

# LOW ENROLMENT OF STUDENTS IN TEACHER EDUCATION: THE CASE OF HOME ECONOMICS

**Agbigbe, Gladys Ese**

*Department of Home Economics Education  
Delta State College Of Education, Mosogar*

## **Abstract**

*The focus of this paper is on the low enrolment of students in Teachers' Education, with more emphasis on Home Economics Education. Teacher Education serves as a key change agents in transforming education and society at large. However, most students prefer to study other profession rather than the teaching profession. Candidates who usually apply to higher institutions for teacher education in Nigeria are those who have either been denied admission or are basically unqualified for admission into such popular professions including medicine, law, engineering, architecture etc. Home economics Education is the area of study in teachers' education that provides the necessary knowledge guiding and assisting human being to be able to attain a more self-reliant and fulfilled life. This paper discusses some factors that poses challenges to Home Economics education and subsequently leads to low enrolment of students in the subject. Amongst are: discouragement from parents, expensive nature of the subject, gender disparity, lack of equipment and ignorance of career opportunities in Home Economics among others. It therefore, recommends among others that the government as well as curriculum planners should make Home Economics education more attractive so as to eliminate gender disparity to increase students' enrolment to study Home Economics Education. They should also provide facilities/equipment/materials/ICT and fund to encourage effective teaching and learning of the subject. This also will make the students spend less in practical since they may not need to buy those equipment/materials themselves.*

**Keywords:** *Teacher Education, Students' Enrolment, Home Economics, Gender Disparity, Teaching Profession.*

## **Introduction**

Education is often seen as a prerequisite for quality manpower development and creation of wealth, a sure path of service to humanity and success in life and thus, teachers have important role to play to sufficiently prepare the young for their roles in the society in order to achieve the set national objectives of any country. According to Abdul-Kareem (2001) Education is an inevitable tool for sustainable development and a vehicle for advancing the frontier of knowledge. This knowledge is imparted by a set of professionals called teachers.

Teachers belong to the profession which has the only potential of determining the social, economic, political and moral destiny of every Nigerian citizen. This fact

accentuates the necessity for teacher education to be perceived as a sacred duty that must never be toyed with if teaching must accomplish its divine professional obligation of cultivating generations of highly responsible, disciplined and useful Nigerians.

The goal of teacher education in Nigeria includes, among others, ‘the encouragement of the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers, and providing them with the intellectual and professional background that will be adequate for their assignments and also make them adaptable to changing situations’ (FME, National Policy on Education, 2004). By the policy stipulations therefore, the professional training of teachers is two-fold: pre-service and in-service trainings. To implement this, certain institutions are charged with the responsibility to provide professional training for teachers. Amongst such institutions are: Faculties/Institutes of Education of Universities, Colleges of Education, The National Teachers’ Institute (NTI), Schools of Education in the Polytechnics etc. these institutions are saddled with the responsibilities of training the future trainers.

The requirements for the various teacher-training programmes differ from one level to the other in terms of academic qualification. For admission to colleges of education, prospective candidates must have at least three credits in the Senior School Certificate—including the subjects they want to study—and two other passes. At the university level, the entry requirement is five credits, which must include the chosen major teaching subject. In addition, prospective candidates are required to sit for an entrance examination called the Unified Matriculation Examinations (UTME). The pre-service training prepares the perspective teacher to participate effectively in the educational system and usually involves exposure to varied concepts of teaching and learning and contents of different subject areas depending on the area of specialization of each teacher.

At the end of their trainings, trainees are awarded degrees according to the institution attended as well as their overall academic performance which qualified them to teach at the level of education trained for. Very recently, they are also required to register with the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) which is a body responsible for the licensing of teachers. At the fulfilment of these requirements, they are considered professional teachers.

There is persistent shortage of applicants seeking admission into teaching programmes in our national universities and colleges of education; which is also a pointer to why admission selection could not be rigorous as it is in other notable and popular professions. Most students prefer to study other professional rather than the teaching professions. Candidates who usually apply to higher institutions for teacher education in Nigeria are those who have either been denied admission or are basically unqualified for admission into such popular professions including medicine, law, engineering, architecture etc. This is really disheartening and challenging and is hinged on some prevailing factors. This study focusses on the low enrolment of students in Home Economics Education.

### **Current Dispensation of Teacher Education**

Today, teacher education is much improved than it was before independence and few decades thereafter. The National Policy on Education, published in 1977 and revised in 1981, 1998 and 2004 clearly articulates the importance attached to teacher education and

affirms that “no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers”. The Policy gives the goals of teacher education as:

- Producing highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system.
- Encouraging the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- Helping teachers to fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and to enhance their commitment to national goals.
- Providing teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing conditions.
- Enhancing teachers’ commitment to the teaching profession.

The Policy makes it mandatory for all teachers in Nigeria to be trained and stipulate

Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE) as the minimum qualification to the profession. The policy also provides that “teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in the curriculum” and that teachers shall be regularly exposed to innovations in their profession. It further recognizes the

### **Home Economics Education in Nigeria**

It is the study of all that relate to home and family. It is the area of study that provides the necessary knowledge guiding and assisting human being to be able to attain a more self-reliance and fulfilled life. Home economics is the education for living.

International Federation for Home economics (IFHE) defines Home economics as a field of study and a profession, situated in the human science that draws from a range of disciplines to achieve optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families, and communities. Home economics is concerned with empowerment and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities and facilitating the development of attributes for lifelong learning for paid, unpaid and voluntary work, and living situation IFHE (2013). McGregor (2006) opined that Home economics is inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary. It is a field of knowledge with numerous marketable skills that make for self-reliance and self-employment. Osuala (2001) is also of the view that for greater emphasis on vocational education in which Home Economics is inclusive has its goal as the preparation of the learner for entry into employment and advancement in his/her career, meeting the manpower needs of the society increasing the option available to students, adults and also to enable learners to wisely select a career.

Ene-obong (2006) gave a more elaborate definition of home economics as a field of study evolved out of the concern for the family and raised by the condition of a society becoming increasingly dominated by commercial and industrial interest, Ene-obong further asserted that it is concerned with ways in which the quality and family life can be enhanced maximally through optimum utilization of its human and material resources. Home economics education /training can be said to be a means through which young people and adult may be led to a stronger growth and development, thereby enabling him/her to take responsibilities in the home, and the society at large.

Furthermore the focal point of Home economics education is to equip young people and adults with sustainable skills, relevant knowledge and attitudes for work in chosen occupation and career opportunity. In 2004 the Federal Government of Nigeria in its national policy on education categorically spelt out the broad aims and objectives of home economics education under vocational and technical education to include: To give training and impart the necessary skills, teaching to the production of craftsmen, fashion design, interior decoration, event planning and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant. Home economics deals with all aspects of family living, drawing knowledge from many disciplines such as Biology, Physics, Social Science, Humanities and Arts, and unifying the knowledge drawn to teach people how to do the followings: Determine the needs of individuals and families and become responsible and effective members of family and community through effective home making and gainful employment (Anyakoha, 1997).

### **Low Enrolment of students in Home Economics Education in Nigeria**

As important as Home Economics is; to actually prepare and to help youths and adults to develop competencies and apply the knowledge on the community to improve the quality of family living and enhances self-reliance, there are still records of low enrolment in the subject in teachers' education across the different institutions. Home Economics as a vocational subject contributes to manpower development. As a result, more qualified teachers are required in the subject to equip the individuals with reliable occupational skills for self-reliance. However, the dwindling students' enrolment in the subject in teachers' education in different institutions across the country is posing a great challenge to the subject.

Home Economics is one of the courses that attracts the lowest enrolment of students both at the university and other tertiary institutions. Akuzuilo (1993), Azikiwe (1990) and Olaitan (1986) are of the view that Home Economics education is one of the courses which attract lowest enrolment of students in teachers' education. Besides, the low enrolment pattern, Home Economics education show wide disparity between male and female students in favour of females. Both low enrolment and gender disparity in enrolment have been attributed to wrong awareness (perception) of the meaning and the roles of Home Economists (Olaitan, 1986).

### **The Philosophy and Objectives of Home Economics Education**

As stated in the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) minimum standard (2004), the philosophy of Home Economics borders on the improvement of the quality of life for the individuals and family specifically and the society at large. It focuses on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences which family members require to satisfactorily improve family living. The objectives of the programme are:

- Trained Home Economics teachers with a sound basis for professional growth and personal.
- Development via Home Economics Education.

- Exhibit thorough knowledge of jobs skills and career opportunities in Home Economics.
- Demonstrate positive human relationship and ability to work with people.
- Prepare teachers to qualify them for a full time two (2) years post NCE degree programme in Home Economics in Nigeria universities.

Certain factors however brings about the dwindling enrolment of students in Home Economics education. These factors deters students from enrolling for Home Economics Education across the country in her different institutions.

### **Factors Responsible for Low Enrolment of Students in Home Economics Education in Nigeria**

The low students' enrolment in Home Economics education in the different institutions calls for much concern. This could be due to certain problems relating to the teaching/learning of the subject. Some likely causes of low enrolment include:

- (i) Parents do not encourage their children to study Home Economics. Several Nigerians parents fail to realize that Home Economics education is one of the components of vocational and technical education. This makes many them to have misconception about the value of Home Economics in our educational system. Olaitan and Augosiobo (1981), observed that, Home Economics were regarded as a subject that could be taught by every mother. Parents seem to look down on this course in the society and thought it was mere waste of time and money to include it in the school curriculum. Subsequently, some parents have wrong notion that Home Economics is for those who cannot cope with literacy subjects. These ugly trends have adversely affected students' enrolment for Home Economics education.
- (ii) One of the reasons why students do not like to study Home Economics may be due to its expensive nature. There is this general notion that huge amount of money is needed to successfully complete teachers' education in Home Economics. That the financial implications of all necessary practical in Home Economics Education dwindles the enrolment rate in the subject.
- (iii) There is this general belief in Nigeria mostly due to cultural influence that Home Economics Education is feminine in nature and irrelevant to boys. Home Economics education show wide disparity between male and female students in favour of females. Eze (2001) found the following as the factors that militate against male students in the study of Home Economics; that there are differential socialization patterns of boys and girls at early stage of life; he perceived irrelevance of Home Economics for boys; absence of career education, feminine.... of Home Economics as a course of study. Home Economics is perceived as a female domain into which males need not venture (Uwadie, 1993). Ode (2011), Home Economics is perceived as kitchen related only; that is seen as a subject which cannot take one outside the four walls of

the home and kitchen. This has affected the number of enrolment for Home Economics Education; as is mostly girls that normally enrol while the boys shy away from the subject.

- (iv) Lack of Equipment which make the students to spend more during practical is a factor that caused low enrolment of the subject in teachers' education. Udom (1979) concluded that all complaints about the teaching of Home Economics are mostly shortage of teachers, equipment and accommodation. Anyakoha (1992) found that the adequate utilization of instructional materials and equipment can motivate and sustain students' interest. For students to purchase this practical items (instructional materials) by themselves is very expensive. This brought about the expensive nature of Home Economics.
- (v) Lack of knowledge about the importance of Home Economics is one of the factors/reasons for student's low enrolment of the subject. This could be that most of the teachers do not stress the importance of the subject while teaching the subject at secondary school level which could also be responsible for lack of knowledge about the career opportunity in Home Economics. This could also make the students to prefer other subjects to Home Economics. Imonikebe (2002) believed that Home Economics is a course for male and female which helps to acquire basic skills for gainful employment, family living and self-reliance. Some parents discourage their children especially male children from studying Home Economics. Some parents feel that the course is only for females. Others feel that there are better subjects than Home Economics. Oliatan and Auguisiobo (1981) found that there is much disregard for Home Economics by parents due to lack of awareness of the importance of the subject.

### **Conclusion**

Home Economics Education is faced with some factors that result to low student enrolment in Home Economics education programme in teachers' education across various institutions in the country. Some of such constraints include; discouragement from parents, expensive nature of the subject, gender disparity, lack of equipment and ignorance of career opportunities in Home Economics among others. Due to low enrolment of Home Economics as a subject in teachers' education, there is also the shortage of teachers of teaching the subject which calls for immediate solution.

### **Recommendations**

This study recommends the following:

1. Parents should encourage their children to study Home Economics education; they should as well provide sufficient resources/finance for them to study the subject.
2. Government, Universities, NGOs should provide facilities /equipment/ materials/ICT and fund to encourage effective teaching and learning of the subject. This also will make the students spend less in practical since they may not need to buy those equipment/materials themselves.

3. The government as well as curriculum planners should make Home Economics more attractive so as to eliminate gender disparity to increase students' enrolment to study Home Economics Education.
4. There is need for enlightenment campaign through seminars, mass media about the importance of Home Economics and the career opportunities that the subject provides to students and the society. This is necessary because a lot of people are not aware of the importance of the subject in national development.
5. Students should be taken on excursion/field trips to various established areas of Home Economics such as food processing industries, textile mills, sewing institutions. This will give them opportunity to see both males and females employed.

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