



The Impact of Provision of Home Economics Skills at Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Levels for Sustainable Social and Economic Development in Communities: the case of Mufulira District of the Copper Belt Province of Zambia

Anna Phiri, Malvern Kanyati

Rockview University, Zambia

***Corresponding Author:** Anna Phiri, Rockview University, Zambia

Abstract: The study found it necessary to discuss Home Economics Promoting Practical Skills for Sustainable development at all levels. Practical skills can really bring excellent and sustainable development to the learners and families at large. The acquisition of values and skills that can be attained by students would be used in their profession and the community at large.

'Home Economics' in Zambia is a vocational subject that passes knowledge and skills from the grass root - home or family. The knowledge and skills that Home Economics provides can be taught in school, formal organization or even in a non-formal setting. Individuals involved in these can become self-reliant or employer of labour.

It should be noted that Home Economics is a field of study that promotes quality home and family life and includes human development and relationships, financial and resource management, consumerism, food and nutrition, clothing and textiles, housing and shelter, and beauty. In view of that, the subject therefore is concerned with development of knowledge, skills and capabilities in the context of health, materials and resources which will economically improve individuals, community and the world at large.

The overall good sustainable development is long term stability of the economy and the environment. Such can only be done through the integration and acknowledgement of economic, environmental and social concerns throughout the decision making process in all Home Economics major categories that is; fashion and fabrics, Home Management and Food and Nutrition.

We all have a part to play in the sustainable development of Home Economics in Zambia and the world at large. Small action taken collectively can add up to real change in Home Economics

In Home Economics education, our goal is that students not only come to change their personal lifestyles, but also come to practice activities in their communities and furthermore develop the knowledge and conviction to suggest bigger reform of the social system for the purpose of creating a sustainable global society.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Government, education institutions, teachers and all other stakeholders need to work together to ensure provision of appropriate education to the citizens of Zambia. When planning content for the Home Economics curriculum, teachers, curriculum developing organs, government and all other stakeholders need to focus on educative contents that are purposely selected and organized. Sometimes the members of the community are always guided by the traditional subjects even without looking at the prevailing social-economic changes which might be taking place at international and global level. Available evidence show that parents in the third world countries are more interested in future job of their children with less concentration on their skill acquisition in their day to day life.

Odu (1983) observes that the only true form of education is the one which teaches people to think for themselves and at the same time prepares them for both present and the future. In view of that, Home Economics stands out as one of the vocational subjects expected to be taught in primary, secondary and further train teachers who will continue teaching the subject.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

There appears to be mounting concerns on the promoting of practical skills in tertiary institutions for sustainable development at all levels. This study, therefore, sort to determine the extent to which the problem of provision of practical skills in Home Economics is impacting on sustainable social and economic development in communities in Mufulira district of the Copperbelt Province of Zambia.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

This study will sort to address the following objectives.

1. To determine the extent to which practical skills in Home Economics were being carried out in education institutions (primary, secondary and tertiary)
2. To identify the problems hindering the promotion of provision of practical skills in Home Economics
3. To find out how practical skills in Home Economics can be promoted in education institutions (primary, secondary and tertiary) to trickle down to the community.

1.3. Research Questions

Research questions will be as follows;

1. To what extent are practical skills in Home Economics being carried out in education institutions (primary, secondary and tertiary)?
2. What problems hinder the promotion of provision of practical skills in Home Economics?
3. How can practical skills in Home Economics be promoted in education institutions (primary, secondary and tertiary) to trickle down to the community?

1.4. Significance of the Study

The study provided information from which policy decisions could be drawn and also gave an insight into the issue of promoting the provision of practical skills in Home Economics for sustainable development in communities. The findings of the study also assisted to rekindle the ambitious efforts of the Ministry of Education and other stake holders to improve funding to Home Economics so as to improve provision of practical skills in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions which will trickle down to communities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In November 1948, members of the United Nations in Article 48 declared the right to education for all people and Article 32 the members reaffirmed the right of every child without discrimination of any kind to free and compulsory primary school education (UN,1948).The Jomtien Conference of 1990 and Dakar Conference of 2000 also emphasized the need to provide *Education for All* by the year 2015.Such education required well trained human resource, provision of adequate text books and teaching aids , laboratories, workshops and equipment for learners in schools. Home Economics is one of the subjects that required such educational requisites.

The origin of Home Economics can be traced way back in the 19th century by Catherine Beecher and Ellen Richards who were American educators. The two ladies pioneered the subject and developed it in North America. The subject further spread to United States of America, Canada, Great Britain, Latin America, Asia and Africa. The aim of the subject Home Economics was to teach young women for the duties in the home and the environment (IFHE 2014). In line of the afore said, the subject was dominated by women which is not true today.

The perception by many people that the subject is women dominated has disadvantaged the subject as they look at it to be easy and not important. In view of this, even learners do not study seriously as they feel that it is not a failing subject. It should be noted that even men have come on board in Home Economics and are feeling the importance of the subject. Flack (1980) had observed before that, the world shapes home economics and home economics contribute to the shaping of the world through its impact on millions of individuals and their families. Nobody is inseparable from the knowledge, values and skills gained from home economics.

Historically, the development of Home Economics in Africa, originally referred to as Domestic Science, was started by foreigners. The foreigners were wives to missionaries who had come from Britain, Canada, America and Ireland while others were white ladies and nuns. The white ladies were interested in teaching the women basic home craft skills specifically, sewing and cooking. Since the subject did not originate in Africa, the Home Economics Movement had not initially been very forceful in Africa. It was also a subject primarily for women and girls in educational institutions partly due to cultural issues and also because of the way it was introduced on the continent: by women only and so everybody thought it was for females only (*Journal of Home Economics 1900-1975*).

In Zambia, Christian Missionaries pioneered education although from 1924 when the territory came under direct British administration, the government showed great interest to promote African education. It was through the Phelps-stokes Report of 1924 were recommendations that domestic science (Home Economics) was introduced by missionary wives and other unmarried European women in the mission stations in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) as a subject in schools for African girls and women.

Perhaps the most important Christian mission in connection with Domestic Science in colonial Zambia was the London Missionary Society whose subdivision (branch) established an only girls' school in Luapula Province. The school was started in 1915 in Mbereshi in the Province by Mable Shaw, a young schoolteacher from Midlands in the United Kingdom (UK).

The success of Mbereshi was due to the fact that the education given to girls was ultimately related to the actual life of the home and the community. Class work was done in the morning, while girls lived ordinary life of the village in the afternoon such as collecting firewood, fetching water and preparing their own meals. Mable Shaw's teaching of Home Economics yielded good results because from the initial stage, she applied both the European Home Economics skills and the African skills that were related to the actual life of the African home and the community.

3. METHODOLOGY

The ministry officials, Head teachers, teachers of Home Economics, principal, lecturers and board chairpersons, and students of Home Economics in Mufulira district constituted the population of this study. Purposive sampling was used to select students. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques to get the data. Quantitative data was collected interactively using descriptive semi-structured interviews. Focus group discussions were conducted with students. Quantitative data was collected using questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered to the randomly selected students. The instruments selected for data collection were piloted at Mufulira College of Education in order to test their efficacy. Qualitative data was analysed thematically. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse numerical data through summaries such as frequency distribution, percentages and tables using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

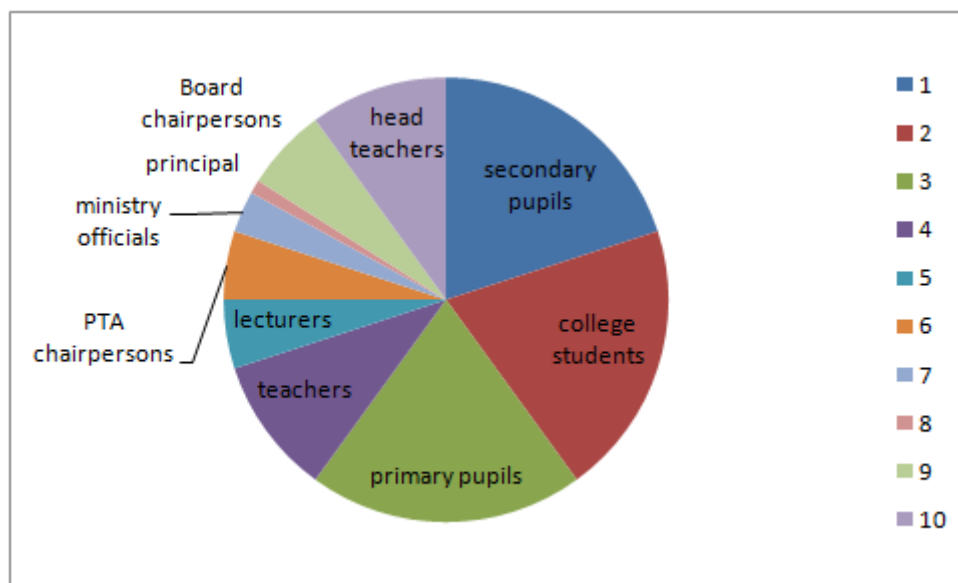
4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The aim is to report on the findings pertaining to the impact of provision of Home Economics skills at Primary, Secondary and tertiary levels for sustainable social and Economic Development in Communities. The views of the interviewees (DEBS, Head teachers, Teachers of Home Economics, Principal, Lecturers, Board Chairpersons and Students of Home Economics). This presentation is based on 5 Primary, 5 Secondary and 1 College which is Mufulira College of Education in Mufulira District where Home Economics is being taught.

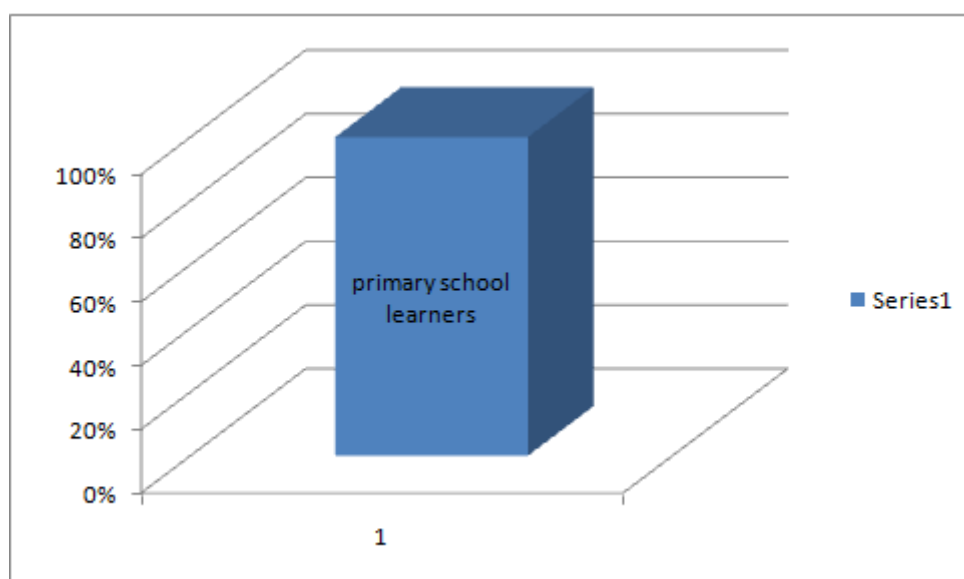
4.1. Data Analysis

Respondents Status

There were 10 class teachers (10%); 10 head teachers (10%); 5 PTA (Parents Teachers Association chair persons (5%); 1 Board chair person; 20 students from Primary (20%); 20 Secondary (20%); and Tertiary 20 from each category (20%); 5 Lecturers (5%); 1 District Education Board Secretary (1%); 1 SEO general (1%), 1 District Education Standards Officer (1%) and 1 Principal (1%).



Learners from Primary Schools



Hundred percent of the learners in Primary schools revealed that, the subject was taught to both boys and girls in their school. The only problem they encountered was lack of equipment and inadequate practical lessons in Home Economics.

4.2. Learners from Secondary Schools

It was discovered that out of four secondary schools visited, two schools in the peri-urban did not have equipment and practical lessons were only carried out once during mock examination and the final one. Equipment was carried from their homes for use during practical examinations. With schools in town at least they had little equipment and only supplemented during the final examinations. Practical lessons were carried at least once a month due to fund raising ventures done by teachers’ in the department.

4.3. College Students

The study revealed that the students were encouraged to take Home Economics as a course because it was hands-on at this level. They were able to carry out practical lessons because adequate equipment was there. Besides, funds were available as it was paid together with other fees at the beginning of each term.

4.4. Responses from PTA Members

The PTA members from Primary schools said that, Home Economics was taught in schools and was liked by the pupils as it gave pupils survival skills. One PTA member disclosed that some pupils were not taking Home Economics seriously because it was not examinable at grade 7 level.

Responses from Teachers of Home Economics on funding

	Frequency	Percentage %
Poorly funded	6	60
Adequately funded	4	40
Total	10	100

Home Economics teachers stated that the subject teaches a multiple of skills out of which livelihoods can be developed in future if well supported. They also said that it required a lot of effort to educate the parents and public at large about the importance of Home Economics especially with regards to self-reliance in job creation for future generations. The Home Economics teachers further stated that it required political will to make parents understand the significance of Home Economics and to make it be fully recognized in the Zambian society. However they lamented on funding to the subject. Six schools complained of poor funding while four said that they were well funded.

4.5. Responses from Head Teachers

The study revealed that head teachers from both primary and secondary schools looked at the subject as important for both boys and girls because it gave lifelong skills to the pupils. The head teachers also stated that they were trying to support the subject but were constrained because of minimal grants that they were receiving.

4.6. Responses from Lecturers

Lecturers from the college where Home Economics teachers were trained in the district highlighted the importance of the subject to the student teachers. However, they encouraged students to study hard as some of them did not take the subject seriously thinking that it was simple and that it was not a failing subject. They said that they do equip the students with necessary knowledge and skills in the subject.

4.7. Responses from the Principal

The Principal said that she did not have many problems of funds. The college supported the subject fully because they had enough funds raised from levying the student a practical fee other than tuition fees. Equipment was being bought from the same funds and also lobbying from donors and other NGOs.

4.8. Responses from District Education Board Secretary(DEBS)

Field research revealed that the DEBS appreciated Home Economics as an important subject because it provided life skills to the pupils at a tender age. To this end, the DEBS proudly stated that ‘I always support the Mufulira Home Economics Association (DHEA)in fundraising ventures for Home Economics’.

4.9. Response from District Education Standards Officer (DESO)

The study revealed that the DESO encouraged males to teach Home Economics .Field work also revealed that the DESO greatly appreciated the subject and looked at it as very important to the learners especially at primary and secondary school levels because it imparted lifelong skills.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study sought to ascertain the impact of provision of Home Economics skills at Primary, Secondary and tertiary levels for sustainable social and Economic Development in Communities. According to the result;

The student’s responses in primary and secondary schools revealed that practical lessons were either carried out once per term or per year before the final examination. At college level, for full time student’s practical lessons were done once per months while for the distance students, it was once per contact session. One grade six boy, chisenga of Mano Primary School said,

Home Economics is a very good subject because it teaches us how to cook and sew clothes and we can even become chefs and tailors in future. The problem is we do not do have enough practice.

Okeke (2001) and Mba (2003) identified that, some students are interested in the subject but denied the chance of studying it for it is either not offered or facilities and teachers are a limiting factor in the sense that they are ill equipped with the skills needed in Home Economics.

In addition, the provision is not there because of lack of space and poorly equipped Home Economics laboratories in schools and teachers Colleges. Besides that, there is also heavily reliance on theory work ignoring practical work. Hence lack of sustainable development of the hands- on skills in the learners.

Furthermore, primary and secondary schools complained of lack or erratic funding to their institutions. Due to lack of funding most schools do not carry out practical lessons and depend solely on teaching theory lessons. For the colleges, they are able to carry out practical lessons because they levy students. The money is paid together with the tuition fees including practical fee for all practical subjects.

The findings correlate with that of Flack (1980), who in his study established that the perception by many people that Home Economic as a subject is female dominated as a result it is easy and not important. As a result of this perception, some school managers did not support the subject and it resulted in teachers teaching theory lessons or stop teaching the subject totally.

The Ministry officials at district level admitted that Home Economics was very important to the learners especial at Primary school level because once the learner gains the basic skills at that level, then learner can develop interest that would be sustainable for the future. The District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) emphasized that:

Home Economics is a very important subject but lack financial support and teaching and learning materials. That is why I do urge the District Home Economics Association (DHEA) to fund- raise and buy some equipment and distribute them to schools that are lacking to promote the subject.

The DEBS also encouraged the head teachers to support Home Economics teachers in fund raising ventures at the school and district levels. He pointed out that fund raising ventures would help the Home Economics teachers to carry out practical lessons with their pupils.

On the other hand, the District Standards Officer (DESO) observed that the grade nine and twelve results at secondary school level were not very good because the learners did not undertake enough practical lessons to help them in the final examinations. He advised that:

Without enough practice, pupils would not have enough skills to sustain themselves when They drop out of formal school.

In view of the DESO'S sentiments, in some schools were teachers have the passion for the subject, they were sacrificing by getting some equipment from their homes to supplement the little equipment in the departments. In other schools, head teachers were supportive by giving a little startup capital for the teachers in Home Economics to fund raise and continue carrying out practical lessons.

The other hindrances in the provision of promoting practical skills was the lack of networking among Home Economics teachers. It was vital that the course should be modified here and there because times are changing. ICT should be enhanced to improve the teaching of the subject in schools as well as colleges. Research should be encouraged to both the lecturers and learners to bring out sustainable development to home economics.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Conclusion

From the research problem that states the impact of provision of Home Economics skills at Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary levels for sustainable social and economic development in communities, it is obvious that the subject is well placed to permeating elements such as the promotion of good health

and the wellbeing of family and the nation at large. Skills and abilities developed through the subject will have lifelong relevance for all learners to the benefit of the families, nation and the global village. In recent times, an increased focus on the world of work in education has highlighted the vocational relevance of Home Economics. Home Economics is a useful qualifying subject for entry into a range of courses in further and higher education and more especially, can prepare young people for specialized vocational training for careers in industry the caring professions being prominent entrepreneurs' in their communities, nation and the world over. Since the government is aiming at giving the best education to the youngster for today and their future welfare, it is high time for all stakeholders in education to enhance the vocational career pathway in order to alleviate the social and economic hardships that the youth face at present. Students, parents, government and the general public are not aware about what Home Economics can do to transform family and community life. It is important for the teachers to sensitize their learners about the importance of the subject and it will trickle down to the communities and the country at large.

6.2. Recommendations

From the study the following recommendations were presented:

- With today's unsteady economy, dynamism in life styles and many other challenges due globalization, an overhaul for Home Economics teaching and learning is needed more than ever before. Responsible Ministry should initiate reviving the subject Home Economics through networking, print and social media. Not only that, but to lobby for support to the subject from other organizations.
- The Ministry of Education should start building appropriate or tailor- made Home Economics classrooms in schools where the subject was offered. The designs for Home Economics classrooms should be specific to the needs of the subject.
- Since Home Economics was a practical subject, the Ministry of Education should provide adequate funds for practical and demonstration lessons in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary institutions.
- Knowing that Home Economics was a practical subject, the Ministry of Education should provide materials for practical lessons such as kitchen hardware and utensils for use by the learners in the schools where the subject was offered.
- The Ministry of Education should provide learning and teaching materials in schools where Home Economics was offered. This study proved that these were insufficient in Mufulira District Primary and Secondary schools the situation which should be generalized to the rest of government schools in the whole country.
- Teachers of Home Economics needed refresher courses, workshops, seminars networking to update themselves with the latest technology, methodologies of food preparations and academic data in food industry, clothing and textile, home management to improve the teaching of Home Economics.

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