

HOME ECONOMICS ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS: A VERITABLE TOOL FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

This paper was a review of Home Economics entrepreneurial skills: a veritable tool for youth empowerment. The paper presented a brief introduction of the subject matter. It X-rayed what Home Economics education is all about. Various components of Home Economics education such as clothing and textile, Foods and Nutrition and Home management amongst others were critically examined. The study revealed that Nigerian youths have not sufficiently learnt and acquired entrepreneurial skills to allow for self-employment. The Nigerian educational system is expected to rise to the challenge of equipping the youth with the necessary entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, values and attitude for them to live as competent members of the society and contribute meaningfully to nation building. This gave rise to various entrepreneurial skills that can be acquired in various Home Economics components. It further examined Home Economics education, Youth and the roles of Home Economics entrepreneurial skills on youth empowerment. It was concluded that reformation of Home Economics curriculum if considered and properly implemented will go a long way in creating reasonable number of entrepreneurs among our teeming unemployed youth. It recommended that students should be encouraged to have interest in the skill-based Home Economics Education, hence should be accorded appropriate recognition. Thus, there is need for a change in the mindset of youth to see self-employment as an option and be prepared psychologically and emotionally for it, this will enable them to be more motivated in identifying entrepreneurial opportunities.

Keywords: Home Economics, Entrepreneurial Skills, Youth empowerment

Introduction

A country blessed with abundant human and natural resources such as Nigeria, appears ravaged in poverty. As a result of the economic hardship experienced in the country over the past years, poverty has increased dramatically, with little or no job opportunities for its graduates. There appears to be acute hunger and increased cost of living amongst others. Nationally, 43% of Nigeria (89 million) live below the poverty line, while 25% (53 million) are vulnerable (World Bank, 2020). No doubt, so many youths are on the streets looking for jobs because they are not skilled. These level of poverty therefore becomes worrisome and unacceptable to the general wellbeing of Nigeria citizenry. It becomes highly imperative for youths to embrace skill oriented programmes such as Home Economics education in order to acquire relevant entrepreneurial skills.

Home Economics is a multidisciplinary field that encompasses various aspects of managing and improving the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through practical knowledge

and skills (Ibrahim 2008). Its primary focus is on the application of knowledge in areas related to home management, family life, nutrition, consumer education, textiles and clothing, and personal finance. The ultimate goal of Home Economics is to enhance the quality of life and promote the overall well-being of individuals and families. The components or specializations of Home Economics education include: Clothing and Textiles, Foods and Nutrition, Home Management, Interior Design, Culinary Arts, Hospitality and Tourism, Health and Wellness, Family and Child Development, among others. The objectives of Home Economics education are closely linked to these specializations. They include: Promoting Healthy Living, Enhancing Life Skills, Sustainable Living, Cultural Appreciation, Empowering Individuals, amongst others. (International Federation for Home Economics, 2018). Towards the attainment of these objectives, Home Economics graduates need to acquire relevant entrepreneurial skills that will empower and make them to be productive. Unfortunately, Home Economics graduates appear to lack necessary entrepreneurial mindset that will make them saleable and productive in the labour market. This has left many Home Economics graduates in the street in search of employment opportunities. If a drastic and a proactive measure is not taken, many Home Economics may engage in social vices and other negative source of livelihood in order to earn a living. The need to acquire entrepreneurial skills becomes extremely vital.

Entrepreneurial skill in Home Economics include sewing, weaving and textile design in Clothing and Textile; cooking cuisines, Baking and culinary arts in Foods and Nutrition, Hospitality, interior decoration and detergent production in Home Management among others. If youth acquire these skills, they will become entrepreneurs which will lead to youth empowerment Entrepreneurship is the ability to turn ideas into actions and is a key competence for all, helping young people to be more creative and self-confident in whatever they undertake. Usman (2018) defined entrepreneurship as the process of identifying, developing and bringing a vision to life. Entrepreneurship in Home Economics education involves equipping young individuals with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become confident, self-reliant, and active participants in managing their homes and making informed decisions that positively impact their lives and families. If they acquire these skills, it will ultimately lead to youth empowerment. With the richness of Home Economics Education in entrepreneurial skills, many graduates of home economics still roam the streets looking for jobs, one begins to wonder what could have happened. Could this be linked to lack of intent on the part of the students or that they were not properly thought the course that is so loaded for the employability skills?

Youth empowerment refers to the process of providing young people with the tools, knowledge, resources, and opportunities necessary to develop their potential, build their confidence, and actively participate in decision-making and positive social change. It aims to enable young individuals to take control of their lives, exercise their rights, and contribute to their communities and society at large. Youth empowerment in Home Economics education involves equipping young individuals with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become confident, self-reliant, and active participants in managing their homes and making informed decisions that positively impact their lives and families. According to Ezeanu (2018), Young people appear to be empowered when acknowledged they have/can create choices in life and are aware of implications of these choices, make an informed decision freely, take action based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of that action. Youth empowerment is an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people, including youths and adults (Sasaki, 2016). Sasaki (2016) further stated that empowering youth in this context means creating

and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. These enabling conditions include, economic and social base, political will, adequate resources allocation and supportive legal and administrative frameworks, a stable environment of equality, peace and democracy, and access to knowledge, information and skills and a positive value system.

Concept of Home Economics

Historically, the study and practice of Home Economics primarily centered around the efficient management of a household, encompassing tasks such as meal preparation, budgeting, sewing, and child-rearing. While these skills remain fundamental, they have now become the cornerstone of a broader and more encompassing approach. Home Economics has evolved beyond its traditional confines to seamlessly integrate with the entrepreneurial landscape, creating a powerful synergy between household management and business acumen.

Home Economics is an interdisciplinary field of study that focuses on managing and improving the quality of life within the home and family setting. It encompasses a wide range of practical skills, knowledge, and principles related to various aspects of domestic life, including: cooking and nutrition, household management, clothing and textiles, child development and family studies, personal finance, interior design and home decoration, food preservation and safety, health and hygiene etc. The aim of Home Economics is to equip individuals with practical skills and knowledge that enhance their everyday lives, foster healthy family relationships, and promote overall well-being. It is a dynamic field that evolves with societal changes, and its principles are applicable to people of all ages and backgrounds (Taar & Palojoki 2022).

Taar & Palojoki (2022) further stated that teachers believe that Home Economics Education is important for the quality of students' lives, as it helps them develop social skills and knowledge in various areas such as food, textiles, home improvement, economics, consumer education, sustainable consumption, and health. Home Economics education can take place in schools, community centers, or through online resources, helping individuals develop essential life skills to become self-reliant and responsible members of society.

Home Economics Education is vocational and it contributes to development by equipping individuals with reliable occupational skills which lead to self-reliance. Home Economics Education prepares youths and adults for entering into various areas of Home Economics occupation (Iyere & Anenea, 2020). It is skill oriented; it is a vocation of self-reliance and boarder on preparing her recipient for challenges of the home and its environment (Zongoro & Msheliza, 2020). Ibrahim (2008) stated that, Home Economics Education is the greatest investment any nation can make for the development of her economy, political, social and human resources. The author further stated that the objectives of Home Economics are geared towards equipping individuals with saleable skills that will make them self-reliant. It exposes individuals to many occupational skills that can enable them gain employment in the labour market.

Ibrahim (2008) further emphasized that Home Economics Education is the study of all the elements of family, individual, human development and interpersonal relation. It is a field of study that provides the necessary knowledge for guiding and assisting human beings towards a more self-rewarding and fulfilled life comparable with their society. Home Economics Education is to assist young ones and interested adults to take a dynamic step which not only cause them to acquire knowledge but the skills for making them self-reliant. Home Economics Education can be

effectively used for economic empowerment which if properly taught can help raise the economic status of the individual, the family and the nation (Alabi, 2016). It enhances a nation's standard of living by creating wealth and jobs, encouraging the development of new knowledge and technology which is the goal of every nation in the world. Home Economics Education can therefore be regarded as a tool for entrepreneurial skills among youth.

Home Economics Entrepreneurial Skills

Lemchi (2017) presented a comprehensive catalogue of Home Economics entrepreneurial skills which can be translated to business opportunities. These include:

1. Clothing and Textile skills; such as sewing and textile production which will lead to, Garment construction/manufacturing, tailoring, fabric stores; apparel shops; laundry services; bridal shop; weaving centers; knitting centers; crocheting; costume design; pattern design and production; fashion and design school operations; tie and die designing; batik designing; children/kiddies clothing shops; clothes remodeling.
2. Foods and Nutrition skills: such as cooking and baking which will lead to restaurant, fast food establishments, grocery shops, bakeries; cake designing; infants formula, food manufacturing, catering Services (both indoor and outdoor) jam jellies and fruit juice making, ice cream and yoghurt making nutrition/diet counseling, candies and biscuits manufacture culinary arts, cuisine services
3. Home management/Housing and furniture skills: such as hospitality and interior decoration which will lead to household equipment shops, Gift shops, Crafts shops, Craft production centers, Super markets, Abrasive production, liquid soap production, Interior decoration, Bed sheets/spread and pillow case making and merchandizing, Soap manufacturing, Cream and pomade manufacturing, Rental services e.g. canopies, plates, cups, chairs, etc. for parties, outdoor decoration for parties, funeral house decoration, furniture shops event management.

It is clearly seen from the above that Home Economics offers numerous self-employment /entrepreneurial skills, hence it can be rightly stated that Home Economics Education is a vital tool in diversifying the Nigerian economy if well implemented and knowledge and skills acquired are well utilized especially our youth

Concept of Youth

Youth refers to the time of life when one is young especially the period between childhood and maturity of the early period of existence, growth or development. Youth generally refers to a time of life that is neither childhood nor adulthood but rather somewhere in between. Youth is an alternative word to the scientifically oriented adolescent and the common terms of teen and teenager. According to Jega (2012) Youth can be defined as a special group of people with strong stamina and passion for realizing certain set goals and objectives. The way in which a nation defines its youth is related to the objective conditions and realities that exist on the ground especially historical and contemporary socio-economic and political issues that need to be addressed. That is why nations use different parameters and variables in defining their youth. For the purpose of execution of Nigeria's National Youth Development Policy; the youth comprises all young persons of age 18-35 who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This category represents the most culture, the most volatile and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population, socio- economically, emotionally and in other respect. Youths share certain characteristic that distinguish

them from other generations, such characteristics include, impatient for change, zealousness, radicalism, rebellions, curiosity, hard work, ego and ambition. From the foregoing discussion, it is safe to say that, youths are the engine and actual of national development, if their mindsets are channeled in the right direction. In order to raise stable youth that are self-reliant, entrepreneurial skills of veritable tool for empowerment should be taught to them. In a world marked by technological advancements, shifting consumer behaviors, and economic uncertainties, the skills cultivated through Home Economics provide a solid and adaptable foundation. This newfound dimension of Home Economics equips young individuals with a versatile toolkit that extends far beyond the walls of their homes. These skills, now intricately linked with entrepreneurial aptitude, empower the youth to not only navigate the complexities of modern business but to thrive within them.

The Role of Home Economics Skills on Youth Empowerment

Home Economics skills play a crucial role in empowering youth by providing them with practical knowledge and capabilities that contribute to their personal growth, self-reliance, and active participation in society. These skills not only equip young individuals with essential life skills but also foster a sense of responsibility and confidence in managing their homes, pursuing their goals, and making informed decisions. Here are some key ways in which Home Economics skills contribute to youth empowerment:

1. Home Economics equips youth with practical skills such as cooking, meal planning, budgeting, sewing, and household management. These skills are essential for daily living and contribute to their independence and self-sufficiency.
2. Home Economics education teaches youth about budgeting, saving, and responsible spending. Financial literacy empowers them to make informed financial decisions and plan for their future.
3. Home Economics can inspire youth to explore entrepreneurial ventures, such as starting home-based businesses or offering services related to their learned skills. This empowers them to create their own opportunities and potentially contribute to their family's income.
4. Home Economics help youth to learn about nutrition, healthy cooking habits, and food safety. These skills promote healthier lifestyle choices and contribute to their overall well-being.
5. Home Economics emphasizes sustainable practices, such as recycling, energy conservation, and reducing waste. Youth are empowered to make environmentally responsible choices, contributing to a more sustainable future.
6. Home Economics education involves problem-solving activities related to household management, cooking, and other aspects. These activities enhance youth's critical thinking skills, enabling them to tackle challenges effectively.
7. Youth learn time management and organizational skills, helping them balance their academic commitments, household responsibilities, and personal interests efficiently.
8. Home Economics fosters effective communication and collaboration within the family setting. These skills enable youth to express themselves, engage in meaningful conversations, and build strong relationships.

9. Home Economics education can promote cultural awareness and inclusivity, acknowledging and respecting diverse family traditions and customs.
10. By actively participating in household decision-making and taking on responsibilities, youth develop leadership qualities and a sense of responsibility.
11. Home Economics skills encourage youth to be actively engaged in family and community activities, fostering a sense of belonging and social responsibility.
12. Youth empowerment through Home Economics involves helping young individuals set personal and family goals, empowering them with a sense of purpose and direction.

Challenges facing the acquisition of Entrepreneurial Skills in Home Economics

The acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in Home Economics faces numerous challenges that limit students' ability to fully develop their entrepreneurial potential. These challenges stem from various factors at the individual, institutional, and societal levels. They include:

1. Limited Emphasis on Entrepreneurship in Home Economics Curricula

One of the primary challenges facing the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in Home Economics education is the limited emphasis on entrepreneurship in the curriculum. Historically, Home Economics has focused on teaching traditional domestic skills, such as cooking, sewing, and household management. While these skills are valuable, they may not fully prepare students to explore entrepreneurial opportunities and pursue innovative ventures. The traditional curriculum may not allocate sufficient time and resources to teach entrepreneurial concepts, business planning, and marketing strategies. As a result, students may graduate without a comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurship and its potential applications in their lives.

2. Teacher Training and Expertise

Effective teaching of entrepreneurial skills requires educators who have specialized knowledge and expertise in entrepreneurship. However, not all Home Economics educators may have received training in teaching entrepreneurship. Without proper guidance and mentorship, students may not receive the necessary support to develop their entrepreneurial capabilities.

3. Gender Stereotypes in Home Economics

Home Economics has historically been associated with gender stereotypes, often portraying it as a female-centric field. This perception can discourage male students from pursuing entrepreneurial interests within home economics. The perpetuation of these stereotypes limits the diversity of perspectives and potential talent that could contribute to entrepreneurial endeavors within the field.

4. Resource Constraints

Limited resources, such as materials, equipment, and funding, can hinder the implementation of hands-on entrepreneurial projects in the Home Economics classroom. Lack of access to modern technology can also limit students' exposure to relevant tools and resources.

5. Lack of Supportive Environment

The home and school environment may not fully support the development of entrepreneurial skills in Home Economics education. Negative attitudes towards risk-taking or entrepreneurship can deter students from exploring such opportunities.

6. Parental and Societal Expectations

Parents and society may prioritize more traditional career paths over entrepreneurship, leading students to choose safer options rather than exploring entrepreneurial endeavors. This mindset may be influenced by the perception that entrepreneurship involves greater risks and uncertainties.

7. Cultural and Traditional Barriers

Cultural norms and values may impact the acceptance and adoption of entrepreneurship, especially within the domestic context. Some cultures may prioritize stability and traditional roles over risk-taking and innovation. Traditional assessment methods may not adequately measure the development of entrepreneurial skills, leading educators to prioritize other academic aspects over entrepreneurial learning.

8. Perceived Risk Aversion

Some students may be risk-averse, avoiding entrepreneurial endeavors due to fear of failure or uncertainty. The prospect of launching a business or pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities may be intimidating for those who are risk-averse. Developing an entrepreneurial mindset and the confidence to take risks can be challenging for some students, particularly if they are not exposed to entrepreneurial concepts early in their education.

9. Lack of Business Networks

Students may not have access to business networks or mentors who can provide guidance and support for their entrepreneurial endeavors. The absence of a supportive network can limit students' exposure to real-world entrepreneurial experiences and opportunities.

10. Institutional Support

Schools and educational institutions may not prioritize or invest in resources to develop entrepreneurial programs or initiatives. Limited support from the institution can hinder the integration of entrepreneurial content into Home Economics education.

11. Lack of Exposure

Some students may not have exposure to real-life entrepreneurial experiences, limiting their understanding of the practical aspects of starting and running a business. The absence of exposure can hinder their ability to connect theoretical knowledge with real-world applications.

Conclusion

The review showed that Nigerian youths have not sufficiently learnt and acquired entrepreneurial skills to allow for self-employment. Hence Nigerian educational system is expected to rise to the challenge of equipping the youth with the necessary entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, values and attitude for them to live as competent members of the society and contribute meaningfully to nation building. Reformation of Home Economics Education curriculum if considered and properly

implemented will go a long way in creating reasonable number of entrepreneurs among our teaming unemployed youth.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Adequate implementation of a well-articulated skill-oriented curriculum by teachers of Home Economics Education (HEE) will provide solution to the problem of poverty in Nigeria because the youths would have been taught some skills that could be used to create jobs for themselves
2. Students should be encouraged to have interest in the skill-based HEE, hence should be accorded appropriate recognition. There is need for a change in the mindset of youth to see self-employment as an option and be prepared psychologically and emotionally for it. This will enable them to be more motivated in identifying entrepreneurial opportunities.
3. With the recent emphasis on the need for youth self-employment, the Federal Government, through the Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Power are equally expected to create an enabling learning environment that will promote entrepreneurship by ensuring constant power supply in the schools and country generally, without this the young upcoming entrepreneurs will become discouraged.
4. Real practical work (and not alternative to practical) in Home Economics Education should be made compulsory for JSS 3 and SSS 3 students as part of the requirements for their graduation. Each student should be encouraged to produce at least one marketable product or service, and such products should be put up for exhibition. This will further create motivation for entrepreneurship
5. Teachers should be supported through continuous professional development and motivation to enable them prepare the youth for success in the competitive global economy.
6. Collaborating with external experts, such as local entrepreneurs or business advisors, can bring real-world insights and experiences to the classroom, enhancing students' learning experience.
7. Sharing stories of successful entrepreneurs who have overcome challenges and setbacks can inspire students and boost their confidence in pursuing entrepreneurial ventures.

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