for the treatment and prevention of diseases, provide individuals with source of income,
10. Working in health departments of schools, hospitals and industries, helping people to improve their nutritional habits and status, to keep in good health, provide individuals with source of income,
11. Cooking for people as caterer in boarding schools, hospitals, hotels, offices, e.t.c, provide individuals with source of income,
12. Running hotels as a business, provide individuals with source of income,
13. Applying the principles of food science and engineering in the development, production, processing and distribution of food, as food technologists, provide individuals with source of income,
14. Working in social welfare and public health centers provide individuals with source of income, and
15. Qualified Home Economists can be employed in research and development units, responsible for researching on various need areas in the society to improve the situation and meet the needs of people and their families.

## **CONCLUSION**

Up till today, Nigeria is still faced with myriad of problems like rural-urban migration, unemployment, theoretical based education systems and declining jobs in the formal sector which are the causes of her underdevelopment, insecurity due to the activities of Boko Haram, kidnapers, Arm robbers, Snatchers, tribal and religious conflicts. These are unpalatable scenarios in addition to other negative impacts of globalization which could become history if we invest in human capacity building and training for the acquisition of skills to raise productivity and allow widespread use of existing technology for the growth of new frontiers in HEE and home making to enhance employability of the individuals and collective flexibility of the workforce. Pendergast (2005) suggests that HEE subject is at a convergent moment, because a number of interconnected societal factors such as sustainability, global consumption, health and social justice are aligning around the profession to play a pivotal role in the development of informed global citizenry so that the intrinsic values of home economics as a discipline could integrate its sub-disciplines with a shared philosophical core – understanding of home economics as a holistic, professional system.

The global qualitative analysis of the concept for “home economics” at all levels would imply that the concepts of “home” and “everyday activities” should concentrate on individual aspects of sustainable quality living (way of life). An individual concept of “environmentally responsible citizen”, “criteria of sustainable living” and a change of thinking from the individual viewpoint about “ways of life” and “everyday living” would become inevitable for a responsive and fulfilling tertiary Home Economics education.

## Strategies for Using Home Economics Education as a Panacea for Sustainable Wealth Creation in Nigeria

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is need for increased funding towards HEE in Nigeria, so that research and development, acquisition of appropriate and up-to-date equipment and tools and general maintenance and management of HEE institution.
2. There is also need to look into the economic policies upheld by our country to fish out the ways and means by which financial assistance can easily be obtained by those with entrepreneurship skills in HEE but are unable to start income generating activities due to financial constraints. Governments should encourage the development of micro finances and also through their national commercial banks offer friendly loans to even the poor and young entrepreneurs to establish money making activities.
3. Since HEC is more market driven, it is necessary for governments to involve organizations in the formulation of the curricula and certification of the skills offered and participates in providing on the job training by creating incentives for companies by reimbursing training costs, by subsidizing apprenticeship wages and for those companies who earn huge profits, by allowing for tax concessions.
4. Appropriate review of the HE curriculum to meet the contemporary needs of individuals, families and the nation within the stipulated period of 5 years should be taken more serious and implemented as at when due to ensure current and up to date overhauling and enrichment of its contents in line with global paradigms as opined by Awosika (2012).
5. Raising the level of interest of the youth in Home Economics Education through provision of scholarships and learning resources and raising the quality of Home-Economics teachers through quality training.

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