

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT THROUGH HOME ECONOMICS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This paper examines the strategies for promoting youth empowerment through Home economics in Rivers State. A sample of 24 Home Economic teachers, 16 school administrators and 51 Home Economics SS2 students were selected from the three senatorial districts using stratified random sampling technique and simple random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire based on four responses options was used for data collection, three research questions were asked and answered using sample percentage and one hypothesis was tested using ANOVA. Some of the findings of the study include a significant difference between the strategies used by teachers, school administrators and students towards Home Economics for empowerment. Teachers' strategies include building of self-confidence into the students, teaching them creative thinking and provision of laboratory materials to help improve students' interest in the subject. Based on the findings of the study, three conclusions were made and the recommendations of the study include some of the following; that government in the state should employ qualified Home Economics teachers and establish more practical centres to enable the teachers and students practice and that more Home Economics centres should be established in the rural communities and adequately equipped where the youths can go to acquire skills that will make them self-reliant.

Keywords: Strategies, empowerment, unemployment, and Home Economics.

Introduction

The acquisition of vocational and technical knowledge and skills has been long recognized globally as powerful instruments for empowering youth to be self-reliance. This recognition led to the integration of various vocational education programmes such as Agricultural Education, Business Education, Fine and Applied Art Education and Home Economics Education into the Nigeria education system (Muhammad, 2018). The aim of these vocational education programmes among others is to empower the recipients with relevant knowledge, skills and aptitude for self-reliance and to be useful members of the society in which they live (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

Home Economics as one of the vocational education programmes designed to equip learners with knowledge, skills and aptitude for self-reliance is seen as a broad-based programme. According to Achor (2014), Home Economics education adopts a multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approach to equip recipients with various marketable skills that can ensure their self reliance and employability. Supporting this, Alabi and Keswet (2015) note that Home Economics is a broad field programme that equips its recipients with

knowledge and skills relating to food and nutrition, clothing and textiles, family life and human development, household and institutional resource management and community health through education and research. The authors also noted that the knowledge and skills acquired through Home Economics can help the recipients to be self-reliant and contribute to the socio-economic development of their immediate environment. Ahmed (2018) notes that Home Economics as a vocational course, teaches its recipients numerous skills aimed at empowering them to be self-reliant in catering services, tailoring, housekeeping, day care services, interior designs among others.

Nevertheless, despite what can be achieved in terms of graduate skills development and empowerment through Home Economics and vocational education programmes, many Nigeria youths (graduates and non-graduates) have been severely trapped in the cycle of poverty (Alabi & Keswet, 2015). This situation has been blamed on ignorance and lack of vocational skills for self-reliance amongst the youth. Supporting this, Ofoha (2011) notes that majority of Nigeria youth are idle and some are involved in various vices due to lack of requisite skills for self or paid employment which has pushed them into unemployment and underemployed status. Ahmed (2018) notes that the high rate of youth and graduates unemployment in Nigerian is due to lack of skills to compete in today's global labour market. Corroborating these earlier positions, Babatope (2019) reports that 66.8 million Nigerian youths of working age are without employment. The author also notes that most of these youths are not only unemployed but are also unemployable due to lack of requisite skills for self-employment or employment in active sectors of the economy. Consequently, to address these problems, the issue of youth empowerment for self-employment has taken the centre stage of many academic discourses. It is in order to contribute to this important academic discourse that the present study is being conceived.

Statement of Problem

Unemployment and poverty are the twin macroeconomic challenges many Nigeria youth face. These are said to be caused by bad governance, corruption, global economic melt down and economic recession experienced over the years. The situation of unemployment in Rivers State is very alarming from 36.4% as at the end of Q3 of 2019 to 43.7% as at the end of Q2 of 2020. It is important to note that youth constitutes more than 70% of the unemployment populations in Rivers State (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020, p. 3). Consequently, their unemployment and poverty means they will face poor socio-economic standard and cannot contribute to nation building. Okafor (2011) noted that this situation has aggravated the youth negative behaviour and most are found engaged in antisocial activities such as thuggery, arm robbery, militancy, restiveness, ethnic-political clashes and other social vices increasing the crime rate across Nigeria. Youth involvement in antisocial activities rather than exploiting opportunities for wealth creation around them has also been traced to their lack of exposure to marketable and sufficient vocational skills for self-employment (Ofoha, 2011; Babatope, 2019). To address these problems, many authors have suggested the need to use education and training to empower the youth with skills for starting and managing self-business (Abdulkarim, 2019; Babatope, 2019). Home Economics has been identified as one of the vocational educational programmes that can be used to empower youth with skills for self-employment and self-

reliance. However, the issue of the best strategies to adopt in achieving this goal is skill hanging in the balance, since many youth are yet to embrace this programme and the impact of the programme is yet to be significantly felt in youth empowerment for self-reliance. Therefore, the need to identify strategies for promoting youth empowerment through Home Economics in Rivers State cannot be overemphasised. It is in order to address this issue that the researchers deem it fit to investigate the strategies for promoting youth empowerment through Home Economic in Rivers State.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to examine the strategies for promoting youth empowerment through Home Economics in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study include the following:

- i. Identify the strategies teachers use to promote youth empowerment through Home Economics
- ii. Identify the strategies students can adopt to improve their capacity in Home Economics
- iii. Find out the strategies school administrators can use to address the problems facing students' empowerment in Home Economics

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What are the strategies teachers can use to promote youth empowerment through Home Economics?
- ii. What are the strategies students can adopt to improve their capacity in Home Economics?
- iii. What strategies can the school administrators adopt to address the problems facing students' empowerment in Home Economic?

Research Hypothesis

Based on the research questions, this hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. There is no significant relationship between the strategies adopted by teachers, school administrators and students toward Home Economics for empowerment.

Literature Review

Concept of Empowerment

Empowerment is seen as the process of enabling individuals with the ability to act on their own economically, socially, and politically rather than at the direction of others. Supporting this, Tope (2011) defined empowerment as the process of strengthening individuals and communities in any aspect of life from spiritual, political, social to economical. Lemchi (2011) noted that empowerment enhance the power, capacity and/or opportunity for people to act independently in their decision making concerning various aspects of life. Consequently, empowerment relating to youth centres on enhancing their economic, social and political independence by enabling them to act for themselves rather than follow orders. Akintayo and Adiat (2013) opine that youth empowerment is concerned with enhancing their motivation perform socio-economic roles independently without being coerced. Mike (2014) notes that

youth empowerment is receiving much attention because of its relevance to securing the future prosperity of the youths and their nations. Jegede, Irewole and Dada (2019) note that youth empowerment through vocational education programme is targeted at ensuring that they acquire skills for formal and informal sectors as well as for entrepreneurial activities to enable them initiate private businesses for self-employment and reliance.

Strategies for Youth Empowerment

Teaching and Encouraging Creativity through Home Economics

Achor (2014) opines that one of the strategies to empower graduates of Home Economics to be entrepreneurs is through developing their creativity in different aspects of Home Economics education. The author noted that this has implications on the content of instruction and methodologies used by Home Economics educators to enhance creative entrepreneurship capabilities of their graduates who mostly are youth. Ofoha (2011) opines that creativity skill development is an aspect of entrepreneurship; hence, without such skill for driving unique self-employment opportunities, youth in Nigeria cannot function as catalyst of her socio-economic agenda. Ihensekhein and Cas-Ogiegbaen (2014) also opines that creativity is the main genesis for entrepreneurial activities and it is deposited in every human at varying degree which can be enhanced through training. Ahmed (2018) asserts that Home Economics education has the major function of inculcating creativity skills amongst its students to enable them be entrepreneurs. Alabi and Keswet (2015) finds out that teaching and encouraging creativity in Home Economics is an effective strategy for reducing poverty amongst Nigerians, youth inclusive. Ahmed (2018) finds a positive relationship between Home Economics education and the development of creativity skills for wealth creation. Mbanefo & Eboka (2018) noted that creativity skills are entrepreneurial skills that learners need to bridge the gap between the school learning and self-reliance in the society.

Developing Knowledge, Skills and Aptitude necessary for Effective Management of Limited Resources to meet Desired Goals through Home Economics

According to Adeyemo (2010), aptitude has to do with an inborn trait that enables people to have an easy disposition to perform better in one operation than in another. The author notes that performance is at best when the right aptitude is called into play. This means that helping youth through Home Economic students to develop the right aptitude to manage their limited resources effectively can impact positively in their ability to harness scarce resources and take on self-employment opportunities in the society. Ewubare and Asarah (2017) opines that Home Economics education is a skill-oriented course which focuses relevant skills and knowledge for gainful employment and wealth creation through effective utilization of available human and material resources.

Adequate Knowledge of and Skills in Clothing and Textile

Clothing is a subset of textile industry. Sarkar (2013) opines that young people can be empowered to easily start business in clothing and textile because this sector provides vast opportunities in the area of cloth manufacturing, sub-contracting, wholesale business, clothing store, printing and embroidery units, garment washing units, retailing units, consultancy units,

advertisement and promotion of different types of apparels. Veena and Josh (2017) note that the textile industry is one of the important industries driving foreign exchange earnings, output and jobs creation for the teeming population across Asia. Alvarex (2020) outlines garment production skills needed that can be used to empower youth to include ability to find, choose and purchase suitable fabrics and accessories, ability to plan sizes, ability to cut accurately, ability to correct faults and ability to deliver the produced garment on time to the market.

Nair (2017) states that for success in cloth making business, certain abilities must be possessed. These abilities are noted as ability to ensure adequate supplies, ability to maintain standards, ability to improve on workflow through the effective maintenance of technological and human resources, and ability to ensure efficient use of resources in a manner that increases outputs. Neelam, Anamdita and Radhika (2016) notes that a business's success or failure is very dependent on whether the business reaches the market (its potential customers), stimulates the interest of the market with the results of research and influence the markets' buying decision. According to Anyakoha (2017), opportunities in clothing avail in the area of cloth designing, cloth construction, dry cleaning and laundering, dying and batiking, modelling, fashion merchandising, and knitting and crocheting business. Supporting this, LaMacro (2018) opines that young people can easily be empowered to start cloth business and come out of their economic woes.

Methodology

This study is a descriptive survey, and the area of study is Rivers State. The population of the study comprised all the Home Economics teachers/principals and Home Economics students, those offering Home Economics. Statistically, data from the State Ministry of Education indicated that there are 99 Home Economic teachers, 168 SS2 Home Economics students. To select the number for this study, a stratified random sampling technique was applied; the three senatorial districts in the state were used. From each district, one local government area was selected each through the use of random sampling technique and all the public secondary schools were identified and used. In all, 16 school administrators, 24 Home Economics teachers, 51 Home Economic students were adopted and used for the study.

The instrument for data collection was a researchers' structured questionnaire containing items. The responses options were based on Strong Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). Data collected were analysed using percentage of responses to answer research questions and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The presentation of the data is organized in accordance with the research questions and the hypothesis and is presented in tables below.

Research Question 1: What are the strategies teachers can use to promote youth's empowerment through Home Economics?

Table 1: Percentage presentation of the responses of the teachers on the strategies to empower students through Home Economics

S/N	Strategies to Empower Student	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1.	Building of self-confidence into the students.	12 (30%)	14 (35%)	8 (20%)	6 (15%)	40 (100%)
2.	Teaching students to think positively	13 (32.5%)	17 (42.5%)	6 (15%)	4 (10%)	40 (100%)
3.	Teachers should organize projects like school talk shops	9 (22.5%)	15 (37.5%)	7 (17.5%)	9 (22.5%)	40 (100%)
4.	Teachers should respect students' ideas and questions to foster creative thinking.	14 (35%)	16 (40%)	6 (15%)	4 (10%)	40 (100%)
5.	Teachers use discovery and exploration methods to teach Home Economics.	15 (37.5%)	20 (50%)	4 (10%)	1 (2.5%)	40 (100%)
6.	Teachers should use divergent thinking strategies to help students develop critical thinking skills.	13 (32.5%)	18 (45%)	3 (7.5%)	6 (15%)	40 (100%)
7.	They should use stimulated board meeting strategies.	10 (25%)	12 (30%)	9 (22.5%)	9 (22.5%)	40 (100%)
8.	Teachers should use the formation of future business clubs.	9 (22.5%)	15 (37.5%)	10 (25%)	5 (15%)	40 (100%)
9.	They should use junior executive training courses.	8 (20%)	17 (42.5%)	11 (27.5%)	4 (10%)	40 (100%)
	Average response	11	16	7	6	40

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 1 above indicates the responses of teachers and school administrators on the strategies to promote youth empowerment through Home Economics in Rivers State. Table 1 analysis revealed that the strategies to promote youth empowerment through Home Economics are: building of self-confidence into the students 26 (65%), teaching students to think positively 30 (75%), teachers should respect students ideas and questions to foster critical thinking, 30 (75%), teachers use discovery and exploration methods to teach Home Economics, 35(87.5%). Other strategies revealed by Table 1 analysis include the use of divergent thinking strategies which help students to develop critical thinking skills, 31(77%), they should use stimulated board meeting strategies, 22(55%), teachers should use the formation of future business clubs, 24(60%). The table analysis also revealed that teachers use junior executive training courses 25(62.5%).

Research Questions 2: What are the strategies students can adopt to improve their capacity in Home Economics?

Table 2: Percentage Analysis of the strategies students can adopt to improve their capacity in Home Economics

S/N	Strategies to Empower Student	SA	A	D	SD	Total
10.	Students should always work in going.	12 (23.5%)	24 (47.6%)	10 (19.6)	5 (9.8%)	51 (100%)
11.	Studying books on business management.	11 (21.6%)	26 (51%)	11 (21.6%)	3 (5.9%)	51 (100%)
12.	Strategy of interacting with small business owners	9 (17.7%)	28 (84.4%)	13 (25.8%)	1 (2%)	51 (100%)
13.	Class discussions on experiences of holiday jobs in small firms.	13 (25.5%)	18 (35.3%)	10 (19.6%)	10 (19.6%)	51 (100%)
14.	Disabusing their minds that the subject in meant for the never-do-well	14 (27.5%)	16 (31.4%)	15 (29.4%)	6 (11.8%)	51 (100%)
15.	Disabuse their minds that the subject is meant for girls.	12 (23.5%)	17 (33.3%)	13 (25.5%)	9 (17.7%)	51 (100%)
	Average response	12	22	12	5	51

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

Table 2 above presented the responses of the selected Home Economics students on the strategies, which can help change their perception of Home Economics. Table 2 analysis revealed that working in groups improve students attitude towards Home Economics 36(71.1%), studying textbooks on business management increases students attitude towards Home Economics 37(72.6%), that the strategy of interacting with small business owners increase their positive behaviour towards the subject, 37(72.6%). Also, table 2 analysis revealed that class discussions on experiences of holiday jobs on small. Firms 31(60.8%) , disabusing their minds that the subject is meant for the never-do-well 30(58.9%) and disabuse their minds (boys) that the subject is meant for girls 29(56.8%) increase students attitude towards Home Economics.

Research Question 3: What strategies can the school administration adopt to address the problems facing students' empowerment in Home Economics?

Table 3: Analysis of the strategies school administration can adopt to address the problems facing students' empowerment in Home Economics

S/N	Strategies to Empower Student	SA	A	D	SD	Total
16.	School administrators should always engage competent Home Economics teachers.	13 (32.5%)	17 (42.5%)	6 (15%)	4 (10%)	40 (100%)
17.	Always provide adequate materials for learning Home Economics.	15 (37.5%)	18 (45%)	5 (12.5%)	2 (5%)	40 (100%)
18.	The laboratories should be adequately equipped for practical.	12 (30%)	19 (47.5%)	5 (12.5%)	4 (10%)	40 (100%)
19.	The school authorities should assist the students by providing some of their requirements for practical lessons.	9 (22.5%)	16 (40%)	11 (27.5%)	3 (7.5%)	40 (100%)
20.	Regularly supervise teacher's activities.	14 (35%)	20 (50%)	6 (15%)	- (0%)	40 (100%)
	Average response	13	18	7	2	40

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 3 analysis revealed that the strategies which the school authorities can adopt to address the problems facing students in their study of Home Economics include the following, that school administrators should always engage competent teachers, 30(75%), the authorities should always provide adequate materials for learning Home Economics, 33(82.5%) and that the laboratories should be adequately equipped for practical, 31(77.5%). Also, analysis revealed that the school authorities should assist the students by providing some of their requirements for practical lessons, 25(42.5%) and that they should regularly supervise teachers' activities. 34(85%).

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the strategies adopted by teachers, administrators and students towards Home Economics for empowerment.

Table 4: ANOVA analysis of the strategies used by teachers, administrators and students towards Home Economics for empowerment

Variables	Source of Variation	Sum of Square	Df	Means Square (MS)	F. Value	Sig.	Crit.
Teachers, school administrators and students strategies	Between group	2300	2	1750	6.26	0.05	3.04
	Within group	37728	89	279.5			
	Total	41228	91				

P=<0.05

The result from the ANOVA analysis in table 4 revealed that there is a significant difference between strategies used by teachers, school administrators and students towards Home Economics for empowerment since the compared f-value of 6.28 is higher than the critical value of 3.04, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship is rejected.

Findings

Based on the analysis of data, the findings made by the study are as follows:

- The study discovered significant difference between the strategies used by teachers school administrators and students towards Home Economics for empowerment.
- Teachers' strategies include building of self-confidence into the students, teaching them to think positively and positively and provision of laboratory materials help to improve students' interest in the subject.
- Teachers' strategies include respect of students' ideas, questioning and the use of discovery and exploration strategies to influence students' interest towards Home Economics.
- Administrators' strategies include the use of stimulated board meeting, the use of divergent thinking strategies and assisting the learners by providing some of their requirements to positively influence students' interest towards the subject.
- Students' strategies include class discussion and studying in groups, disabusing the belief that Home Economics is for never-do-wells and for girls only.

Conclusion

This study concluded that the use of competent teachers who can utilize creative thinking strategies would improve students' interest in Home Economics. That the provision of laboratory equipment and the provision of materials to assist the students in their lesson requirements would help improve their interest in Home Economics. Also, as long as the authorities fail to equip the Home Economics laboratories and the teachers do not use creative strategies to empower the students with the knowledge and skills to be self-reliant students' attitude towards the subject would remain poor.

Recommendations

To help curb the menace of youth unemployment in Rivers State through empowerment in Home Economics, the study recommends the following:

1. Government in the state should employ qualified Home Economics teachers and established more practical centres to enable the teachers and student's practice.
2. More Home Economics centres should be established in the rural communities and adequately equipped where the youths can go to acquire skills that will make them self-reliant.
3. The graduates of Home Economics should be helped with soft loans by the government to enable them to start up something after school.
4. Home Economics teachers should be encouraged by the government and school authorities to teach the subject using exploration, discovery and group discussion strategies.
5. Teachers should always visit small-scale firms for their students to obtain first-hand

knowledge on how to start their own businesses.

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