

Making the Male Home-Maker: The Home Economics Imbalance in the Southern States of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT Equal educational opportunities for both male and female citizens remain one of the cardinals of Nigeria National Policy on Education with the aim of achieving high vocational and technical status. However, the scenario presents a gross imbalance in male enrolment in Home economics a major vocation course in the education system. This paper projects the aim of the course, the cause of enrolment imbalance, the consequences of the imbalance and recommends among others the reservation of a percentage of admission quota for male students, the organization of remedial courses for male students and employment of Guidance Counsellors in the school system.

INTRODUCTION

Utilitarianism has been the basic principle of African traditional Education. Individuals were taught or schooled in various occupations and vocation so defined by the society. The males were educated in the crafts of wood carving, farming, traditional medicine; while the females had pre-eminence training in the arts of home keeping, especially cookery, home management and motherhood crafts (Fafunwa, 1974). Today things have changed. Western education with its abundant development in industries and business has revolutionized the society. Skills hitherto taught at home and in the industries are now the preoccupations of schools with the mind of producing individuals that are not only knowledgeable in the vocations but are skilled in the art of their choice for either individual absorption for productive goods and services or self-employment. The world has now changed to a small village where individuals moving from one point to another require services enjoyed at home. They need to be cared for in home services outside their domain to reduce displacing shock. But culture restricts the appearance and working conditions of the females.

This paper is propelled by the need to have male individuals knowledgeable and skilled with appropriate competencies to render services where culture restricts the female folk.

The production of skilled manpower needs for economic and technological growth of any society is generally acknowledged as one of the major functions of the educational system.

Education is generally accepted as a social infrastructure for developing any society both for technological adoption, adaptation and transmission of culture. Okwele (1993) hold that there is need not to increase the rate of the economic growth by an appropriate investment in human capital, but also to replace costly expatriate manpower by skilled indigenous personnel. The need for appropriate skilled personnel in different areas of the economy necessitated the offering of both vocational and technical education in different tertiary institutions of learning especially in the monotechnics and different faculties in universities. Prominent among these vocations is Home Economics.

The definition of Home Economics has varied among authors (Mainwood, 1976; Weidemann, 1977; Giadom, 1981; Anyakoha, 1982; and Okwele, 1993). However, they all agreed that the course has as its central thrust as education for skill development necessary for an occupation with the family as a focus. Anene-Okeakwa (1990) defined Home economics as that aspect of Vocational Education concerned primarily with development of skills; knowledge and attitudes required for useful and successful occupation which may be in the form of self-reliance or for being gainfully employed by others. Employment for the Home economics graduate abound in Hotel and Catering Services; "food is ready" (term for local restaurant), business and tourism industries.

The choice and enrolment of people in different occupations have been explained by many educational scholars (Bandura and Walter, 1983 and Nwanna-Nzewunwa, 2000).

Home economics is one of the vocational subjects defined in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1998: revised 2002) as that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as basic scientific knowledge. The aim among others include:-

1. To produce professionally qualified teachers who are competent to teach Home Economics at post-primary levels.
2. To equip students with the intellectual and professional skills and other competences required for self – reliance.
3. To inculcate in the students the necessary skills to strengthen family life through improvement of personal family and community living.
4. To produce practical and production oriented graduates that will successfully utilize their skills to be self – employed for service in government, industry and other careers in Home Economics in addition to teaching jobs.

OBSERVATIONS

While the low enrolment of females in Science, Technology and Mathematics is known, (Yoloye, 1994; Erinasha, 1998 and Fakorele, 1999); the low male enrolments in occupations dominated by females have attracted little attention. The Nigerian philosophy of education (NPE, 1998) is the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal educational opportunities for all her citizens at all levels of education. Although, government insistence is on equal opportunity, the scenario is a gross imbalance in enrolment of males in Home economics. As a course of study, apart from dealing with food – its preparation, composition, preservation and quality; encompassing home making and clothing, Home economics offer probable opportunities both in institutional employment and job creation which is one of government's focus in poverty alleviation and private sector participation in the national economy.

Statistics from the schools/institutions offering Home economics as a course since 1990 in the Midwestern (Edo and Delta) and South-western (Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Lagos) states show a gross low level of enrolment of males (Table 1). This no doubt has caused unavailability of able bodied males that can be employed in the tourism and catering services.

Table 1: Enrolment of males in Home Economics Classes 1990 – 2005 in Midwestern and South western States

<i>Zone</i>	<i>States</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Mid West	Edo	-	750	750
	Delta	10	2,452	2,462
South West	Oyo	-	3,266	3,266
	Ogun	4	3,106	3,110
	Osun	-	2,436	2,436
	Ondo	2	2,631	2,633
	Lagos	-	2,130	2,130
Total		16	16,771	16,787

Source: Field work 2005.

The table shows that of the 16,787 Home economists produced in the Mid West and South West zone of Nigeria, only 16 were males representing 0.095 or 0.10 percent of the total number of trained Home economics teachers.

CAUSES OF IMBALANCE

The gross imbalance between male and female enrolment in Home Economics could have arisen from plethora cultural practice in the society resulting from ingrained prejudices, attitudes, customs and behavioural decisions. Religious and cultural practices in favour of women are long aged (Nayana, 1985; Robertson, 1988, 1991; Okojie, 1995 and Ezech, 2002). There is sex-typed interest. Sex-stereotyped occupation of the female over the male is a tradition which has socialized males into believing that it is a ridicule of manliness to venture into an occupation that is female preserve. Culturally, women are expected to have children early to whom they will devote their live and traditional domestic roles assigned to women – attending to household chores, work in the farm, fetch water and firewood (Fafunwa, 1974; Erinoshio, 1998).

Identification and modelling by the females tend to favour their predominance in Home making courses. The psychoanalytic theory of Freud (expressed in Baudura and Walter, 1963) explains that the two antecedent conditions that result in a child identification with parents are fear of loss of love and fear of punishment. Witkin (1965) explained choice of job as a status-envy of identification, which states that identification is the cumulative effect of a rivalrous interaction between the child and the parents. Witkin (1965) postulates that the more a child envied the status of another person, in respect to the consumption of resources of which he feels deprived, the more

he/she will play the role of that person in fantasy. The effect is females reinforced to adopt the mother – type behaviour, while males then towards their fathers. Besides, the curricula offering are in Food and Nutrition, Clothing and Textiles and Home Management (Arubayi, 2004). These are really the domains of women. Since most of the students are females, the case is also true of the teachers. So there is predominance of women at both the Colleges of Education and the Departments in Faculties of Education of Universities offering the programme. This affects enrolment in Home economics and Home making courses in tertiary institutions.

The social learning theory (Cob, 1972) a fusion of traditional learning theory and observational learning theory hold that boys and girls are reinforced to adopt male and female typed behaviour. He further explains that socializers especially parents do not provide males with experiences necessary for skill acquisition in home making.

IMPLICATION

The major implication of this imbalance in enrolment of males in Home economics courses is wastage. Yembo (2004) put wastage as a situation when an investment does not produce either its deserved or anticipated results or produce at a scale considerably lower than it has set for itself. Simply put, wastage would mean inefficient use of resources. The wastage are in under utilization of facilities, non-recruitment of young men into Home economics programmes and under utilization of human learning and abandonment of Home economics job for other areas of occupation.

Usefulness of resources depends on what the teacher makes out of them as emphasized by Onwuka (1981). He also pointed out that one of the reasons why available materials are not used effectively by teachers in schools was that they lacked the necessary skills to operate them. The teachers themselves indicated difficulty in getting the resources as their problem (Echetabu, 1984). The teachers are required to manipulate and organise the learners to bring about the desired behaviour (human learning).

CORRECTING THE IMBALANCE

There is need for effective counselling at the

secondary school level that Home Economics is not exclusive preserve for females and that traditional belief should be discountenanced. Occupational opportunities available to males should be exposed especially in the Hotel, Catering and Tourism industries. The society has changed from its traditional setting; it's still changing and would continue to change. Emeruwa (1981) defined society as a segment or proportion of the universe of mankind. Activities are carried out in a society which tends to influence the culture of the society. The society is therefore dynamic and the learner susceptible to or prone to changes. His/ her education is also prone to changes. Ottaway (1962) concluded that education is an activity that goes on in a society and its aims and methods depend on the nature of the society in which it takes place. A society driven by technology tends to influence and change the learner beyond the scope of conservatism. The impact of this is that the concept and curriculum of Home Economics need to be reconceptualized and implemented to include those areas hitherto regarded as women duties and jobs. The need for occupational guidance can not be overemphasized. Many occupations suffer and the potential of individuals wrongly dissipated as a result of unawareness. Counsellors specializing in occupational guidance should be employed in schools to educate students about occupations – their requirements, duration of study and prospects both in the industry and self-reliance.

Admission policy into Home Economics programmes in schools should have a percentage for males. In addition, in-school remedial courses should be offered or organized for intakes that fall short of the requirement for Home Economics.

There is the need for proper planning and implementation of Home economics education. This will reduce the under utilization of food laboratories, kitchen utensils and other equipment needed for its vocational empowerment.

Monetary allowances should be made available to Home economics teachers in the villages. This will serve as incentive to reside in the villages/rural areas which constitute about 60 – 65 percent of Nigerian habitat. There is the negative attitude to vocational education which can be traced back to the colonial orientation and indoctrination that the Grammar school education is superior to vocational education. There is therefore the need for a curriculum affect

(Egun, 1993) and programme model incorporating a period of academic work (in- school) and out-of-school work – Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) during which period learners acquire first hand experience in the vocation. In the rural areas there is the need to disinfect the minds of parents of the psychology of certain disciplines as exclusive preserve of females and the projection of males that have made success in the confessional industries. This necessitates rural extension service with adult education goals that are capable of converting needs of the people to felt- needs.

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