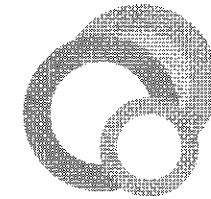


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Envisioning an African-Centric Higher Education Home Economics Curriculum for the 21st Century

Lois R. Mberengwa and Fungai M. Mthombeni

Home Economics as a discipline of study was introduced into Africa mainly through missionary activity in the first half of the 20th century. However, training educators to teach in higher education institutions on African soil did not begin until the last half of the 20th century. To fill this gap, teachers were trained abroad, mostly in England, Canada and the United States. They then returned to teach in African institutions. As a result, the content of most Home Economics higher education and public school programmes in Africa reflects a strong Western influence. The relevancy of these programmes has oftentimes been criticized, warranting programme evaluation and review. Africa is a unique continent (54 countries) with particular challenges for its individuals and families. While embracing similarities and the leadership provided by Western paradigms, African home economists need to be sensitive to these unique challenges and to their own culture in order to create an appropriate curriculum that is relevant to their context. This chapter first explores the current challenges that are faced by Black African families in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. This overview is followed by a discussion of the challenges that emanate from professional Home Economics practice. It concludes by envisioning an ideal Africentric Home Economics higher education curriculum for socializing future generations of African home economists.

Historical background

As noted, Home Economics, as a discipline of study in African schools, was introduced during the first half of the 20th century, mainly through missionary activity (Atkinson,

1972; Kiamba, 2005). Teachers were often missionaries' wives who wanted to train women and girls so they could become better maids and housewives. The women were therefore taught basic housekeeping skills, including hygiene, in order to improve the living conditions in homes (SIAPAC-Africa, 1990).

Today, Home Economics professionals, including those in Africa, agree that the scope of Home Economics is much broader. It is no longer just limited to the home, but expands into the larger community, including the world of work. By focusing on the "trilogy of prevention, education and development" (McGregor, 2010, p. 28), home economists work to improve the quality of life of individuals and families by paying attention to the practical perennial problems encountered on a daily basis from generation to generation. To ensure continuity of this important work into the 21st century, Africa needs Home Economics educators with the right attributes, skills and knowledge.

Provision of such educators has always been a challenge in Africa, as previously noted in the Introduction to this chapter. Because the content of most African Home Economics programmes reflects a strong Western influence, critics have described the programmes and curricula as irrelevant for African professional practice, highly foreign, and not taking into account African developmental needs and problems. As well, curricula are criticised for lacking any focus on critical thinking, and for lacking qualified personnel, at all levels (Waudu, 1993). Such criticisms, and related ones, have provided the basis for programme reviews in most African countries.

To focus the discussion offered in this chapter, we will set out the challenges faced by Black African families in the 15 countries (Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) making up the SADC. These countries constitute a common trading region. The economic, political and social development levels of these countries are highly diverse, with some countries being far more developed than others. The populations are also diverse in terms of ethnicity, race and gender. Despite this diversity, the majority of the SADC countries have similar developmental challenges. Because all of the 15 countries have subscribed to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (Economic Commission for Africa, 2005), they also have common social development agendas for the first quarter of the 21st century. The major challenges faced by families in the SADC are issues related to poverty, health and disease, food security and nutrition, migration and urbanization, conflict, and technological changes (similar to the megatrends identified in the Chapter 1 for this book, but lived out differently in Africa). Home Economics has the potential to contribute towards these national development goals. We discuss the aforementioned challenges in the following section.

Challenges confronting Black African families in the SADC

Poverty

Poverty can be defined in different ways according to the context in which the concept is being applied. We use Wodon and Zamani's (2010) definition of economic poverty, defined as a state of one's income being inadequate to maintain quality of

life. Every family wishes to meet its basic needs for shelter, food and clothing, but this reality remains a dream for most African families. Political instability and harsh economic factors have forced governments to resort to budgets cuts — eliminating access to even the most basic services such as health and education. Jobless youth are a common sight in the SADC. Poor harvests caused by natural disasters result in hunger and starvation in rural households, and food prices in urban areas increase. Conflict and war have also worsened famine in some countries, thus exacerbating poverty.

Conflict (including domestic violence)

Southern Africa is not a stranger to wars and conflict. Wars, regardless of what causes them, expose the family and its members to many risks including: death, injury, orphan-hood, sexual abuse, and rape, which may culminate in illegitimate children. Children are left without the needed care, protection and support from families. Some become 'street children' and are at risk of abuse. Women, like children, are also exposed to vulnerability through widowhood. Female-headed households are also vulnerable because men are engaged in combat. Education and socialization are disrupted because schools are destroyed. Other basic survival needs tend to dominate the time and energy of the adults, leaving little time for education.

Education

Educating a child is generally expensive in the SADC. Primary school education is free in most of these countries, or only a minimum fee is charged, but families are expected to pay for both secondary and tertiary (college or university) education. Most families strive to send their children to school in the hope that their children will live a better life and help take care of their parents and siblings. However, the high tuition fees are beyond the reach of most families. This situation, compounded by the negative effects of HIV/AIDS, forces most children to drop out of school in order to look after their younger siblings.

Health and Disease

The face of the African family has been affected by wars and diseases, more so than any other factor. Millions of African children have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS. The pandemic is concentrated disproportionately among younger, economically active and, often the best educated, family members — impacting the economic performance of the family. Malaria is another big killer among African children. About 20% of Africa's children die before they reach the age of five. Orphaned children are usually left with no older blood family members to care for them. The extended family system, which traditionally cushioned such children, is severely challenged as it fails to cope with the ever-increasing number of orphaned children (Washi, 2002).

Aside from disease, other health-related issues such as sanitation, clean drinking water and fuel supply remain chronic challenges for most African families. Without a permanent supply of clean water, it is impossible to achieve good sanitation. Food security and nutrition are also pressing health issues faced by families living in the SADC.

Food Security and Nutrition

Basic food security is achieved when all people have access at all times to the food required to maintain a healthy life. At the household level, food security refers to the ability of a household to secure adequate food that will meet dietary intake requirements for all members of the family. In the SADC, malnutrition, due to inadequate food intake and poor nutritional quality of diets, causes death among children and women of child-bearing age. For example, it is estimated that 20% of African women have a low Body Mass Index (BMI) due to chronic hunger (Lartey, 2008).

Several reasons have been attributed to Africa's insecure food resource base. These include: erratic rainfall patterns which cause droughts, dependence on rain (not complemented with irrigation during the growing season), inadequate agricultural inputs for subsistence farmers and poor harvests and food wastage resulting from inadequate and inappropriate storage mechanisms which prevent families from having access to food during the dry months. These challenges have formed, and should continue to form, an integral part of the work of Home Economics extension officers so that, together with other development partners in the field, they can assist families to be food secure. With Botswana, South Africa and Lesotho rated as the only three SADC countries likely to meet the MDG target of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by 2015, the work for home economists in this area is immense.

Migration and urbanization

Migration, identified as one of the megatrends, is the largest source of urban expansion in Africa and has placed extra burdens on families. Whether voluntarily or involuntarily, men and women are leaving their homes in search of better economic opportunities in cities, neighboring countries, and internationally. Working women have now joined the workforce and are forced to combine their traditional roles of childrearing and household chores with earning money to supplement household income. Some children try to escape from hunger or bereavement and quickly become street kids. Living environments in cities become congested, thus creating environmental disasters and health risks that threaten people's lives. Urbanization has also caused people to increasingly depend upon purchasing food commodities rather than producing their own. As a result, people's diets and eating patterns change as they adopt new values and lifestyles. International migration has caused disruption in family set-up and marriages. The effects of urbanization and migration are likely to continue well into the 21st century, as the world moves more and more towards becoming a global village.

Globalization, technological changes and industrialization

Technology drives development and is a major determinant for classifying the status of countries as developed or underdeveloped. Most SADC countries are regarded as underdeveloped mostly because they lag behind in technological advancement in most economic and social sectors. Although rich in natural resources, sectors such as mining and agriculture are underexploited due to a lack of appropriate technologies that facilitate value added to most products (SADC, 2008). Although the role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Africa's development has always been recognized,

the challenge in the 21st century is to make sure that they are viable and sustainable. This success depends partly upon the acquisition and use of appropriate technologies, supported by the creation of a conducive environment and relevant and effective implementation of policies that support growth and trade, and empower SMEs. Home economists need to be aware of the challenges in the employment/industry sector so that they can strategize towards minimizing the negative effects of globalization on families, and the proliferation of cheap quality products on African markets.

Information technology has both positive and negative impacts on the manner in which family members interact, and on the structure of African families. With increased access to television, computers and the internet, traditional ways of interaction are challenged. The structure of African families is also changing, with the trend towards nuclear families. Single parenting and cohabitation are becoming more acceptable (Washi, 2002). To be able to work with families, home economists need to be aware of all these developments and how they influence family life.

Challenges emanating from professional practice

The first section of this chapter profiled the profound challenges SADC families are facing in the new millennium, ranging from life threatening conflict and diseases, through life-altering urbanization and changing family structures, to the ubiquitous challenges of globalization and technological innovations. The magnitude of these problems is perennial, never going away, and experienced differently by each generation. These problems will likely dominate the social development agendas of most African nations throughout the 21st century. Home Economics has a role to play in contributing to Africa's future as it is affected by strong families.

But, home economists in Africa are truly challenged as they strive to embrace this professional challenge. It is necessary to acknowledge and give voice to their challenges before suggesting a new vision for a higher education curriculum for socializing future generations of African home economists. Lessons learned from struggling with the current situations can inform plans on how to future-proof the African Home Economics profession. Home economists are grappling with the absence/ineffectiveness of professional Home Economics associations, the hyper-specialization of the discipline, and the declining popularity of Home Economics as a school subject.

Absence/ineffectiveness of professional associations

McGregor (2008) argues that home economists need to build professional communities of practice where professionals can engage each other and deliberate on concerns affecting their field of study so that the body of knowledge does not become stagnant and so that the profession is future-proofed. One major player in this process is professional associations, which serve several key functions in the role of future-proofing the profession. They seek to further the interests of the profession, its members, and those of the public. Many professional associations are involved with the development and monitoring of professional educational programs, the certifica-

tion of practitioners and/or the upgrading and professional development of members (Harvey, 2009).

The Home Economics Association for Africa (HEAA) was active during the 1990s. Its mission was to "facilitate the process for individuals, families and communities to become responsible for improving their well being in relation to their economic, social, cultural, political and [the] physical environment" (the 1993 HEAA Constitution as cited in Kiamba, 2005, p. 22). HEAA slowly slipped away in the early 2000s as it tried to stand on its own after sustained funding from the Canadian Home Economics Association (CHEA). Since then (2003), the IFHE-Africa Region, which is affiliated to the International Federation of Home Economics (IFHE), has been formed. It is headed by two Vice Presidents and members come from approximately 10-15 countries out of a possible 54 African nations. Each Vice-President of IFHE-Africa is keen to build synergy amongst home economists from the African nations, but this task is challenging due to the geographical logistics of meeting, a lack of contact information, and inadequate responses for calls to contribute to the association's efforts. In addition, many African home economists do not have reliable access to social networking technology, such as email, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Ning or Wikis (SidigaWashi, personal communication, January 23, 2012). Lack of access to each other makes the dissemination of information and the process of networking and acting in solidarity, very challenging.

Indeed, there is little continent-wide networking and solidarity amongst practicing home economists in Africa, which could be promoted through a viable continent-wide professional association. There is no centralized website, common conferences nor professional journal or newsletter(s). Despite the fact that some African nations have their own professional Home Economics associations and journals, sometimes their roles are undermined due to the lack of effective leadership, committed and adequate membership and funds. All these inadequacies indicate a strong need for a vibrant professional community for African home economists, without which it is difficult to lobby for or effect, curricula changes required in higher education to help address the challenges faced by African families.

Hyper-specialization in the discipline

The hyper-specialization of Home Economics is evident in African nations. Most Home Economics programmes in universities and colleges in Southern Africa have been reviewed during the last five years in order to address the needs of the changing market and of the programmes. The general trend has been to do away with the 'family focus' in preference for specialization (Kiamba, 2005). For example, in 2010, the University of Swaziland revamped its programmes and is currently emphasizing consumer science/education issues. Similarly, in South Africa, consumer issues now dominate what were traditional Home Economics programmes (van Wyk, 2005). The niche for Home Economics programmes, the family, has been de-emphasized in these programmes, thus making the concept of family well-being vulnerable.

Hyper-specialization has the tendency to divert Home Economics from its traditionally holistic mission of facilitating family-well-being and quality of life. Ogwu

(2010) observes that Home Economics in Africa seems to be threatened and is losing its visibility and its position in the curriculum. This decline reflects dwindling enrolments of students opting to study the subject in schools. Such trends raise concerns about the future of Home Economics in Africa.

As well, with increased hyper-specialization, those who graduate from related training programmes are no longer labelled as 'home economists,' but carry other specific job titles. Eventually, by the end of the 21st century, professional Home economists will be eradicated if something is not urgently done. Unfortunately, this loss is happening at a time when Home Economics is needed to help steer community development in Africa and to reach the MDGs agreed to by the SADC.

Declining popularity of Home Economics as a subject of study

The educational level at which Home Economics is taught in public schools in Southern Africa varies from country to country, with some countries offering a strong component of Home Economics in primary schools, while others place it as part of other subjects, such as Creative and Performing Arts (e.g., Botswana), and still others teach it in non-formal sectors, or it is not taught at all. Regardless of when it is introduced into the public school curriculum, most Home Economics programmes in African schools, including colleges and universities are characterized by a shortage of human resources and equipment, by irrelevant textbooks, and by irrelevant content, among others (Mberengwa, 1997; Ogwu, 2010).

Most African governments also fail to consistently provide a safe, rich and progressive environment where children can pursue their educational dreams. In those locales where war prevails, education and socialization are disrupted because schools are destroyed. Other basic survival needs, therefore, tend to take precedence, leaving little time and energy for education.

It is a fact that some African children as young as 12 years of age are already heads of families due to loss of parent(s) or their abandonment. It is important to expose children to the basic skills and knowledge they need in order to make decisions in their everyday life, even when they are still in primary school. Home Economics is one vehicle that can be used to transmit this knowledge. Inadequate provision of a stable and resource-rich educational environment is, therefore, a threat to the sustainability of African Home Economics programmes in the 21st century.

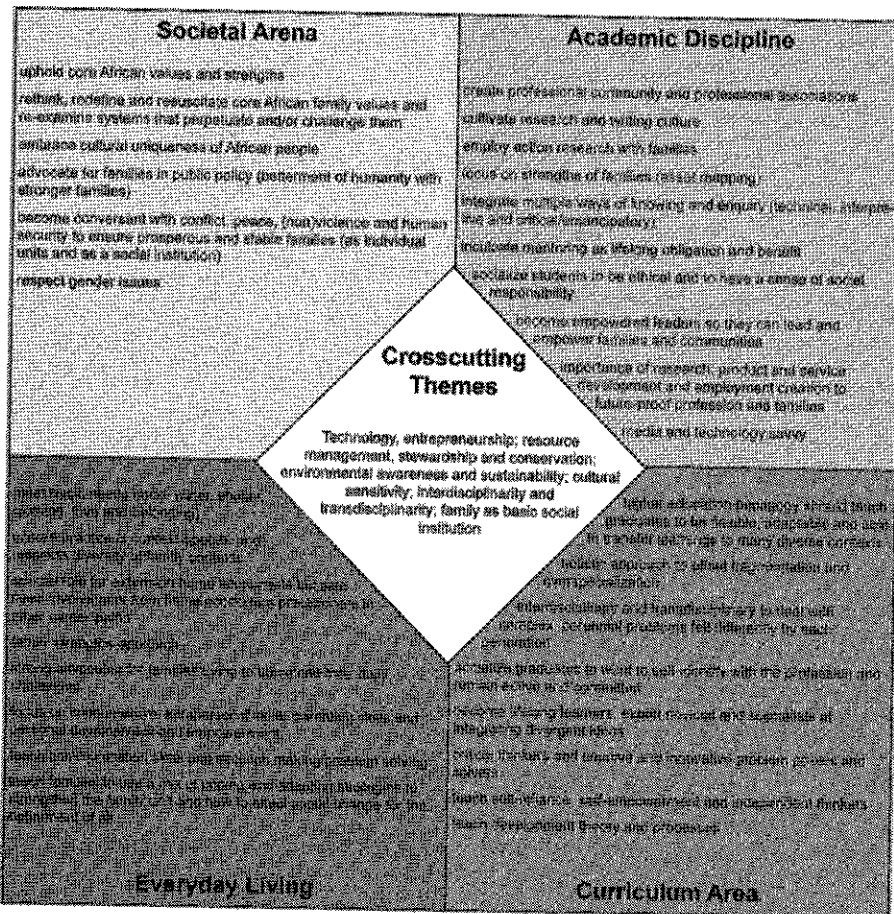
The proposed Africentric higher education Home Economics curriculum

Tertiary or higher education is a critical component in the shaping of empowered Home Economics professionals who will take charge of development efforts in their communities. We should emphasize that the role of the home economist in contributing towards Africa's future is even more crucial in the 21st century than it was a century ago. The magnitude and nature of the problems in Africa is perennial, never going away, experienced differently by each generation. As noted, these problems will likely continue to dominate the social development agendas of most African countries throughout the 21st century.

In the light of IFHE's (2008) four dimensions of professional practice in Home Economics, we make the following suggestions for an Africentric Home Economics curriculum for the 21st century. Figure 17.1 summarises our ideal curriculum for Home Economics in Africa. It is organized using the four dimensions of Home Economics proffered by the IFHE Position Statement (2008). The dimensions should not be seen as separate entities, but as an integrated whole. The cross-cutting themes influence the orientation of Home Economics in all the arenas.

Home Economics as a societal arena

The curriculum should uphold African core values and strengths. Values of respect, tolerance, togetherness, sharing, caring, honesty, morality, discipline, dignity, solidarity, communication and others characterize many traditional African societies



(Mberengwa, 2003). The setup in traditional African families, including ways of communication, where the elders were the 'teachers,' facilitated the nurturing of these values and made them achievable. Today, these values are threatened with modernization and with the issue of human rights (where even children can challenge their parents). These threats tend to undermine the desired aspirations expressed in the African traditional values. Home economists need to rethink, redefine and, if possible, resuscitate some of these values, and re-examine the systems in which they function in an attempt to redress the social challenges confronting African families. The curriculum should also embrace the cultural uniqueness of African people. For example, African hospitality, diets, shelter, parenting, child-rearing practices and artifacts should be woven into the higher education curriculum. As well, Home Economics university students should be trained in, and socialized into, the processes needed to be advocates for effective public policy for the betterment of humanity through strong families. As well, in order for families to prosper, peace and stability are needed in African homes. Home Economics university students should be conversant with these issues (conflict, (non)violence, peace and justice and human security).

Home Economics as an academic discipline

Training programmes should strive to socialize and generate Home Economics graduates who have the required core competencies needed to sustain the profession beyond the 21st century. Professionals are needed who will work tirelessly as advocates for families and their communities. Home Economics professionals who are themselves empowered can in turn empower those they work with also. University students need to be socialized to be ethical, to have a sense of social responsibility and to value their role as leaders of their communities (and be able to lead communities forward). These professional attributes can be nurtured through a sustained socialization and training programme. It must value research and product and service development as ways of creating new knowledge. It must teach leadership skills and foster in university students the belief that mentoring is an important socializing function of Home Economics professionals. The university degree program must integrate various modes of enquiry and knowing, including the technical, interpretative and emancipatory approaches.

We have also observed that there is poor documentation of research activities and of information about the existence and focus of higher education programmes by African scholars in general. African Home economists need to cultivate a research and writing culture among themselves and infuse relevant research practices into their practice. Research opportunities with African families are abundant and action research strategies should be encouraged. All research efforts should be carefully documented so that they can inform future generations about their past in order to plan for their own future. The future of Home Economics in Africa deeply depends upon the creation of a professional community supported by sustainable professional associations (which, in cooperation with the academy, can contribute to the development

Figure 17.1

Home Economics in Africa: The four dimensions.

of conferences, networking opportunities, professional development, and publishing avenues like journals, edited books, working papers and monographs).

Home Economics as a curriculum area

The teaching/learning methods (pedagogy) that are used to teach Home Economics in higher education play an important role in influencing university students' outcomes and socialization processes. Home Economics skills university students learn should be flexible, adaptable and transferable to many different situations. This flexibility can be achieved if interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches, philosophies and subject matter are used to address the multipronged nature of complex problems faced by families. A holistic approach will discourage the fragmentation that is created by overspecialization in the various Home Economics content domains. It will also help transcend the negative stereotypes and other challenges that have characterized the Home Economics profession since its inception. We have observed that some home economists have a negative attitude towards their own profession. Negative attitudes are a symptom of disempowerment. So, addressing the issue of attitudes and stereotypes during training and the socialization process will better ensure that future home economists can confidently make decisions about their life, take an active role in their work and in the profession and self-identify with being a member of the profession.

Above all, Home Economics professionals should be lifelong learners, people who are willing to continuously learn about new things in view of the vast technological changes and other mega changes taking place on a daily basis. They need to be socialized to be expert novices and to be specialists at integrating divergent, complex ideas. They need to be taught to be critical of what is happening in their world and of how these events impact family well-being and quality of life. More importantly, they need to be taught to be creative and innovative in their problem posing and solving. This approach to practice should be possible if the teaching environments for Home Economics (both the physical and psychosocial environment) promote the communal and professional traits discussed earlier.

Home Economics as an arena for everyday living

Home Economics is a comprehensive discipline that teaches everyday life skills, which are applied on a daily basis in people's lives — in their homes and communities, including the workplace. Most African families grapple daily with how to meet basic survival needs: food, shelter, love and belonging, clothing and others. Conceptualizing Home Economics as an arena for everyday living should therefore focus on meeting the basic needs of individuals, families and communities, in ways that recognize and respect their dynamic contexts. Issues such as sanitation and hygiene, water, what to eat, child health and care, and fuel for cooking preoccupy the African woman's time and energy. Families need help to enable them to transcend these challenges, and they need resources and personnel who are actively engaged at the grassroots as their advocates — and that would be us as home economists. Qualified Home Economics extension workers in Africa should have both the theoretical knowledge and the practical skills needed to help tackle such problems. We

believe they should embrace the family strengths approach and use asset mapping, as well as needs assessments, all drawing on the strengths of families instead of their weaknesses. Home economists in media, politics, development, private enterprise, as well as in civil society, all have roles to play as African home economists work together to future-proof the profession for the next century, all from an Africentric perspective. Home Economics higher education curriculum should reinforce all of these ideas.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to explore and envisage an ideal Africentric Home Economics higher education curriculum for socializing future generations of African home economists. It first discussed the current challenges that are faced by Black African families in the SADC region. This overview was followed by a discussion of the challenges that emanate from Home Economics practice in Africa. On the basis of all these theoretical and contextual underpinnings, an ideal Africentric Home Economics higher education curriculum, which is modeled along the four IFHE dimensions of Home Economics, was then suggested.

- The major challenges faced by families in the SADC region are issues related to poverty, health and disease, food security and nutrition, migration and urbanization, conflict, and technological changes;
- Major criticisms for existing African Home Economics educational programmes and curricula include (a) irrelevant content that is operationalized through Western paradigms of the what, how and why of Home Economics, and (b) a lack of qualified and committed Home Economics professionals at all levels;
- African home economists are encouraged to be sensitive to the unique challenges besetting African families and to their cultural context. Practitioners need to infuse this knowledge into their programmes of study in higher education and
- The IFHE (2008) four dimensions of Home Economics can effectively be used to define the parameters of Home Economics in higher education.

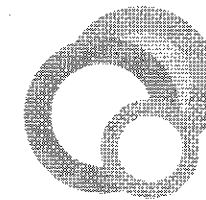
Discussion Prompts

- How can Home Economics higher education programmes socialize and empower home economists who can play a strategic and effective role in helping families improve their quality of life (that is, strengthen the home for the good of humanity)?
- What strengths do African families have that can be respected and fostered in efforts to overcome and transcend the challenges they face in everyday living?
- Rethink the role of professional associations in future-proofing Home Economics.
 - (a) How can African home economists be motivated to join and take an increasingly active part in the activities of a continent-wide Home Economics association?
 - (b) How can the association be self-sustaining?

- Given the megatrends identified in the Chapter 1, and the powerful context within which African families are living, how can Home Economics as a discipline of study in Africa be future proofed, especially in view of its declining popularity, coupled with its profound need in the 21st century?

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Food Security, Street Food and Family Insecurity in Nigeria: Repositioning Home Economics in the 21st Century

Nwakego Molokwu and Elizabeth M. Kembe

Home Economics as a field of study needs to connect and key into the political, economic and technological conditions of the 21st century. It is a profession that impacts on family and community well being and will continue to show concern over issues in the society that directly affect individuals and families. Home Economics is a versatile field of study that draws knowledge and training from disciplines in the sciences, social sciences and the humanities and is in a very unique position of strength to meet the challenges of improving the quality of life and well being of individuals, families and communities. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and referred to as the “Giant of Africa”, but as a developing country it continues to grapple with inadequate resources in the area of food, shelter, health, education, environment, sanitation and other needs of the community that are necessary for the quality of life and well being of the people. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has remained a developing country for the past 51 years despite its numerous human and material resources. Unfortunately, these resources are poorly managed due to corruption and lack of good governance. For these reasons, Nigeria is incapable of sustaining its teeming population of over 160 million people (World Bank 2012). In a country where population is constantly on the increase and where food production is lower than the population growth rate, food security is a problem. This chapter will discuss food security, increase of street-food vendors, family insecurity and the role of Home Economics vis-à-vis the well being of the people.



Food Security and Family Insecurity

The most critical issues that confront Nigeria are the problem of food security and family insecurity. Food security exists when people have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet the dietary needs and food preferences of family members. The food security problem is multifaceted since it relates to poverty, in terms of the family's purchasing power and food practices (preparation and service) that may enhance the nutritive value of food in the correct quality and quantity. Food security for a household means access to nutritious meals by all members at all times. Inadequate food supply affects family security. According to FAO (2011), food security includes, at a minimum, the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods and the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing and other coping strategies. In the absence of a secured source of food supply, there are bound to be hunger problems, and its manifestation in malnourishment — especially of children and women. The three main causes of malnutrition are: lack of food, health and care. Food security, health and family security have an important link to nutrition.

Food insecurity occurs when majority of people do not have access to food that is adequate in quantity and quality consistent with decent existence at all times. Food insecurity has adverse effects on individuals and the nation as it slows down a nation's developmental plans and affects family security. In Nigeria, the quantity and quality of food produced is low. In general, traditional diets in Nigeria are based on cereals and root crops, with significant amount of legumes, fruits and vegetables. Often, fish, poultry, meat and dairy products provide only a small proportion of the total energy. Malnutrition is common where there is inadequate supply of the right type of food nutrients in the correct proportion, which has been known to be the cause of high morbidity and mortality rates especially among infants and children below the age of 5 years. (Academy of Science 2011).

Nigeria falls short of the first millennium development goals of food security aspirations in seeking to reduce by half the proportion of people experiencing hunger. Due to the population of Nigeria, the upward trend in hunger is close to 30%, whereas the millennium development goal targets only 10%. Over 900 million people experience global food hardship and hunger. (FAO 2010). Within the context of food security is economic instability, climate change, national and global insecurity. In Nigeria, the incidence of 'Boko Haram' and other terrorist activities continue to threaten the stability of the nation and invariably tamper with family security. If there is instability in any country and constant threat to life and property, then, the worry is not only on food production and consumption but on the access to food during periods of unrest.

Food prices are determined by oil prices. Even though Nigeria is a major exporter of crude oil, its citizens are often under the burden of fuel scarcity. Recently, the Nigerian government announced the removal of oil subsidy, from a pump price of ₦65.00 to ₦141.00 per litre. This change led to uprising from the populace and it is not surprising because it will translate into an increase in almost all the essential com-

modities of daily living such as food prices, transportation, health, shelter and other basic needs. The uprising brought the country to a stand still and the pump price was reduced to ₦97.00 per litre. People are very unhappy about this because the government was not transparent in this matter. Furthermore, food prices are affected by the seasons of the year. Foods are cheaper during the post-harvest period than the pre-planting season. During periods of festivity such as Christmas and Sallah holidays, the 'festive rush' for food stuff influences food prices. Consumption patterns also change during such periods because of the preparation for delicacies, variety and indigenous types of food. Indeed, it is a period when families try to exhibit their culinary expertise in the cooking and presentation of food. Traders capitalize on these factors and mark up food prices.

Street Food and Food Vendors

Food shops and food vendors are not left out in the bid to make more money during festive periods. Some families depend on food vendors for the provision of their meals especially breakfast and or lunch. Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO, 1990), has defined street foods as ready-to-eat foods and beverages prepared and sold by vendors especially in streets and other similar public places. In many growing urban cities, street food provides a significant percentage of the total intake of many working class people. Yet street foods are largely unregulated and create health risks to people.

Fast food joints, street vendors and mobile food services are now available all over the country. Depending on the locality, multiple street vendors may specialize in specific types of food characteristics of a given cultural or ethnic tradition. In some cultures, it is typical for street vendors to shout the prices and chant the names of food products in a theatrical fashion ('oyi', 'akpukpa', 'okpa' 'doya' 'oyoyo rice' 'suya' 'moimoi' etc) in order to engage the prospective customers. Some of these food vendors have makeshift stalls that they occupy, while others carry their foods on their heads or tricycle trucks or wheel barrows, moving from one part of the town to the other and hawking their foods. In many parts of the country, the majority of persons involved as street vendors are women and children who assist in the carrying of utensils or pushing the trucks. So, in a way the sector contributes to the financial empowerment of women and youths, but keeps the children out of school. Home economists can impact the community through training and advocacy for this vulnerable group.

Increase of Street Food Vendors in Nigeria

Individuals and families recognize the need for eating out of the home due to work and other social factors like the availability of food supplies. That is why it is important that the chain of production provides reliable, safe and nutritious food for the public. There are various reasons why people patronize street food vendors, this patronage gave rise to the increase of street food vendors who see it as a quick way of making a living. Some of the reasons include:

Work style and mobility

Parents now work far from their homes leaving the preparation and selection of family meals in the hands of untrained house helps. Type of job and place of work influences the preparation and choice of food eaten. The traditional method of food selection, preparation and service was such that the mother/women were responsible for the provision of the type of meals that are eaten by family members. With the education of women and subsequent employment into the labour force, most of the household chores including selection and preparation of meals has been commercialized either through the employment of house helps or patronising fast food joints and street vendors. In some large urban centres, it is common place for bank workers and other civil servants to patronise street food vendors for meals due to lack of time for food preparation. Meals require planning in terms of time and other resources. Today many women are engaged in income generating activities and this hardly allows them time to effectively cook their family meals. Such women engage assistance of house helps or live on street food to the detriment of family well-being. (Salami & Uko-Aviomoh, 2005). Highly mobile workers like drivers and salesmen patronise street food vendors because meals served in hotels and restaurants are too expensive.

Economic Factors

Street food vending is significantly related to poverty. Most of the street food vendors are from the low income group who are striving to meet personal or family needs. FAO (2009) observed that the preparation and sale of street food provides a regular source of income to millions of men and women in developing countries. In fact, there is a popular saying that it is only in the business of food that a business man never loses. It requires very little capital to start, and it can be conducted as a family business with other members of the family rendering various form of assistance such as washing of plates after service, clearing and cleaning. It is easy to start especially bearing the fact that Nigeria is endowed with food crops at all seasons such as yams, cassava, rice, beans, cereal crops (maize, millet, and guinea corn), soy bean, different types of fruit crops and vegetables. These food crops are cheap especially when they are in season. So there is a guarantee of the supply of raw materials.

Employment (Youth Empowerment)

The rate of unemployment and youth restiveness has encouraged government agencies to train people in skills for food preparation. They make meat kebabs ('suya' 'kilishi'), pastries, cakes, drinks and beverages and other finger foods. Some of these trainees are given take-off capital and equipment to start their business. This way the government is sure to have taken some youths off the streets. What is missing here is a regulatory policy on sanitation and safety of the food offered to the public.

Rural-urban migration

The lure of the city life and all the good things in the city such as communication, electricity, better housing and menial jobs that are instantly paid for have attracted youths from village farm settlements to the urban cities. During the time for farming

one can hardly find the labor and manpower to help even when payment for such labor is available. These youths in urban areas provide commercial motorcycle transport popularly known as 'okada'. Some become political thugs, house helps, bus conductors, street hawkers and shopkeepers. This has implication for food security and family security, it also affects youths who at this age are suppose to be in schools and trained to contribute usefully to the society. This group depends mainly on street food and some of them become street food vendors.

General Complaints about Street Food and Food Vendors

Street food accounts for a significant proportion of the daily food consumption of millions of low and middle income families in Nigeria. In as much as there is the need for street food vendors as a necessity that has come to stay in most urban areas, there are general complaints concerning the safe handling of street foods.

Public Health

Most of the time, fast foods are prepared and served in unhygienic environment. Due to lack of water, serving utensils (which are usually sub-standard) are not properly washed. Food is handled with dirty hands and could be left uncovered. Anyone who appreciates good food and a clean environment and realises that germs cause diseases will know that when foods are prepared with dirty hands and utensils, then left uncovered, infested by flies and dust, it is unsafe for consumption. Foods may be contaminated by disease-causing organism such as viruses, bacteria and parasites which cause common diseases such as typhoid, cholera, dysentery and diarrhoea. These pathogenic organisms results from unhygienic practices in the preparation, cooking, serving and storage of foods. In the preparation of food and through all the process of food from the kitchen to the table, water is a significant factor for proper hygiene and care. If the source of water is not clean and available water is not adequate, then the health of the consumers is compromised. Olufemi (2012) reported that water is a problem confronting street food vendors in most developing countries, Nigeria is not an exception. Potable water for drinking, water for washing plates and utensils and water for food preparation is scarce. Most times the water is not in sufficient quantity, so, it has to be used sparingly. It is not uncommon to see food vendors use the same bucket of water over and over to wash plates and utensils and there is no hot water, which is the ideal for the washing of plates and utensils properly.

Ignorance

Food vendors have little knowledge or appreciation of good cooking practices, food hygiene and sanitation. There is no formal or informal training for this business, they just learn from one another. This activity is related to poverty and a form of employment in the informal sector. There are no regulations or licensing of this aspect of the private sector. Apart from the food vendors, the consumers themselves are sometimes ignorant and show little concern on the type of water used and the environment. The critical factors in the choice of food by consumers are the cost of the food, the taste and variety of food. Consumers assume that these foods are well prepared especially

if it is a local delicacy, thus, may not insist on proper heating of the food. These street food vendors do not move about with any source of heat, so it is impossible to heat the food when necessary. Some use food warmers, but food gets cold as hours go by and the food remains at an inappropriate temperature for too long. The food is usually prepared in the morning for the whole day. On a good business day it may be sold out completely, but on other days, this may not be possible. The leftover food is then reheated for the next day.

Environment, Water and Sanitation

FAO identified the following as key factors in street food contamination:

- Insufficient cleaning of raw materials, ingredients and utensils before cooking and of table ware used by customers;
- In appropriate handling of ingredients and raw materials during food preparation and of finished products;
- Poor conditions of storage of raw materials and finished products (exposure to dust, insects and pests) and
- The prolonged holding of prepared food at inappropriate temperature.

From field trip observation, the challenges of food vendors are the absence of basic facilities such as water and toilets, training on hygiene and sanitation and provision of basic infrastructure for the street food industry. These are major deficiencies in food vending. If they are not addressed and regulated, consumers and the general public will continue to be at risk.

Waste generation and disposal scenario is a national problem in Nigeria. Most of these wastes that are generated on the streets are from commercial activities including activities of street food vendors. The quantity and rate of solid wastes generation depends on the population, level of industrialization, socio-economic predominant activities and the kinds of commercial activities, (Babayemi & Dauda, 2009). Waste management is not successful because of the unwholesome waste disposal habits of the people, especially as it concerns sanitation. The use of polythene packages and the use of non-degradable solid waste often block the drainage systems thereby causing flooding in some major urban cities. Indeed, environmental sustainability is influenced by individual life styles and ethical consumerism. In order to avoid environmental degradation, there must be management of consumption patterns of individuals and households. That is where Home Economics is relevant in achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on environmental sustainability. Home Economics is geared towards influencing consumer patterns and external forces impacting on consumer choices. Food handling and attitude change toward healthy eating form an integral part of any Home Economics program. Given the economic trend in Nigeria, individuals and families would need a guided framework on better ways of achieving food security with minimal cost on resources. This is a challenge for home economists.

Some human behavior contributes to health hazards on the streets. Some of these include the dumping of human and house hold wastes on barren land or uncompleted buildings, improper disposal of refuse, littering public places and flipping rubbish carelessly from car windows. Some of these 'refuse sites' are sometimes illegal sites for the occupation of street food vendors. Despite the filth, consumers eat from street vendors in an unhealthy environment. Waste generated by street food vendors end up in gutters blocking the drainage. Sometimes, the used water not finding a passage may accumulate and form an eyesore that encourage the growth of bacteria and breeding of flies, mosquitoes and cockroaches at the sale points. This violates the Millennium Development Goals on environmental sustainability. The proportion of the population with sustainable access to improved water source in both the urban and rural areas is below the MDGs stipulation.

One of the major problems in Nigeria is the inadequate supply of clean water in both rural and urban areas for human consumption and general household use. UNICEF (2009) reported that about 100 million Nigerians out of the 160 million have no access to potable water. Though it seems there is water everywhere, potable water is accessed by only a few. Water is a significant part of the street food vending activities. Drinking water is often sold in polythene sachets (either factory made or home made) and in bottles. Ice cold water as is sold on the streets are often contaminated with pathogens causing cholera, typhoid, dysentery and other water borne diseases. According to the Standard Organization of Nigeria (2007), many street food operators have to use water from wells or rivers or rain water. In many cases, the food vendors contaminate water by inappropriate handling. The major source of contamination of street food in Nigeria is water. Either the water is of poor quality or it had become contaminated during the process of handling.

Home Economics is skill-oriented, therefore it is able to promote the acquisition of skills, knowledge, attitude and practice that can lead to productive ventures without jeopardising the health and well being of families and individuals. If professionals in the field are proactive, then it must be seen to exert certain parameters and work in conjunction with relevant government bodies and through effective advocacy, lobby for the formulation of policies and laws that will control street food vendors.

Repositioning Home Economics in the 21st Century

The ability to develop a framework for the future depends on the capacity of the institutions and professionals to understand the complex nature and requirements of Home Economics. Four dimensions have been identified by IFHE (2008) position statement namely:

- As an academic discipline engaged in research, education and creating new knowledge;
- As arena for everyday living in households, families and communities, identifying potentials for meeting human needs;
- As a curriculum area that facilitate students to discover and develop their professional decisions and actions and

- Finally, as a societal arena to influence and develop policy and advocate for individuals, families and communities to achieve empowerment and wellbeing, to use transformative practices and facilitate sustainable futures.

As much as the above statements can be applied universally, there are regional variations in its application and relevance. In Nigeria, the major concern of home economists is on values of professionalism and recognition by government of contributions of home economists in policy, advocacy and implementation of government laws and policy at all levels of the society. Unless, Home Economics is seen as a profession with laws, ethics and regulations guiding its professionals at whatever level, it will be difficult for practitioners to exert any meaningful influence in ensuring that best practices are adopted in its different careers. Home economists must key into the values of professionalism and ensure that the government recognizes Home Economics contributions to everyday living — a factor that cannot be brushed aside. The role of home economists have been explained variously to include the improvement of quality of life by influencing the social, health, economic and environmental conditions which affect human and social development. This therefore means that home economists can work with street food vendors to develop programs that will help them make positive changes in their environment, sanitation, food preparation and service.

Future-Proofing Home Economics

To future-proof Home Economics is a duty we owe ourselves, the nation and the world of home economists. Our practices must therefore be guided by ethical and professional principles. Home Economics is concerned with the ways in which the quality and content of individual and family life can be enhanced through the optimal utilization of its human and material resources. It is a profession that deals with family values, ideals and goals. A well balanced curriculum prepares students to become responsible citizens in their society. One of the key points for future proofing Home Economics in Nigeria is that training must be relevant, unique and different from the practices received from road side quacks. UNESCO (2009) explained that the three pillars of sustainable development focus on environment, society and economy with the major objective being to “help people to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge to make informed decisions for the benefit of themselves and others, now and in the future, and to act upon these decisions”. The Home Economics curriculum needs to be reviewed to key into the major issues of sustainability.

Effort must be made to encourage young people (both male and female) into the profession for the future is for the youths of today. Young professionals must be engaged in Home Economics and groomed to be good ambassadors of the profession. To achieve this, we need to rebrand Home Economics to give it a new identity, different from cooking and sewing, and make it more visible. Home economists must be concerned about what content is being taught at the secondary schools across the nation and who is teaching what. Are the graduates leaving with employable life skills? Will they choose Home Economics for further studies? We need the expertise of members to work on critical issues. Molokwu (2010) stressed that Home

Economics professionals must mindfully assess the philosophical foundation, objectives, trends, achievements, issues, problems and concerns of Home Economics. Pre-professionals need to know about the status of the profession, career opportunities and the competencies required for entering the job market in Home Economics. We need a new breed of professionals who is confident, assertive, willing to argue and take on major responsibilities for the interest of Home Economics.

Most small-scale businesses are centered round the life skills in Home Economics such as dressing making, cake making, interior decoration, day care/pre-school services, outdoor catering services, bead making etc. Some of these business people are not trained home economists and the best hands are not necessarily Home Economics graduates. There must be some significant difference in curriculum content and approach in what we offer. In order for the profession to continue to be relevant, it must use technology and develop technology that will compete with global standards and ways of promoting products in the global market. The internet and computer aided designs have simplified this task and it is an opportunity that must be adaptable in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship and investments lead to economic growth and well being of individuals and families. Entrepreneurial education introduced in Home Economics must be a practical demonstration of commercial skills, social skills and competences needed in the world of commerce.

Home Economics plays a crucial role in the environment, water and sanitation. Since its major concern is with the wellbeing of families, issues arising from the environment which negatively impact families will therefore become a major concern. Due to inadequate supply of potable water in Nigeria, households depend on unwholesome source of water supply such as ponds, wells and streams. Not many families can afford the borehole that is now common in urban elitist communities. Families spend money to treat avoidable water borne diseases. As home economists, there are a lot of actions that can be taken to proactively address issues that arise from street food vendors and environmental hazards associated with indiscriminate street behaviour. Advocacy, awareness education programmes through seminars, workshops and symposia will be of immense benefit. Home Economics associations like the International Federation of Home Economics (IFHE), Home Economics Research Association of Nigeria (HERAN) and Home Economics Council of Nigeria (HECON) etc need to form regulatory bodies and vanguards for the promotion of good health and family wellbeing. McGregor (2009) explained that togetherness and cooperation is power and power is energy — the capacity generated through relationships.

Summary

This chapter recognises that the issues generated from food security and street food vending directly affect individuals and families and the very centre of family security. The discourse is organized around the highlights with reference to the risks posed by street food vendors to the public. The potential for financial empowerment, wealth creation and employment was highlighted as well as issues in future-proofing Home Economics. There is need for Home Economics to be re-appraised and the functions

translated into more proactive activities. Home economists must begin to exert themselves and ensure that the training given to the graduates will be relevant in meeting the requirement of the industry as well as meet individual, family and community needs. Prompts for discussion are included.

- Home economists should be proactive in meeting the needs of families;
- Develop programmes that will be relevant in arresting the inadequacies of street food vending;
- Develop new technologies and use existing approaches that will facilitate the dissemination of Home Economics research findings;
- Review curriculum content that is obsolete and out of context with existing trends in the society;
- Provide a professional body that will regulate Home Economics-related trades and businesses in order to inculcate desirable standards;
- Education is recognised as the most important condition for families to improve their lives and for societies to reach the Millennium Development Goals. Home economists can serve as an advocacy group to promote government policies regarding food security and environmental sustainability and
- Develop field based training programs for some food vendors who would be trained to teach other food vendors best practices in the food business.

Discussion Prompts

- What strategies can home economists adopt to curb the unhealthy practices by street food vendors?
- Identify the benefits of street food as it relates to your own locality?
- How does food security relate to family security?
- What is the total family income spent on street food as compared to homemade meals?
- How can home economists key into the government policy on 'clean hands' and develop a framework that could be used by street vendors in personal hygiene and the environment sustainability?

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