IMPROVING STUDENTS’ SKILL ACQUISITION IN SECONDARY SCHOOL HOME ECONOMICS FOR SELF-RELIANCE

Millicent Tsado

Abstract

The role of skill acquisition in the overall development of individuals and the nation cannot be undermined. This perhaps, made the government to come up with various policies such as National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) strategies on all aspect of education to make people self-reliant. This study examined ways acquisition of skills in secondary school Home Economics could be improved in its curriculum implementation towards self-reliance. The population comprised of 20 Home Economics teachers in 6 senior secondary schools in Bida town teaching Home Economics subjects at SSS III. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection, while mean score was used for data analysis. Findings revealed 15 factors serving as hindrance to acquisition of Home Economics skills in secondary schools. The study also revealed that secondary school students’ skill acquisition could be improved by 12 strategies designed towards self-reliance. It was recommended that government and administrators should employ trained, competent Home Economics teacher to master mind teaching of Home Economics at secondary schools to achieve the objective of self-reliance. There should be provision of equipped laboratory and availability of funds for consumable items and general maintenance.

Home Economics is an aspect of Vocational Education, a skill-oriented subject that can offer learners acquisition of skills for enhancing their capability for self-employment. Home Economics draws its knowledge from the sciences, humanities and arts. It uses human and material resources for positive effect on homes and families. The objective of teaching Home Economics is to help individuals live a purposeful and satisfying life through wise use and management of their human and available material resources. As a field of study, it offers numerous occupational opportunities for self-reliance. The knowledge of Home Economics helps to strengthen the understanding of interconnectedness of dependence, independence and inter-dependence, within families and society. These Home Economics learning experiences enable students to develop competencies, making connection between their daily lives and their future world.

The primary focus of Home Economics at all levels of education is the well-being of people in their everyday living, achieved through self-reliance and their contributions towards national development. Ezike (2011), stressed Home Economics as a subject that prepare learners for survival, because individuals can always fall back to the skills acquired in the course in time of emergencies – drop out of school, and retrenchment of a parent and even poverty, crises of death of one of the parent. This point out the viability of Home Economics in the society today. Furthermore, the objective of teaching Home Economics at secondary schools is geared towards equipping learners with basic knowledge and skills that could lead to a vocation in any area of Home Economics. Home Economics at senior secondary school features as three subjects – food and Nutritions, clothing and Textile and Home management, but a student is expected to offer only one of these subjects. Also the broad goal of secondary education outlined in National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) is to prepare the individual for useful living within the society. On this note, the Federal Government of Nigeria recognizes vocational subjects

(Home Economics inclusive) as medium through which the education reform can be achieve, especially Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS). If Home Economics Education must achieve these goals, there is the need to make the teaching of Home Economics subject more dynamic and functional at secondary
school level. Furthermore, if this subject is to play its role for sustaining productivity for socio-economic well-being of the individual and society, its recipient must be taught and acquire necessary vocational skills both in theory and practice. If students are taught and equipped with knowledge and have no skill acquisition they will not be able to apply the knowledge to purposeful living in several Home Economics opportunities when the need arise.

Concept of Skill Acquisition.

Skill is the ability to do something that comes from training and practice. According to Ejifor (2010), skills are well established habits of doing things by people. Also Okeke (2005), opined that demonstrating the habit of acting, thinking in such a way that the process becomes natural through repeated practice refers to skill. Both cognitive and psychomotor domains are involved in skill development. This implies that theoretical teaching of Home Economics involves cognitive domain while the practical revolves around psychomotor. When the teaching of theory and practical of Home Economics are in full play in class, learners can make a living through the use of skills acquired for self-reliance.

Skill acquisition means a specific and prolonged form of learning about a task or event. According to Tyarkoni (2011), acquisitions of skills occur at three stages in learning. To him, skill acquisition takes place at cognitive level when learners receive instructions and develops performance strategies. The second stage is associative level, where previously learned strategies that are appropriate strengthened the new situation on the basis of feedback. The last stage is autonomous, at this point performance strategy slowly become more autonomous and less subject to cognitive control or external interference. Home Economics teachers ought to enhance skill acquisition in teaching-learning of their subject at these stages to effect lasting changes on selected experiences. When learners are taught these experiences in practical lessons, it will capture their attention and pave way for knowledge retention for future utilization. However, one of the problems confronting Nigeria today is how to equip her teeming population with employable skills to reduce the rate of unemployment in the country (Nwabudike, 2009).

Skill acquisition involves human and material resource. Teachers are under human resource. To teach Home Economics as a subject in secondary school for acquisition of skill requires trained personnel who are competent, material resources and funds said Shehu (2010). Consequently, Agwasin and Agwasin (1995), Rabiu (2007) and Olaitan (2001) as cited in Shehu (2010) observed that there are insufficient number of Home Economics teachers to teach technical skills and sometime complete absence of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) teachers and training facilities. This situation calls for urgent need to devise strategies for improving the teaching –learning of Home Economics. Addressing the challenge Mohammed (2012), said skills can only be learnt under the guidance of skilled tutors. Teachers use material resources to inculcate necessary skills to learners. Agbo (2000) and Adeyeye & Akerele (2006) as cited in Nwabudike (2009), discovered that no effective teaching and learning can take place without materials, equipment and tools related to the skills to be learnt. To acquire skills in Home Economics by Secondary School students involve responses that can be learned, potentially be refined with practice giving the right condition. Consequently, observations have been made on the use of untrained Home Economics teachers in secondary schools and inadequate staff strength during Teaching practice supervisions. Furthermore, secondary school Home Economics as a subject is taught in classrooms instead of laboratories, without equipment and tools using normal classroom teaching method and/or discussion. Okechukwu (2003), asserted that lack of appropriate instructional methods make teaching & learning ineffective. Secondary school learners are youths possibly also facing problems of poverty and lack of necessary productive skills to keep body and soul together. This reality leaves them without any meaningful means of sustainable livelihood. Children need to be taught functional skills that lay foundations for earning a living and for economic progress of the nation (Oyin, 2006). To acquire skills in home economics at secondary school, emphasis ought to be place on human and material resources for any learning skills that will develop into purposeful living.
Self-reliance is a state of confidence being able to live by supporting oneself with the means of a person’s own power, utilizing his/her skills, abilities and available resources to produce and distribute goods and services for personal economic profit. The act of self-reliance involves acquisition of skills, utilization of ideas and managerial abilities to become independent and responsible for all his/her own actions. Dustin (2007) in Emerson (2008) noted that display of self-reliance represents the true nature of an individual having the ability to stand-up for himself/herself and perform in the right situation to save lives and live with no fear no matter what the pressure. Nigerian secondary school students need a form of self-reliance education in preparation to face issues of poverty and unemployment in the country. Ejiofor (2010), posited that self-reliance enterprises are suitable and can provide a living for unemployed secondary school graduates in Nigeria.

Home Economics possesses the capability of equipping individuals with saleable skills that make for self-employment in occupational opportunities available in the programme. Given to the background of poverty, unemployment and social vices of violence, unrest, political thugs among others, a careful thought should be given to the teaching of skills in Home Economics for self-reliance. Marinova and Hossain (2006) said that teaching these skills will result in self-reliance character development of simplicity, responsibility, respect, commitment and creativity. On the contrary Yanda (2006), opined that teaching vocational subjects in absence of practical graduate products that are ill-equipped for practical living in ever growing complex economy. Achieving self-reliance by Nigerian populace is the government’s priority through the strategies of NEEDS and MDGs. However, measures put in place to achieve NEEDS and MDGs have not being felt by secondary school learners. One of the approach to make the impact of NEEDS and MDGs felt at secondary school level as one of the grassroots education calls for improving secondary school skill acquisition in Home Economics, a means of developing self-reliance for productivity among secondary school students.

**Purpose of the Study**

The major purpose of this study was to investigate the ways of improving student’s skill acquisition in secondary school Home Economics for self-reliance. Specifically, the study determined:

1. Constraints to the acquisition of skills in Home Economics in secondary schools.
2. Ways to improve skill acquisition in Home Economics in secondary schools.

**Research Questions.**

The study sought answers to the following research questions.

1. What are the constraints to acquisition of skills in secondary school Home Economics for self-reliance?
2. In what ways can skill acquisition of secondary school Home Economics be improved for self-reliance?

**Methodology**

The study was conducted in Bida Local Government Area of Niger State. The Local Government area is about eighty-seven kilometer from Minna the state capital. It harbors centers where skill acquisitions are taught to the blind within the communities therein. The population for the study was made up of 20 teachers in 6 senior secondary schools offering subjects Home Economics at WAEC/NECO Examinations. All the teachers are females. The twenty Home Economics teachers teaching in these senior secondary schools were used for the study. As a result, no sampling was done since the number of the respondents is small. The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Items on the questionnaire were developed following the literature reviewed based on the objectives of the study. The instrument has 27 items. The items were made up of 15 constrained to acquisition of skills and 12 ways to improve acquisition of skills. The respondents were required to score the items on questionnaire as 5-point scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The instrument was subject to face validation and reliability testing using Cronbach Alpha as it dealt with multiple scored items. This yield reliability coefficient of 0.78 and 0.76 for each cluster. The entire instrument reliability coefficient was 0.74.
The administration of the instrument was done through personal contact by the researcher. A total of 20 copies of the instrument were administered and all copies were returned and completed valid. These were used for data analysis. Data were analysed using Mean for research questions. Any item with a Mean of 3.0 and above was considered agreed while any item below 3.0 is considered otherwise.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the constrains to acquisition of skills in secondary school Home Economics for self-reliance?

Table 1: Mean Responses of the Respondents on Factors That Hindered Student’s Skill Acquisition in Secondary School Home Economics for Self-Reliance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Hindrances to student’s skill Acquisition in Home Economics.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Lack of qualified teachers</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Shortage of adequate number of teachers in school</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Teachers negative attitude to the subject</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Lack of equipped laboratory</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Lack of equipment and tools</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Use of lecturing and discussion methods</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Use of single double period per week</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Lack of competent teacher</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Lessons lack practicals</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Lack of text books</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Disagreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Allocation of a classroom without equipment and tools</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Lack of fund for consumable items</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Attitude of students to the subject</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Socio-cultural background of students</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Lack of parental support for items needed for practicals</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 20          Grand mean 3.8

Table 1: shows that the Home Economics teachers agreed on fourteen (14) factors out of 15 that hinder student’s skill acquisition in secondary school Home Economics for self-reliance. This factors that hindered to student’s skill acquisition in secondary school Home Economics for self-reliance are lack of qualified teachers, equipped laboratory, equipment and tools, competent teacher, practical lessons, funds, parental support, negative attitude of teachers, use of single double period per week, use of lecture and discussion method of teaching allocation of a classroom without equipment and tools and socio-cultural background of students, with mean score range from 3.1 – 4.8.

Research Question 2: In what ways can skill acquisition of secondary school Home Economics be improved for self-reliance?

Table 2: Mean Responses of Respondents on Ways of Improving Student’s Skill Acquisition in Secondary School Home Economics for Self-Reliance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Ways of improving skill acquisition</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Employment of qualified teachers</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Posting of adequate number of teachers to school minimum of three</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Teachers should be model to students in skill acquisition</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Teacher’s self improvement on acquisition of skills.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Organisation of Home Economics club aimed at skills.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Sensitization of students on importance of the subject and skill acquisition.</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Sufficient periods for lesson and practicals – at least double period twice per week</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Use of demonstration and project methods of teaching</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Use of discussion, demonstration and project methods of teaching.</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Availability of laboratory, equipment and tools for practical</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Provision of adequate funds for consumables for practical’s</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Educating parents and make appeal at P.T.A</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 20          Grand mean 4.0

Table 2: Shows the respondents rating on ways perceived to improve student’s skill acquisition in secondary school Home Economic for self-reliance. They agreed on all the 12 items generated. The
Improving Students’ Skill Acquisition in Secondary School Home Economics for Self-reliance

items had recorded Means that ranged from 3.1 – 4.5 which fell within the real limit of 3.0 indicate that these are ways of improving skill acquisition in secondary school Home Economics by students. These include:

- Employment of qualified teachers
- Posting of adequate number of teachers to school minimum of three.
- Teacher should be model to student’s skill acquisition.
- Teachers self improvement on acquisition of skills.
- Organisation of Home Economics club aimed at skills
- Sensitization of students on importance of the subject and skill acquisition
- Sufficient periods for lesson and practicals at least double period twice per week
- Use of demonstration and project method of teaching
- Use of discussion demonstration and project methods of teaching
- Availability of laboratory equipment and tools for practicals.
- Provision of adequate funds for consumables for practicals
- Educating parents and make appeal at P.T.A

Discussion

The findings in table I show factors that hinder student’s skill acquisition in secondary school Home Economics for self-reliance. These factors include lack of qualified teachers, equipped laboratory, equipment and tools, competent teachers, practicals, funds, and parental support. Also allocation of a classroom without equipment and tools, socio-cultural background of students, negative attitude of teachers to the subject, use of lecture and discussion method of teaching and use of single double period per week. The findings of this study is in agreement with that of Okechukwu (2003) and Yanda (2006) that lack of appropriate instructional methods make teaching and learning ineffective and the products are ill-equipped for practical living in a dynamic society. Also this findings is in line with that of Olaitan (2002) quoted in Shehu (2010) that there are insufficient number of Home Economics teacher to teach technical skills.

Supporting these findings, Osifeso (2001) ascertained that competent teachers at all levels of education are required where Home Economics is taught for effective acquisition of skills. The finding of this study is also in agreement with that of Muhammed (2004), Okeke (2005), Agbo (2000) and Akerele and Adeyeye (2006) as cited in Nwabudike (2009) all who stressed the ineffectiveness of teaching and learning without materials, equipment and tools related to the skills to be learnt. The consequence of these, Olaitan (2002) pointed out that the society frowned at the incompetency of secondary school graduate who seek jobs in Nigerian hotels, restaurants, institution and other eating houses. Acquiring education without necessary skills, ideas and initiatives that can make students stand on their own is not only inimical to the development of the individual but also that of a nation, because practice and skill acquisition are interrelated. Supporting this Kolo (2003) stressed that practical lessons in equipped laboratory capture the student’s attention for future utilization.

The result from the data in table 2 indicated ways of improving student’s skill acquisition in secondary school Home Economics for self-reliance. These include employment of qualified teachers, posting of adequate number of teachers to school, teachers as model to students in skill acquisition, teachers self improvement, organization of Home Economics club, sensitization of students, sufficient periods for lesson and practicals, use of discussion, demonstration and project method of teaching, equipped laboratory, adequate funds, educating parent and appeal to P.T.A. This findings are in line with that of Shehu (2010) that only competent qualified teachers should teach Home Economics subjects in secondary school for effective acquisition of skills. Supporting this finding Andrew (2006), opined that teachers should hold value position of pragmatism in teaching. This is an approach focusing on individual acquisition of useful skills, becoming self improved and a model to learners. Again this finding is not different from that of Mohammed (2012) that said teachers must remain a student all his life, as skills can only be learnt by teaching under the guidance of skilled tutors, Rabiu (2007) also supports the assertion that personnel involved in teaching of practical skills should be
experts and well trained in their chosen area and management skills. The finding of provision of adequate funds, educating parents and make appeal at P.T.A is in agreement with Rabiu (2007) and Shehu (2010) who pointed out that insufficient funds are given to secondary schools for practical teaching of skills and advocate adequate funding for teaching of skill-oriented subjects. Availability of funds and support from the public pave way for effective teaching and acquisition of skills for self-reliance. The observation of Tyarkoni (2011) that learning skills occur in three stages demand more time and require additional periods. Increase in practical period is in agreement with Sadker and Sadker (2003) that when more time is allocated to subject matter learning, student achievement increases. They further opined that developing extracurricular activities add value to life both during and far beyond the secondary school years, this is in support of the organization of Home Economics club to enhance skill acquisition by secondary school learners. This is not surprising as skill acquisition and self-reliance is the government’s target. Awojobi (2005) share same view that people with skills become better and more useful human beings at home and in the society at large.

Conclusion

Home Economics play an important role in the life of secondary school students. It can equip students with relevant skills and knowledge for gainful employment and self-reliance. Becoming self-reliant entailed acquisition of skills through teaching and learning. Unfortunately, these factors hindered acquisition of skills in secondary schools. They include lack of qualified competent teachers, lack of laboratory, equipment and tools, wrong choice of teaching methods and unavailability of adequate funds.

Providing remedy to these factors by employing adequate, qualified, trained, home economics teachers that chooses the right teaching methods, used in equipped laboratory where support and funds is made available, will go a long way to improve the acquisition of skills in Home Economics among secondary school learners. Then, the secondary school graduate will live useful lives and become asserted to the nation.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion that improving secondary school Home Economics skill acquisition can produce self-reliant graduates, the following recommendations are proffered.

- Administrator of secondary schools should endeavour to seek for trained Home Economics teachers to implement the curriculum.
- Administrators and Government should provide an ideal laboratory for the teaching and learning of Home Economics skills in secondary schools.
- Home Economics teachers should endeavour to be competent in the skills as exemplified by the subject, be a model and sacrifice their time to increase period of teaching from three period per week to four period per week.
- Home Economics teachers should assist in the formation of Home Economics club where skills that will make students self-reliant are taught.

References


Improving Students’ Skill Acquisition in Secondary School Home Economics for Self-reliance


Okeke, C. A. (2005), Improving student’s Skill Acquisition through Effective Clothing and Textile Education in Tertiary Institution in Anambra state. Journal of Home Economics Research (JHER) 6 (1) 84 – 89.


