

ADVANCING A FRAMEWORK FOR SHOWCASING FAMILY CONCERNS: CHALLENGING THE CHALLENGES

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The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Bartholomew

Principal Officers

Erudite Professors

Distinguished Academics Administrators

My Family Members and Friends

Lions and Lionesses

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Introduction

Every individual comes from a family. Family is often taken for granted. It seems like a simple, natural part of everyday life. Yet, within the family system, individuals develop enduring and vital relationships which give rise to creation of life, birth, childhood, education, marriage, parenting, retirement and death. For most people, the family provides a special cushion and spring-board for numerous life decisions, challenges, demands and goals. The family performs multifaceted functions in the society. And the society in which the family exists and functions is constantly changing. Consequently, numerous issues (concerns) and challenges arise in the society and have over the ages continued to impact the family. Such concerns include environmental problems, barrage of natural and man-made disasters, ever emerging scientific and technological inventions, economic recession, crimes, diseases, and many more.

In recognition of the age-long functions and the ever evolving challenges of this basic social unit, and the need to apply the findings of science and technology to it, for the purpose of enhancing the wellbeing of the family in the United States of America (USA), a group of scientists met in series of what was known as the ***Lake Placid Conferences between 1899 and 1909***. The conferences were devoted to the study of scientific laws, conditions, principles and ideas concerned with a person's immediate physical environment, his/her nature as a social being and the interrelation therein, as well as how to enhance management of households and make families (and homes) effective

part of the world's social fabric. **Home Economics** grew out of these conferences, as a legitimate profession in the USA after a series of legislative processes. The early Home Economics programmes were started in Land-grant colleges, including, Iowa State College 1871, Kansas Agricultural College 1873, Illinois Industrial College 1874 and Oberlin College in Ohio. The focus was on applying theories in arts and sciences to everyday living.

Since issues relating to the family were and still are broad and many times complex, Home Economics became and still is a very broad, complex, an ever evolving and dynamic field of study. It has been characterized by a plethora of names and concepts in the process of its evolution. Such names included Domestic Science, Living Science, Home Science, Home Science Education, Human Ecology, Human Sciences, Practical Life Studies, Household Technology, Science of Living, Family and Household Education, Family and Nutrition Studies, Family and Consumer Studies, etc. From the USA, Home Economics spread to various countries of the world as a field of study. It was birthed in Nigeria at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) which started as a Land-grant University in 1960. From UNN, Home Economics is now offered in almost all Nigerian universities and other tertiary institutions under different names.

Today, it has become obvious that the family, the major focus of Home Economics, is impacted not just by its immediate physical environment but also by a barrage of natural and man-made challenges. The world has become a global village with the family at its centre. Home Economics has therefore extended its horizon beyond a narrow traditional emphasis to encompass all issues concerning the family and strategies for addressing all the contemporary challenges that impact the family. It does these through research, coalescence of multidisciplinary knowledge, teaching, learning, documentation, policy briefs, advocacy, net-working, assorted retooling programmes, conferences, workshops. All these are geared towards empowering individuals, families, and communities for their own wellbeing.

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, Home Economics is today truly empowering individuals, families and communities in diverse ways. The engineers of this empowerment are **Home Economists**. I became part of this group in 1980 when, after my graduation in

1979, I was appointed a graduate assistant (one of the very first set in UNN), in the Department of Vocational Teacher Education (VTE), as the best graduating student in my Department and Faculty of Education. From that time I have endeavoured to embrace and to gain mastery of what seemed to me as a borderless discipline. Since then I have been engaged in what had been and will continue to be an interesting, challenging, yet rewarding search for an appropriate framework for showcasing family concerns and related challenges, as well as evolving strategies for challenging such challenges.

This inaugural lecture focuses on the following:

- A brief exposition on the subject of Home Economics -A borderless field of study.
- Challenges that impact the family with their attendant implications for Home Economics.
- How Home Economics grapples with these family challenges.
- My contributions so far in these areas.
- Conclusion
- Recommendations
- Acknowledgements

Home Economics - A borderless field of study

Home Economics is a multi-disciplinary family-oriented profession that is continuously evolving new ways of enabling families to

- take charge of their lives.
- maximize their potentials.
- function independently and interdependently.

There are three essential ingredients which are unique, exceptional and unrivalled about Home Economics (by whatever name it is called) compared to other professions and fields. These are:

- a focus on fundamental concerns of the family and everyday life, and their importance both at the individual and near community levels, as well as at the societal and global levels;

- the coalescing of knowledge, processes and skills from multiple disciplines synthesized through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary inquiry and pertinent theoretical paradigms; and
- demonstrated capacity to take critical, transformative, emancipatory action to enhance wellbeing and to advocate for individuals, families and communities at all levels and sectors or society (Pendergast, 2006).

Home Economics thus, uses its unique, creative and integrated approach to draw knowledge, laws, principles, theories and practices from numerous disciplines and synthesizes such into its own body of knowledge and practices. There is virtually no field of study from which Home Economics does not draw knowledge (Anyakoha, 2008). This is because every field of study has something unique to offer the family. Besides family concerns are very multifaceted and almost all fields of study can impact the family. No other discipline draws from so many applied and theoretical areas of knowledge or reaches out to other fields as Home Economics (McGregor, 2007). In fact, as changes and new challenges emerge in the society and impact the family, Home Economics responds appropriately by evolving and integrating new and relevant curricula segments such as environmental education, HIV/AIDS education, entrepreneurship education, security education, and so on. International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) (the highest Home Economics body in the world) (2008) noted, that “the capacity to draw from such disciplinary diversity is a strength of the profession, allowing for the development of specific interpretation of the field, as relevant to the context”.

IFHE (2012) in her mission statement stipulated four areas of practice of Home Economics as:

1. an academic discipline to educate new scholars, to conduct research and to create new knowledge and ways of thinking for professionals and for society.
2. an arena of everyday living in households, families and communities for developing human growth potential and human necessities or basic needs to be met.

3. a curriculum area that facilitates students to discover and further develop their own resources and capabilities to be used in their personal life, by directing their professional decisions and actions or preparing them for life.
4. a societal arena to influence and develop policy to advocate for individuals, families and communities to achieve empowerment and well-being, to utilize transformative practices, and to facilitate sustainable futures (IFHE, 2012,).

Since Home Economics focuses on families, and family concerns differ across cultures, countries and continents, Home Economics must necessarily be contextual. It follows that the Home Economics programmes and practices that address family challenges have to also be contextual, adapting to contemporary situations in various contexts, while the vision, mission, goals, theories and principles that govern practices remain the same globally. In doing these, creative problem solving and integrative approaches remain major framework for Home Economics practice. Home Economics is thus by its very nature, a complex field of study demanding a high level of conceptual thinking on the part of researchers, practitioners and students to effect the integration and synthesis of the many varied disciplines into a whole (Davies, 1981).

Challenges Impacting the Family have Implications for Home Economics

Many changes in the society often translate into challenges, impacting families in diverse ways, sometimes even threatening their very existence. These challenges have serious implications for Home Economics. Some of the challenges could be contextual, hence, IFHE (2008) insists on “locating the profession in the contemporary context”. Some of the challenges include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Family poverty:** Many forces in any given society combine to pull families into poverty. Chief among such factors is unemployment. In some families parents and adult children remain unemployed, at times, in spite of their educational attainments. Sometimes poor parents beget poor children, creating a kind of dynasty of the poor (National Planning Commission (NPC), 2004). Poor families fail to meet their basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, health, and so on. This poverty manifests in lack of income and empowerment, hunger and malnutrition, ill health, homelessness and

inadequate housing, unsafe environments, various forms of crimes, etc. These challenges are the concern of Home Economics.

- **Economic insecurity:** Related to poverty is economic insecurity which threatens the societies and families. Economic recession presently characterizing many countries, including Nigeria, results in such problems as downsizing in various sectors of the economy, job cuts and job losses, forced and premature retirement, loss of investments (stocks and shares), and so on. All these impact families and constitute big threat to social security for individuals and families. Home Economics is also concerned with empowerment and social security for individuals and families.
- **Globalization impacting families:** Globalization incorporates both opportunities and threats for individuals and families, thus impacting them both positively and negatively. For instance, while it provides new opportunities for workers (family members) in some countries to develop their potentials, earn more to support their families and enhance living standard, in others, workers suffer job losses occasioned by various stringent economic measures which drain employment opportunities, leaving families hungry (Anyakoha, 2003). Also, communication among family members is facilitated via new means of communication and information technologies (ICT) across the globe. However, threats such as cyber crime also challenge the family. These and many other related issues, have implications for Home Economics.
- **ICT and the family:** ICT impacts families in various positive and negative ways, for instance,
 - There is now a combination of increased computing power, diminishing prices of hardware and software, improvement of wireless and satellite technologies and reduced telecommunication costs. So many family members have increased access to ICT.
 - The space and time barriers to information access and exchange are being seriously removed because of ICT. The mobile phones have penetrated even the rural households in Nigeria.
 - Consumers can now find out the prices offered by vendors for any product, via internet.
 - New markets have opened up.

- Businesses can now facilitate delivery of their products through a phone line anywhere in the world, twenty-four hours a day.
- There are now various applications of ICT to business transactions such as: e-mail, e-funds transfer, e-banking, e-data transfer, e-consulting, e-library, e-conferencing, e-marriage as marriages can now be contracted via internet.
- Assorted crimes are also designed and executed via internet, including, notorious frauds (419), internet pornography, internet prostitution, murder of all sorts, etc.

All these have direct and indirect impact on the family, consequently have implications for Home Economics.

- **Dual-location families:** The present challenging employment conditions and scarcity of employment opportunities compel some young couples to live apart right from the onset of marriage when they are expected to live together, share intimacy and build strong families. Thus, many people are married but remain as strangers to each other. This is a serious threat to beginning a family and family survival in many dimensions. Many young people have also lost their lives in various types of auto-accidents in the process of commuting to spend weekends with their spouses and children. In many cases there is rising migration of men and high number of female-headed households. All these challenge family survival and have implications for evolving new family living and home management strategies which Home Economics should be concerned with.
- **Work-family imbalance:** With the present dearth of employment opportunities, existing work environment is increasingly becoming harsh, highly competitive, and job security is being seriously threatened. Employees (men and women) are in many cases made to put in more working hours even on weekends. Most employees are subjected to very heavy workload. Striking a workable and healthy balance between work and family responsibilities (conflicting priorities) is a challenge for many families. For young parents, care of children is getting more and more problematic. Many also lack parenting and home management skills. Besides, mobility occasioned by globalization has caused many families to be separated. Emerging life-styles and related issues have made long distance families more common than ever before. Few grandparents live within walking distance to help with grandchildren. Young parents are in dire need of

safe place to keep their children while at work. All these lead to stress and stress-related health challenges, threaten individual and family wellbeing, and hence call for coping strategies. Home Economics can and should evolve and promote the needed strategies.

- **Intergenerational solidarity and dwindling extended family system:** At the micro level (family), which is our concern, the intergenerational solidarity is related to connections and relationships between generations in the family, including grandparents, parents, children, etc. It relates to the extended family system (EFS) which used to provide social security for the aged and less privileged family members. Within the system, each member is expected to be the brother's keeper. Various changes in the society have now weakened this solidarity and support system. The support from EFS is no longer readily available to many family members, including the increasing number of older persons. The family thus needs innovative support systems. Home Economics can help here too.

- **The HIV/AIDS pandemic and the family:** This is a very serious global challenge that impacts the family. Available reports indicate that as of 2010 approximately 34 million people have HIV worldwide (UNAIDS, 2010). In the same year an estimated 68 percent (22.9 million) of all HIV/AIDS cases and 66 percent of all deaths (1.2 million) occurred in Sub-Saharan Africa including Nigeria. Both the infected and dead are/were family members. Besides, families must necessarily cope with the trauma of losing family members, care for infected family members and the increasing number of orphans. All these are challenges for families and Home Economics must be concerned.

- **Environmental challenges and the family:** The family exists in the physical environment and operates therein. The environment and human health are inter-related. A clean and beautiful environment ranked first out of ten basic human needs including a clean and adequate supply of water, basic clothing, food, health care, communication, simple housing, energy requirements, basic education, spiritual and cultural needs (United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), 1990). It can even be seen that all the other basic human needs have direct or indirect bearing on the environment. Developments of all sorts result from harnessing the environment and its resources.

Thus individuals and households keep on affecting their environment and being affected by it, in the process of consumption and resource management (Anyakoha, 1998a). The environment is constantly being abused through various unsustainable exploitation practices, giving rise to such problems as climatic changes, soil erosion, various forms of pollution, deforestation, landslides, flood, indiscriminate dumping of refuse, and so on. Families are impacted and challenged in various ways, such as complete displacement of families, loss of livelihood, pollution of water through oil spillage, living with refuse dumps, diseases. The environment with related issues has always been a serious concern for Home Economics, and will continue to be.

- **Fifteen (15) Global Challenges Facing Humanity:** It is pertinent to mention that each of the 15 global challenges facing humanity as identified by the Millennium Project (2010) has direct or indirect impact on the family. The challenges include, sustainable development and climate change, clean water, democratization, rich-poor gap, energy, transnational organized crime, status of women, among others (www.millenniumproject.org). These global challenges are of interest and concern to Home Economics.

Home Economics Contributes to Challenging Family Challenges

In Nigeria, as in many other countries Home Economics can challenge family challenges through multi-pronged strategies, including:

- **Education and training:**
 - i. Home Economics is offered at all levels of formal and informal education howbeit, with varying levels of depth and complexity.
 - ii. At each level, the curriculum is made robust and appropriately designed to prepare individuals (youths and adults) to manage themselves, as well as their personal and family resources, to identify needs, set goals, apply resources, solve problems, attain goals and evaluate results.
 - iii. Home Economics graduates are also effective resource managers and home managers/homemakers.

- **Creativity, problem solving and entrepreneurial opportunities:**
 - i. Creativity and entrepreneurship are synonymous with Home Economics. Every area of Home Economics (and they are many) is skill-oriented and capable of generating enormous self-employment/career opportunities for individuals (Anyakoha 2010).
 - ii. Home Economists are trained to evolve enterprises out of problems, that is, turning problems into opportunities. They are expected to be trained as job creators and not job seekers.
 - iii. Home Economics therefore stimulates entrepreneurial spirit in the students and equips them with appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills to create jobs for themselves and others.
 - iv. In these ways Home Economics promotes self-employment and alleviates poverty. Home Economists are thus empowered to empower their families and households so that they can in turn challenge their challenges.
- **Equipment for Diversified employment opportunities:** Home Economists are also prepared to work in numerous sectors of the economy. For instance, many industries focus on products and services consumed by families/households and appreciate the services of Home Economists in research, marketing, promotion, demonstrations to and training of households (consumers), among other numerous opportunities.
- **Home Economics extension services:** Through relevant extension services Home Economists work with families (especially farm families) to identify their problems and bring such to appropriate research centres where solutions are sought. The Home Economists also make available to families the research findings (solutions) designed to improve the wellbeing of families.
- **Home Economics and learning to be family:** Everyone belongs to a family but not everyone understands how to be part of it and function appropriately as a member therein. This is because individuals are not born with any special “family living gene” (McGregor, 2009). They need to learn “how to be family”, that is, become **family** literate. This literacy is beyond functional literacy and involves values, knowledge,

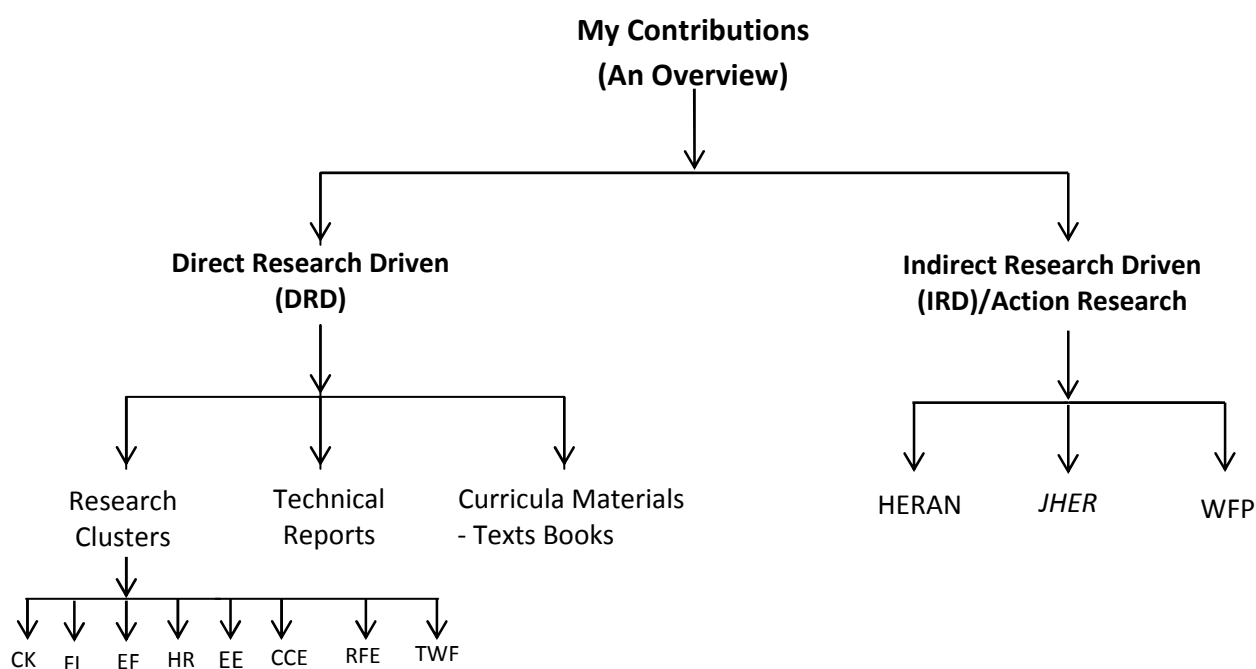
skills, processes, attitudes, principles and behaviours (family living competencies) needed to function as a basic social unit. Society relies on both familial and generational socialization processes as well as the formal and non-formal education systems to teach people how to be in families. Home Economics is a unique part of this education system, which is uniquely positioned to teach essential family living competencies required for becoming family literate.

- **Home Economics is also a carrier subject:** As new challenges arise in society and impact families, education is employed as an instrument per excellence for effecting the needed changes and solutions. This often involves enabling individuals acquire relevant knowledge, attitudes and skills for addressing specific challenges and solving problems. Some subjects lend themselves as vehicles for carrying the needed curricular innovations in education, hence, they are called “**carrier subjects**”. In this regard, Home Economics has become a carrier subject for HIV/AIDS education, Voter education, Drug use education, Consumer education, Environmental education, Population education, Security education, and more. These curricula innovations are normally integrated or infused into relevant segments of the Home Economics curricula at various levels of education.
- **Research and knowledge generation:** Home Economics practitioners, researchers, teachers and bodies are consistently embarking on research on emerging family concerns with a view to evolving new relevant knowledge and workable strategies that could inform intervention programmes. Such programmes could help families address their challenges and enhance their wellbeing.

My Contributions

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, my contributions towards challenging family challenges, which is a major focus of Home Economics, border around teaching, research, publication, and related activities. The efforts made were both challenging and exciting. At times it became necessary to delve into disciplines considered “*no-go-areas*” for Home Economists, which sometimes resulted in mild hostility. This should however not be so, since practically every field of study has something to offer the family.

My contributions have thus been diverse. This is to be expected since issues relating to the family and their corresponding challenges are diverse. Figure: 1 is an over-view of my contributions. They are broadly grouped into *Direct Research–Driven (DRD)* and *Indirect Research-Driven (IRD)* contributions. While the former were borne out of empirical research, the later were borne out of action research that aims at solving problems at hand.



KEY: CK – Coalescence of knowledge and education; FL – Family living issues; EF – Environment and family; HR – Human rights/child rights; EE – Entrepreneurship education; CCE – Consumerism and consumer education; RFE – Reproductive and family education; TWF – Technology, woman and family; HERAN – Home economics research association of Nigeria; JHER – *Journal of home economics research*; WFP – Widows’ foundation programme.

Figure 1: An Over-view of My Contributions

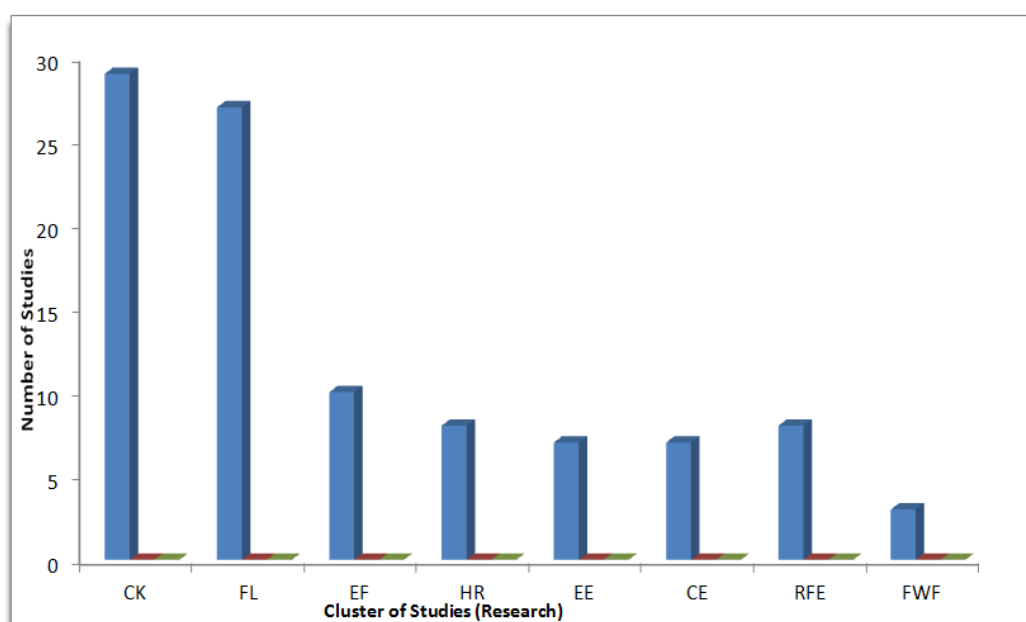
Direct Research Driven (DRD) Contributions: Research Clusters

Contributions in DRD category are organized under the following eight clusters for the purpose of this inaugural lecture: Coalescence of disciplinary knowledge and education (CK); Family living issues (FL); Environment and family issues (EF); Human rights and responsibilities (HR); Entrepreneurship education (EE); Consumerism and consumer education (CCE); Reproductive and family health education, (RFE); and Technology,

women and family (TWF). The quantum of research carried out in each of the eight clusters is shown in Table 1. The Table shows the ranking of the research efforts based on the number of studies in each cluster. This is also depicted in Figure 2.

Table 1: Clusters of Research activities in Home Economics

Clusters	Cluster Titles for Research Activities	Frequency	%	Ranking
1	Coalescence of knowledge and education (CK)	29	30.21	1 st
2	Family living issues (FL)	27	28.13	2 nd
3	Environment and the family (EF)	10	10.42	3 rd
4	Human rights/child rights (HR)	8	8.33	4 th
5	Entrepreneurship education (EE)	7	7.29	5 th
6	Consumerism and consumer education (CE)	7	7.29	5 th
7	Reproductive and family health education (RFE)	6	6.25	7 th
8	Technology, women and family (TWF)	3	3.13	8 th
	Total	96		



KEY: CK-Coalescence of knowledge and education; FL-Family living issues, EF–Environment and family, HR–Human rights/child rights, EE–Entrepreneurship education, CE–Consumerism and consumer education, RFE– Reproductive and family education and TWF–Technology, woman and family.

Figure 2: Direct Research Driven Contributions (Empirical Studies) by Clusters

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, it is not possible here to speak on each study or even on every cluster. The focus will be on few studies within the first four highest ranking clusters, as follows:

Coalescence of Knowledge Cluster

Studies here focused on evolving new knowledge, attitudes, skills, principles and practices (issues in curriculum innovation, teaching and learning) that could be integrated or infused into various areas of Home Economics curricula at different levels of education. A high percentage of works in this cluster derive from the studies with my post-graduate students which have been phenomenal. Two of these received the **Fafunwa Educational Foundation Post Doctoral Award** in 2008 and 2012, for the third and first positions respectively, (by Dr. C.I. Iloeje and Dr. D. Thompson respectively) and four others obtained grants from **Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA)** based in Senegal. The studies were designed to primarily impact Home Economics curricula at specified levels of education, which in turn will be used to instruct and empower students who in their own turn will empower their families and society. Some areas covered include, development of programmes as potential curriculum segments for specified levels of education within Home Economics in, Entrepreneurship education, Environmental education, Family law awareness, Functional clothing for a number of occupational areas, Clothing merchandizing, Youth apprenticeship, and Retooling programmes, among others. Our greatest contributions are in this cluster (Anyakoha, 2008). This is attributable to the following:

- The ever increasing number of issues challenging the family which Home Economics must necessarily address.
- The magnitude of new knowledge relevant to the family and Home Economics that is being generated and disseminated globally on a regular basis.
- New technologies which impact families that are being invented and marketed, including assorted new household equipment and appliances, consumer goods and services.
- New occupational areas (opportunities) for which Home Economics can and need to provide training for youths and adults including the retirees. Some of the

areas emerge out of problems facing individuals and families, new consumption patterns and lifestyles.

- Home Economics is a dynamic and ever evolving field. It cannot be static but must respond appropriately to relevant emerging issues. It has to be at the frontier of every knowledge relevant to families since it is not possible to solve new problems with old tools.

These contributions have implications for relevant curriculum planners, and policy makers, Home Economics teachers, practitioners and students.

Family Living Issues Cluster

Many issues are critical in family living and are often sources of challenges to the very survival of the family. Such issues include, family relationships, communication, marriage, resource management, decision making, housing, clothing, feeding, child development and care, conflict resolution, crises management, stress management, balancing work and family matters, wealth building/income generation, social security, retirement and ageing, etc. We have made a number of worthwhile contributions in some of these areas. For this lecture, however, the focus will be on issues relating to conflict resolution, communication and social security.

Communication is like a thread that holds family members and their relationships together. It serves as the “lifeblood” of the family since it pervades all the activities in the household and serves as a work tool through which members understand their roles, express their feelings and challenges, identify needs, set goals and standards, achieve goals, evaluate goal attainment, and so on. It may not be possible to control some aspects of the environment, however, people can and do influence their personal and social environment through communication.

Communication also enables couples to learn how to live together. Husbands and wives learn about themselves, by talking about their concerns, such as, roles, expectations, challenges and goals. It is through communication that they express love, respect and other ingredients that promote marital stability. This communication goes beyond verbal expression to include non-verbal gestures encompassing such acts as a pat on the back, hug, facial expression, eye contact, sexual intimacy, and others.

Communication within the family must necessarily be effective for family survival. However, many family problems, including unresolved conflicts between couples, siblings, parents and children have been attributed to ineffective communication or gaps in communication, often resulting in various forms of challenges and when unresolved, such conflicts could lead to family disintegration. It is thus important to evolve ways of strengthening/enhancing communication in the family.

Our contributions in this cluster abound. We will however, focus on a study of conflict resolution practices. Conflict is disagreement occasioned by struggle with values, power, resource allocation, situation and personality factors. Family members, especially husbands and wives who interact across time are bound to have differing opinions or perceptions about some aspects of family life. Through communication a couple could make their opinions known to each other, resolve issues and continue their relationship. This is however, not always the case. Conflicts often occur and threaten family stability.

This particular study focused on the sources/causes of conflict prevalent among spouses, procedures adopted by the couples in resolving the conflicts, the problems they encounter in resolving conflicts and ways of enhancing marital conflict resolution capabilities among spouses. The study was carried out by Milka James in Borno State of Nigeria in 2000. It was a survey that involved both quantitative and qualitative procedures. Respondents were mixed aged spouses in the area of the study.

The major findings include 21 causes/sources of marital conflicts relating to communication; resources availability, control and management; unemployment/employment related issues; spousal intimacy issues; personal traits; childlessness; and so on. Each of the causes has either direct or indirect bearing on communication. Other findings are 15 ways (practices) the spouses adopt in resolving their conflicts. Most of the practices (75%) revolve around the spouses themselves, and include spousal dialogue, application of persuasive techniques (threats, abuses, denial of intimacy, fighting), compromising behaviours and silence treatment. Other practices involve outside persons or groups in mediation (mainly in-laws, friends or religious leaders, social welfare department). Some of the practices (71%) could be regarded as positive, while others (29%) were negative. Many of the respondents (40%) indicated

that they were not satisfied with their conflict resolution practices, 28% were satisfied, while 25% were indifferent, 8% saw marital conflict as “a way of life”. The last group (8%) tends to live with conflict as a way of life. Twenty (20) problems respondents encounter with conflict resolution were also identified. Many of the problems (46%) centre around unwillingness/inability to communicate (communication related problems). Others relate to: uncompromising attitudes of spouses (10%); domineering/authoritative tendencies (6%); resources management/financial limitation related issues (31%); childlessness/gender issues (8%). Problems relating to communication however, ranked tops. Twenty one (21) measures or ways of enhancing conflict resolution capabilities of spouses were also identified. Most of the measures (85%) deal with communication skills including, among others, development and utilization of listening skills and self-disclosure. Other measures are mutual respect, empathy and spending more quality time together. Family resource utilization related measures also ranked high and include, joint decision making and setting realistic family goals, and so on.

Some implications of this study are that:

1. conflicts are bound to occur in families and among spouses but it is very important to resolve such.
2. no known available programme prepares spouses for conflict resolution and no two families are the same. Conflict resolution strategies that work for family A might not work for family B. No family should copy or imitate another since each family is unique.
3. personalities, challenges, and circumstances often differ, so should conflict resolution measures differ with families. However, there are general conflict resolution measures which families could adapt to their peculiar circumstances.
4. families and spouses need help, as many of them may never have had, nor ever will have orientation on spousal or family conflict resolution strategies. This is where learning to be a family, that is, becoming **family literate** is crucial.
5. the occurrence of conflicts in the family can have either positive (constructive) or negative (destructive) outcomes. Constructive conflict occurs when people work together to resolve a problem and they come to a better understanding of each

other. With negative conflict outcomes, husband and wife attack each other, instead of the problem. In such cases, relationships could be weakened or end as a result. This needs to be avoided.

Mr Vice Chancellor Sir, another major contribution in the family living cluster was a study on the status of extended family system (EFS) in Nigeria and its implications for social security of the aged (Anyakoha, 1991). This study was carried out in Imo State and funded by the Social Science Council of Nigeria/Ford Foundation Research Project Phase II (1991). It investigated the continued relevance of the EFS and its inbuilt support and social security mechanism. This study served as springboard for other related studies.

Some of the major findings of the study are that:

- The EFS still has some relevance and status in the society. High percentage of the respondents (74% to 86%) agree that a strong sense of mutual obligation still exists in the EFS. However, a still higher percentage (90% to 93%) of respondents, agree that the EFS is a dwindling culture though it has not completely broken down and that its norms are no longer as strongly adhered to as in the past.
- The aged still perform valued roles in the system and receive various forms of support therein (60% to 78%). There are however, some gaps between what the elderly are getting from the EFS and what they expect to be getting (their needs). Children play the most dominant role in supporting their parents at old age.
- The childless aged could be with little or no assistance in the present EFS. The women are the most challenged.

Some areas where the EFS norms are presently weak include:

- Mediation in family and spousal conflicts.
- Support for childless aged women.
- Control of anti-social behaviours of members, especially youths.
- Being a source of house-helpers and child minders for members of EFS.

Some implications of the study include:

- 🌈 Dread for and challenges of retirement: Individuals are increasingly becoming aware of post retirement challenges, with heightened dread and anxiety. There

is thus, a need to plan most effectively for retirement, as support from EFS might not be reliable.

- ✚ Heightened dread for childlessness and mounting anxiety for couples when fertility is delayed. In extreme cases husbands could opt for some sort of polygamy.
- ✚ Presently increased awareness and high rate of child adoption. The major motivation remains that children are their parents' source of social security in old age.
- ✚ Increasing unresolved inter- and intra- family conflicts, since EFS can no longer command its influence in the mediation processes within the system. Litigation (beyond the EFS) is now common. This also manifests in non-resolution of spousal conflicts and increase in divorce cases.
- ✚ Increasing unavailability of house-helpers and child minders with emerging reliance on crèche or child care centres by young parents.
- ✚ Increasing demand on grand-parents to help young parents. In trying to respond, grand-parents may have such challenges as, learning to handle new technologies like, pampers, educational cartoon for children, new toys, etc. They also need to keep fit through healthy lifestyles, including regular exercises and good nutrition.
- ✚ Need to strengthen parent-children relationship and family ties, since there is no government social security for majority of Nigerians. Many look forward to the support from the children they had invested on. Even where an aged retiree is a pensioner he/she may at a point require the support of children to access such social security, for instance, in going for verification or "show-your-self exercises or parades". These calls for strengthening of family ties through whatever strategies meet each family's needs, such as effective communication. Strengthening family ties needs to be started early enough in the family life cycle, so that when children are grown, leave home, and become well established they will still be interested enough to care for their aged parents.

Some of these implications have in turn triggered up further research efforts with interesting results. These will not be discussed in this lecture. Such research efforts are

in the areas of: child care practices, child adoption practices, challenges of retirees and their coping practices, child care practices in crèches, among others.

Rights and Responsibilities of Family Members Cluster

Family members have some fundamental human rights as members of the society. They also have responsibilities that go with the rights. There are also rights that are specific to women and children. These are enshrined in various government instruments including the *Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria*. Family members need to be aware of their rights, enjoy such rights and make informed decisions on issues relating to their rights for their optimal wellbeing. When such rights are violated, families could be in jeopardy and may not be empowered to challenge their other challenges and optimize their potentials. Human right issues thus constitute a crucial area of research in Home Economics. And issues relating to the rights of the child deserve special attention.

All children, without distinction of gender, have the right to live and develop to their fullest potentials. The rights of the child are set forth in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). There is also a Charter on the Rights of the African Child. In Nigeria, the welfare of the child had been recognized since 1943 when the Children and Young Persons Ordinance was first enacted. It is also entrenched in the Nigerian Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 1999) and in the *Nigeria and Rights of the Child* handbook on (Child Development Department of Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 1995). There is also the *National Policy on Education* (FRN, 2004). All these and more have been put in place to promote the rights of the child in Nigeria, including their rights to health and education. In spite of these, evidence still abounds that the rights of children in Nigeria are being violated in diverse ways, in families, community, schools, public places, etc. The family, however, deserves special attention because it is the primary environment for the growth and well-being of children. Our major contribution here was a study funded by CODESRIA under their Child and Youth Studies Fellowship 2000 which investigated the status of the violation of the rights of the child within the Nigeria family, with a view to evolving strategies for promoting the observance of such rights (Anyakoha, 2000). Specifically, the study determined ways and extent to which the child's rights to health and education were being violated by

parents within the family/household; influences of selected demographic and socio-economic factors (determinants) on the violation; reasons/causes of the violation, and strategies that could prevent the violation. The study was carried out in Enugu State. It covered urban and rural areas, involving a mixed population of parents, children, teachers and health workers.

The study identified 21 ways in which the children's rights to education were being violated and 22 ways their rights to health were also being violated. These ways represent child rights violation indicators which range from very high, to high, then moderate and low extents. The high extent violation indicators for education include that children were not: allowed/encouraged to go to school in time (non punctuality); provided with necessary books and other requirements, parents/guardians may not always be able to pay children's school fees/levies/dues, some parents tend to believe the education of boys is more important than that of girls. Also some parents: could keep children away from school as punitive measure for offences; give more priority to traditional titles than paying school fees for children. In some cases parents could encourage boys to go into business as apprentices, as a means of getting rich quick. Househelps/domestic servants may not be sent to school by their employers. For girls, marriage could be given higher priority than education. With regard to health, violation indicators include, that children were not provided with: adequate diet and clean water; hygienic home environment; adequate clothing; and needed attention (that is, they are neglected). Children are also involved in excessive labour/hawking. Parents neglect their children with special needs (their handicapped children); house-helps may not receive appropriate health attention as biological children in a household.

Further findings reveal 17 reasons or causes of violation of child rights to both education and health. These are related to:

- Lack of awareness of the rights by parents
- Lack of means/poverty
- Lack of women empowerment. This commonly occurs when women are illiterate, have no source of income, cannot take decisions or participate in decision making on issues relating to their children's health and education. They cannot provide for their children even when they desire to do so.

- Cultural factors, such as, boy-child preference, and/or where expenditure on traditional title taking or other related issues take precedence over children's education, health care and other critical concerns of the family.

Other findings are, 48 strategies for the prevention of the violation of the children's right to education and health. These include:

Parent-centred strategies (16), among which are

- Parent becoming aware of
 - rights of the children, including those with special needs or special challenges.
 - needs of the children and the necessity to provide the needs. Parent should be willing to do meet the needs of their children.
 - need to reduce the work-load of children.
 - importance of girl-child and need for gender equity.
- Parent maintaining effective communication channels with children, including their house-helpers.
- Promoting poverty alleviation among parents.
- Parents availing themselves of adult literacy opportunities.

Children-centred strategies (11) including, that, children are to:

- become aware of their rights and the accompanying responsibilities;
- utilize available educational opportunities afforded them;
- communicate effectively with parents especially on issues relating to their education, health, and challenges.

Government-centred strategies (21) including, among others:

- ✚ making basic education really functional, compulsory, accessible and free for all children, in both urban and rural areas.
- ✚ encouraging equality of access to educational and health services for boys, girls, and disadvantaged/challenged children or those with special needs, in both urban and rural areas.
- ✚ providing parents with opportunities for adult literacy.
- ✚ promoting workable poverty reduction programs for parents.

The study also revealed that violation of children's rights to both education and health tends to depend on educational level, occupational status and location (urban/rural) of parents. Illiterate parents, those who reside in rural areas and lack the means (the poor) are more likely to violate their children's right to education and health. The reasons are obvious. Educated parents are more likely to appreciate the value of their children's education. Besides, parental literacy is a precursor of a supportive learning environment for the child (UNESCO, 2004). Also poor parents would find it difficult to provide for their children's education and health care. The rural areas pose special challenges. Parents in rural areas are prone to violate children's right due to poverty, illiteracy, lack of government facilities, etc. For instance, women in rural areas who are subsistent farmers with little or no education, operating heavy workload, poor, depending on child labour, could easily violate children's right to education and health (Anyakoha 1995, 1998, b, c & d).

Some implications of the study include that:

- Parents and children need to be made aware of the rights of the children.
- Parents need to become more functionally literate. When this happens, they can then use the skills acquired and work with their children to make them more literate.
- It is necessary to evolve ways of reducing the workload of women, especially those in rural areas, for instance, through enhanced use of appropriate technologies (Anyakoha & Mama, 1995).
- Facilities in the rural areas need to be enhanced by government.

Environment and the Family Cluster

Families and households are especially responsible for informed resource management and sustainable consumption at the household level. Many acts of abuse of the environment have, however, been attributed to lack/poor environmental awareness among individuals and households. It is thus important that they are helped to acquire the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills (environmental education), for making informed decisions on sustainable exploitation of the environment and its resources.

Our research efforts in this area focused on environmental awareness, management practices and education. In most of the studies the unit of observation remained the

household, while women constituted the target population. This is because women, not only bear the brunt of environmental degradation, they also play a crucial part in its exploitation and management as they carry out their gender roles (Anyakoha 1990; Rodda 1993). Our major study was on *Household Solid Waste Disposal Practices of Women in two Nigerian Urban Town and the Implications for Environmental Education* (Anyakoha and Igboeli, 1993). It was funded by Nigerian Environmental Study/Action Team (NEST)/Ford Foundation Research 1993. This study was informed by the fact that, as individuals and families/households consume goods and services, wastes are generated, and improper management of such wastes gives rise to various forms of pollution which constitute health hazard. There are abundant evidence of unsightly, potentially dangerous and indiscriminate dumping of solid waste in Nigeria towns. There are either ineffective and/or insufficient arrangements for proper waste disposal in many urban and even rural centres in Nigeria (NEST, 1991). The consequences of this situation include blockage of drains and flood hazards, air and water pollution, breeding places for pests and mosquitoes, diseases, and so on.

The study was designed to determine: the extent to which women were aware of the importance of the environment; the practices which the women adopted in disposal of their household solid waste (HSW); the problems which the women encountered in the disposal of the HSW; possible ways of enhancing HSW disposal practices of the women; the environmental education (EE) needs of the women and appropriate delivery systems through which EE could be effectively extended to the women.

The findings of the study include, among others:

- ❖ The women scored 50% on an environmental awareness scale. However, based on the magnitude of challenges posed to families by environmental problems, this score could be said to be on the low side. A rather more disturbing finding is that 82% of the respondents indicated unwillingness (disinclination) to include environmental sanitation in household monthly budget. This is probably an indicator of their apparent low awareness of the importance of the environment.
- ❖ Education rather than income has significant effect on environmental awareness at 0.05 level of significance. This emphasizes the need for women education.

- ❖ Only 12% of respondents sort their HSW at source (home) prior to disposal. This means that 88% would not sort their HSW. Thus, majority of households would dump a mixture of biodegradable and non-degradable (cans, assorted cellophane bags, *purewater* packaging, bottles, plastics, paper, etc) in any available dump sites. This is displayed at the dumpsites, and is not indicative of effective HSW disposal practice.
- ❖ All respondents indicated willingness to use government approved public dumpsites (GAPDS) if such were available and within reach. The problem, however, is that such dumpsites are not always available to up to 25% of the households in any given area.
- ❖ Where GAPDS were not available (that is for up to 75% of the households), the following places served as dump sites for HSW:
 - ✚ Household backyard/garden (26%) (This could be said to be appropriate)
 - ✚ Gutter near the home (9%) (Not appropriate)
 - ✚ Open space near the house (31%) (Not appropriate)
- ❖ Fifteen (15) factors hinder the effective disposal HSW by households. Top among the factors are:

- Non-availability of GADPS.	84%
- GADPS too far.	81%
- Lack of commitment/interest among households.	79%
- No supervision of home surrounding by sanitation authorities.	70%
- Neighbours' lack of interest.	64%

A related study on the environmental awareness, involved women living in the rural areas of Enugu State, who had participated in the Women-In-Agriculture (WIA) Programme. It was funded by WINROCK International Institute for Agricultural Development, Virginia U.S.A. The findingsrevealed, *inter.alia*, that majority of the respondents (70%) were not aware of practices that degrade the environment (environmental threat indicators), in spite of their exposure to the WIA programmes. The threat indicators include environmentally unfriendly/non-sustainable farm practices and mis-use of agro-chemicals even in food storage and pest control in their homes. (Anyakoha & Ozo, 1999).

The findings of these two studies point to the need for promotion of environment awareness among women both in the urban and rural areas. The studies stimulated further studies on environmental awareness with my post-graduates students. One of such studies, by Esiobu C., was on *Strategies for Enhancing the Environmental Awareness of Home-makers in Enugu State: Implications for Home Economics Education in 1998*. A more recent study in 2005 by Ukwe C.A., was on *Development of Environment Education (EE) Programme* which could be used to equip women and Home Economists with necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills for informed and sustainable environmental management.

All these studies have implications for enhancement of environmental awareness of individuals, families and communities, in fact everybody. This environmental awareness involves thinking about how our actions affect the environment. It also means taking responsibility for keeping the environment clean and safe. As consumers we should be conscious of our environment and always exhibit environmental awareness by:

- Reducing waste (including HSW) through finding ways to cut down on what we throw away. For instance, one could maintain a reusable groceries/shopping bag/basket instead of collecting as much plastic bags as items purchased in the market, only to fill up the trash bin at home.
- Buying products with minimum packaging.
- Using reusable items such as glass cups, durable plastic cups instead of the disposable ones.
- Recycling the items that are recyclable, such as, clothes, bottles, certain containers.
- Disposing HSW properly by sorting the items in the homes according to types (biodegradable and non-biodegradable) and disposing as most appropriate at the right place.
- Using approved public dumpsites properly where they are available.
- Avoiding the dumping of refuse in gutters and water channels to prevent, blockages and flooding.
- Talking with others about environmental concerns.
- Staying informed on environmental issues and developing interest in them.

- Adults, home-makers, and parents need to supervise children and house-helpers to ensure appropriate disposal of SHW in the right places.
- It is possible to evolve entrepreneurial activities out of HSW disposal on neighbourhood and community bases, thereby creating employment, while ensuring a healthy environment.
- While sanitary inspectors may not be resurrected at the micro /grass-root level, it could be possible to have community or ward-based environmental monitors.
- A little bit of effort at informed management of our immediate environment and its resources would contribute to ensuring that something will still be left for the future generations. This is sustainable development.

Other Contributions

These contributions were informed by results of some action research. An action research aims to solve an immediate practical problem. Thus they could be called *immediate-problem-driven (IPD)* contributions. They include:

❖ **Authorship of two standard text books**, published by **African-First Publishers**, Onitsha. The need to write the books was informed by the problem of dearth of appropriate texts in the field for students and teachers. The books include:

- Home Management for Schools and Colleges*, first published in 1991, reprinted six times from 1993-2010. The book is widely used in Nigerian Schools and Colleges, as well as those in English speaking West African countries.
- Home Economics for Junior Secondary Schools*, first published in 1997, revised in 2007, reprinted yearly. This book is used in most secondary schools in Nigeria.

❖ **Founding of the following:**

(i) ***Home Economics Research Association of Nigeria (HERAN)***. This was founded in 2000, with the vision of “Promoting sustainable quality life for individuals and families”, and mission, “To improve the overall wellbeing of individuals and families in Nigeria and African continent through promotion of high quality Home Economics education, research and documentation, practices and activities”. It has ten objectives one of which is “to promote research on emerging issues and challenges that impact the wellbeing of individuals and families”. HERAN has grown phenomenally in membership. Annual

HERAN conferences have continued unabated since September 2000. The September 2013 conference will be the 14th in the series. HERAN has also published four monographs and publishes *Journal of Home Economic Research (JHER)* annually, promotes retooling for Home Economics practitioners, networking, etc. Worthy of mention is the fact that my one time Ghanaian Ph.D student Dr Adelina Akhurst became interested in, and got involved with HERAN as a post-graduate student while in UNN and went home with the vision to establish Home Economics Research Association of Ghana (HERAG) in 2008. I was at the inauguration.

(ii) ***Journal of Home Economics Research (JHER)***: This is an multidisciplinary journal founded and first published in 1995 and was bequeathed to HERAN in 2000 when the latter was born. The publication of *JHER* has sustained an unbroken continuity. It is now 18 years old. Each year has been marked with meaningful improvement in quality, spread and patronage. *JHER* has published articles from within Nigeria, West Africa and Europe. Beginning with Volume 9, 2008, *JHER* became indexed and abstracted in ***Social Scisearch and Journal Citation Reports/Sciences*** Edition by **Thomson Reuters** of Philadelphia, USA. It is now a journal with impact factor, one of the few with such status in Nigeria. This has understandably led to an explosion in her patronage. In 2010 it became one of the first 50 association journals selected for ***Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) Special Intervention Support***. Today *JHER* is affording a viable and sustained avenue for publication for Home Economists and many members of the academia in family related disciplines.

❖ **Widows' Welfare Foundation Programme (WWFP)**: This is based in a rural community (Arondizuogu) in Imo State. It was informed by the fact that single female-parent families, (occasioned by widowhood/loss of bread-winner husband), face special challenges. Such challenges are phenomenal when a widow is young, poor, illiterate, not empowered, vulnerable, lives in rural area, and has young children to cater for. In the face of neglect, such women easily fall prey to abuse, exploitative and debasing practices/experiences in their efforts to eke out a living and train their children. The plight of this class of women inspired the founding of a *Widows' Welfare Foundation Programme (WWFP)* on December 31st 2002. The major goal of WWFP is to stimulate entrepreneurial spirit within the women and jump-start them into viable

entrepreneurship. Among other things, a zero interest loan scheme was established for them. It has so far empowered 102 widows to engage in various petty businesses. By this, woman dignity is being enhanced, children have food to eat and many of them go to school. Thus family challenges are being challenged.

Conclusion

The family seems so common, yet it is very complex. It is also often taken for granted, yet family plays crucial roles in the lives of its members and in the sustenance of the society. Today numerous forms of micro, macro, and global challenges continue to emerge, most of which are taking unforetold and frightening dimensions. Individuals and families are being continuously bombarded with unpredictable and ever-emerging challenges. Family crises are on the increase, as members lose jobs, imbibe strange lifestyles, experience violence, breakdown, stress induced health problems which abound, and so on. Many families are hurting. Families need to be strengthened to stand and survive. All these call for continued research activities and informed workable intervention programmes. There is also need to promote family literacy, thereby helping individuals acquire relevant knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, processes, principles for functioning as a family. They need social skills that promote awareness of others and a sense of responsibility; cognitive skills that empower them for critical thinking, reasoning, informed decision making, resource management, creative problem solving, and pscho-productive skills for self-reliance. Home economics by whatever name it goes, has the unique mandate for empowering and strengthening individuals and families. This calls for unending meaningful research alertness and efforts on the part of Home Economists. We have made some contributions but more grounds need to be covered, as new changes and challenges evolve and impact the family. I am poised to continue in this direction, God helping me.

Recommendations

In order to challenge the multifaceted challenges impacting the family, enhance its wellbeing and strengthen Home Economics as an anchor subject, it is recommended that:

- 1) Efforts should be made to promote meaningful Home Economics programmes at all levels of education, both in the formal and informal sectors of education. Every individual should be enabled to be family literate, that is, learn how to become a family. Home Economics should be strengthened at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. At the tertiary level, aspects of Home Economics could be made part of the general studies, so that all students could be empowered for family living. This is necessary because there are aspects of family living which only Home Economics as a subject can teach.
- 2) Education policy-makers and curriculum planners, school administrators and proprietors, should appreciate the position of Home Economics as a subject which prepares youths and adults for living, and promote it most appropriately.
- 3) Home Economists and those professionals in family-oriented fields of study should intensify their research efforts at studying the ever-emerging challenges that impact families and evolving possible intervention strategies and programmes that could promote family survival. This calls for research alertness and sharpening of research skills among practitioners.
- 4) Family support programmes and facilities need to receive relevant government policy backing, and be strengthened. Such facilities and programmes include daycare, centres crèche, etc. Minimum standards of operation of such facilities should be laid down for the operators by government, so as to ensure the safety and optimal development of children.
- 5) Relevant government policies should be made family sensitive. Home Economists and their associations need to play their advocacy roles in contributing to policies relating to families.
- 6) Families should evolve ways of helping themselves. For instance, retiree grandparents (male and females) should be interested in offering relevant support to their children and grandchildren where-and when-ever possible.

- 7) Each family should of necessity ensure that the family relationship is kept alive through appropriate communication channels and strategies. When children are launched out into the wider society away from family, the “life-blood” of family relationship (family communication) must be kept flowing.
- 8) Appropriate environmental awareness should be promoted among individuals and families since family survival depends to a large extent of sustainable exploitation of the environment and its resources. Relevant government bodies, non-governmental organizations, Home Economics practitioners, families and individuals have important roles to play in enhancing environmental awareness and ensuring sustainable management of the environment.
- 9) Families must keep abreast of ever evolving technologies (tools, equipment, facilities, techniques) especially those that have become critical for survival in the new world order, e.g ICT and computer literacy.

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- Only HE is worthy of our p-r-a-i-s-e
- No man on earth should give glory to himself.
- All glory must be to our God.

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