

THE DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY, NUTRITION AND CONSUMER SCIENCES: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Ogbimi G. E. (Ph. D)

*Department of Family, Nutrition and Consumer Sciences,
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile – Ife.*

BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

The commitment of the Federal Government of Nigeria to establishing Home Economics on a national scale dates back to 1970s when the government requested assistance from Food and Agricultural Organisations (F.A.O.). The resulting National Home Economics Project led to the establishment of a Home Economics unit in the Federal Department of Agriculture. A major objective of this unit is to assist the states in initiating home economics programmes or strengthening existing programme.

This objective was seriously hampered due to lack of trained manpower at both the State and Federal levels. For examples, some States did not have a single Home Economics graduate to man their extension programmes. In some other States, educationists were used as extension agents. The problem of Home Economics Education was equally serious if one considered that there should be at least one Home Economist for every secondary school and teacher training institution. At that time also, there were very few Home Economists attached to Nigeria's industries.

The Faculty of Agriculture of the then University of Ife conducted a survey to determine the nature and scope of the need for Home Economics graduates in Nigeria. The results indicated that employment opportunities particularly in government ministries were good. The following areas of specialization were identified and are listed in order of frequency of mention: Home Economics Education, Food and Nutrition Extension, Resource management and Rural Development, Child Development and Family Relations; and Textile, Housing and Design. During the period, it was only Ahmadu Bello University and the University of Nigeria at Nsukka that offered degree programmes in Home Economics. It is only the latter which offered a comprehensive programme while Ahmadu Bello University offered Home Economics Education only.

For these reasons, it was suggested that the University of Ife should as a matter of priority establish a degree programme in Home Economics leading to the award of B.Sc. (Home Economics). The senate of the University of Ife approved a B.Sc. (Home Economics), during

the 1979/1980 session. The Home Economics unit was based within the department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology. The first set of students was admitted into Part I of the programme in October 1981.

The purpose of the programme was to train professionals who would perform their jobs effectively in areas of Home Economics of their choice.

1. Graduates with interest in Extension and Rural management will be able to:
 - (a) organise cooperatives and other groups to aid families in their economic endeavours.
 - (b) encourage modern production, processing and marketing of agricultural products.
 - (c) organise programmes that encourage improved nutrition, child development, home management and health practices.
2. Graduates with interest in nutrition will be able to:
 - (a) develop and test recipes
 - (b) prepare food
 - (c) test food quality
 - (d) test food acceptability
 - (e) **conduct programmes** in market research and product promotion
 - (f) understand and apply the principles behind food processing and preservation techniques.
 - (g) educate patients and their families in the area of nutrient, child development and hygiene.
3. Graduates with interest in textile and clothing, housing and design will be able to:
 - (a) design and alter patterns
 - (b) construct garments
 - (c) coordinate colours
 - (d) **organize printing and dying operations.**
 - (e) conduct programmes in market research and product promotion
 - (f) advise organizations and individuals on housing design, housing construction interior design, environmental design and

housing finance.

4. Graduates with interest in family relations will be able to:
 - (a) plan and execute child development programmes
 - (b) counsel families on resource management, family relations and nutrition.

The programme was designed with four areas of specialization; Child Development and Family Relations; Foods and Nutrition, Clothing, Textiles and Design and Resource Management and Extension. The degree awarded was a B.Sc. Home Economics with the different options. This programme ran from 1981 to 10th September 2006 as Home Economics unit in the department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology. The administrative head of the unit was a coordinator usually appointed by the Dean, Faculty of Agriculture.

THE PRESENT

The subject matter of Home Economics revolves around three basic needs of life – food, clothing and shelter. Other components centre on family and resources. There are many misconceptions about the subject matter of Home Economics to imply cooking and sewing and as such it is meant for females only. All of these contributed to students' lack of interest in the subject area and consequently low student enrolment in the past.

Also during the 1998/1999 accreditation exercise, the National University Commission (NUC) accreditation team recommended that Agricultural Extension and Home Economics should maintain a distinct identity through separate department, staffing, location and other conditions in order for it to grow and develop. In line with NUC's recommendation and the need to reorient the public and prospective students about what obtains in the subject area, our programme was revised and expanded.

The proposed name took into consideration the

re-designed programmes and the need to adequately reflect what is being taught in the department. The programme has five areas of specialization (tracks) which include: Child Development and Family studies, Textile, Clothing and Interior Decoration, Foods, Nutrition and Dietetics, Hospitality and Tourism Management and Resource management and Extension. Consequently, the name of degree offered was changed to Bachelor of Science:

- (a) Consumer Sciences (Child Development and Family studies)
- (b) Consumer Sciences (Textile, Clothing and Interior Decoration)
- (c) Consumer Sciences (Foods, Nutrition and Dietetics)
- (d) Consumer Sciences (Hospitality and Tourism Management)
- (e) Consumer Sciences (Resource Management and Extension).

The present programme was approved a full fledge Department with a change of Name from Home Economics Unit to the Department of Family, Nutrition and Consumer Sciences in September 11, 2006 by the Senate of the university. Also, for the first time the department was fully accredited by NUC in November 2007. Thus became the sixth department of the Faculty of Agriculture.

Contributions of the different Tracks

The knowledge produced by the various field of study of Consumer Sciences contribute to enhancing the quality of the home, family living and the quality of life of the individual as well as the family as a whole.

Human Development and Family studies

The focus is on human beings in his environment. The family anywhere in the world regardless of its specific structure, is the basic social unit of society. The important role of the Consumer Scientist in this option deals with enhancing individual's ability to understand the family, how relationships are formed,

maintained, and expanded. Teach appropriate interactive, communication and conflict management skills, improved child care practices and appropriate parenting behaviours. The importance of good group care facilities for young children is to enhance their physical, social, emotional and cognitive development.

Foods, Nutrition and Dietetics

It has been proved by modern nutrition science that diet has a far reaching influence on health. Since a large proportion of the world's population is inadequately fed, specialists in Food, Nutrition and Dietetics are trained to raise the levels of nutrition and they are knowledgeable about what people eat, how far existing diets are satisfactory and what the basic causes of inadequacy are.

The discipline deals with the study of food nutrients and their importance to family health. It includes food preparation, preservation and processing. Socio cultural factors such as social position, food choices, food habit that are important in considering the quality and quantity of food consumed by a member of the community. There is also focus on household food security since the household is the basic earning and decision-making unit of the most nutritionally venerable groups. There is also the aspect of dietetics which uses diet to address diseased conditions.

Textile, Clothing and Interior Decoration

Textile, clothing and housing are basic human needs. The primary reasons for wearing clothes lie in covering, protection and adornment. Students learn about textile design, sewing of clothes, knowledge of dress sense – that is dressing to suit different occasions and activities in the social group and system. There is also clothing maintenance, and the production of articles to decorate the interior of the home.

Resource Management and Extension

Wants of every individual are unlimited; however, means to achieving these wants are

limited. The primary needs of a family include food, clothing and shelter while the secondary needs include health care, education, savings, housing etc. Meeting human needs (primary and secondary) requires careful skilful management of resources (money, time, energy). This track is designed for students who are interested in managing individual and family resources, consumer education and rural development programme. This specialization gives them a wide range of skills that qualifies them to become consumer advisors/educators, rural development policy makers, change agents and scholars in resource management and rural development.

Home management is another aspect which deals with educating homemakers especially in the rural and urban poor communities the importance of maintaining clean indoor and outdoor spaces of their homes. Families are also introduced to modern energy, and energy saving house technologies (work simplification) that could contribute to enhancing productivity in the home.

Hospitality and Tourism Management

It deals with provision of food, drink and accommodation to meet the needs of domestic and international leisure and tourism market. This track is completely a new area. It is designed to introduce our student to the Hospitality and Tourism industries which are fast growing in Nigeria today.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Increased student enrolment

Prior to the revision, expansion and re-

packaging of our programme, we had very few students and the male student were very uncomfortable studying the course, since what we do according to their understanding of Home Economics is cooking and sewing, it should be meant for females only.

Today, with the redesigned programmes and successful re-orientation, students have properly understood what the different options have to offer them career-wise. We have both male and female students in the different options.

In the past two years, we have successfully graduated over 120 students. Our student enrollment currently is as follows: Part 1(29), Part 2 (51), Part 3 (64) and Part 4 (67).

Staff Development

Most of academic staff have Ph. D. while two are still on their training programme. Staff members designed and carried out research in the different options of Consumer Sciences with results published in reputable local and international journals. Two of our academic staff members in Food, Nutrition and Dietetics option got fellowships to attend international conferences in Nutrition, Leadership for Environment and Development (Lead) and Africa Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) in Morocco, Dakar, South Africa and Kenya respectively between 2010 and 2012.

**Staff Strength as at 2012
Academic Staff**

S/N	Name of Staff	Status	Qualifications	Area of Specialization
1.	G.E. Ogbimi	Reader	B.Sc., M.A.(Ohio)Ph. D (Ife)	Child Development and Family Studies
2.	B.O. Ounba	Senior Lecturer	B.Sc.(Ife); M.Sc., Ph.D.(Ibadan)	Food, Nutrition and Dietetics
3.	K.O. Soyebó	Senior Lecturer	B.Sc., M.Sc. Ph.D (Ife)	Resource Management and Extension
4.	M.F. Olumakaiye	Senior Lecturer	B.Sc. (Ife); M.Sc.; Ph.D. (Ibadan)	Food, Nutrition and Dietetics
5.	D. Oladeji	Lecturer I	B. Ed.(Sokoto), M.Ed.(Ilorin) Ph. D. (Ibadan)	Child Development and Family Studies
6.	K.O. Ajila	Lecturer I	B.Sc., M.Sc. , Ph.D. (Ife)	Clothing, Textile and Interior Decoration
7.	K.O. Bakare	Lecturer I	B.Sc. (Ife), M.Sc. (Abeokuta)	Hospitality and Tourism Management
8.	I.J. Diyaolu	Assistant Lecturer	B.Sc., M.Sc. (Abeokuta)	Clothing, Textile and Interior Decoration
9.	T.G. Yusuf	Graduate Assistant	B.Sc. (Ife), PGD (Abuja)	Resource Management and Extension

Technical and Administrative Staff

S/N	Name	Status/Position
1.	T. A. Bamidele (Mrs.)	Technologist II
2.	C. A. Famurewa (Mrs.)	Chief Secretarial Assistant
3.	O. Akinwumi (Mrs.)	Secretarial Assistant III
4.	V. Fajolu (Mrs.)	Laboratory Assistant
5.	A. F.Akanbi (Mrs.)	Principal Office Assistant

Postgraduate Programmes

The development of Post Graduate Programmes such as Post Graduate Diploma, Masters' and Doctorate programmes in the different tracks or options are in advanced stage. These are being processed for approval through the relevant university committees.

PROBLEMS

Most of the courses in Family, Nutrition and Consumer Sciences are not agriculture-based and have their own required sequences and pre-requisites. These requirements were not addressed in the revision for most tracks since students are required to take introductory courses designed for B. Agriculture students instead of introductory courses designed for the B.Sc. Consumer Sciences degree in Part II.

The problem faced by the department is that very often, courses that should be prerequisites are taught simultaneously with the courses that should follow. This lack of foundation can be expected to impair performance. This had somehow resulted in squeezing what should be three years of course work into two.

The department feels concerned, when our graduate transcript is attached to an application. It would be obvious that one year of course work is in another field which is Agriculture.

The department believes that having our students learn about and appreciate the vital roles of agriculture in the economy and in Nigeria society generally would be of tremendous benefits to them, the programme and to Agriculture itself. It is therefore suggested that a service course, should specifically be designed for our students and taught by all agriculture department. This is an appropriate way of imparting the relevant information and desired attitudes.

THE FUTURE

It is envisaged that in the future the department would grow and develop into a faculty knowing fully the prospects and opportunities attached to various areas of specializations. It is also hoped that the department would be a major source of Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) to herself and the university if adequate facilities (human and nonhuman) are in place.

CONCLUSION

It is not over emphasized that the department had contributed to the growth and development of the nation through production of well seasoned graduates in different areas of specialization. Many of these graduates have assisted in ameliorating the menace of youth unemployment in the country through establishment of private enterprises.