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Teachers' Improvisation of Instructional Materials for Nigerian Home Economics Curriculum Delivery: Challenges and Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to ascertain the challenges of improvising instructional materials by Home Economics teachers at the Upper Basic education level in Nigeria, and as a result identify strategies for enhancing improvisation. The study used survey research design based on two research questions. The sample was four hundred and thirty-one Home Economics teachers in Upper Basic schools in Anambra State of Nigeria. A structured questionnaire, designed on a 5-point scale, was used to collect data. Findings indicated that some of the challenges faced by the teachers include how to: improvise materials to arouse and sustain learners' optimism and enthusiasm; access expert assistance and technical support; stay informed of innovative developments; have confidence to share ideas with other teachers; interpret research and statistical data; diplomatically handle students' resistance; align improvised materials with curriculum guidelines and timelines; and develop materials to cater for individual learner's needs in overcrowded classrooms. Some strategies bothering on teachers' self and group professional development, training, and Internet literacy were identified as capable of enhancing improvisation. These strategies if implemented might provide the teachers with opportunities to develop more improvisation insights for engaging young people in the highest quality learning activities.

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INTRODUCTION

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme of Nigeria is designed among other things, to facilitate the standard of literacy, and improve societal development. The UBE is a nine-year programme that covers six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary schools. The three years of junior secondary school is known as Upper Basic (Basic 7-9). This Upper Basic level is aimed at preparing the youths for gainful employment or progression into the senior secondary level and subsequent admission into higher education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Undoubtedly, these functions are very essential to the survival, enhancement, and development of the Nigerian society. However, the extent to which the Upper Basic education level achieves the set aims is largely dependent on the various subjects in the curriculum and how they are taught in schools.

Home Economics is one of the vocational subjects taught at the Upper Basic level of the Nigerian education system as a compulsory part of the curriculum. It is taught as an integrated core subject, which comprises Food and Nutrition, Clothing and Textile and Home Management. Home Economics is an interdisciplinary field of study which helps families and individuals to understand and adapt to the effects of social, economic, cultural, and technological changes. Arkhurst and Anyakoha (2004) described it as an applied science subject which is dependent on the integration of different academic disciplines such as the natural sciences, i.e., biology, chemistry, physics mathematics and health science; the social sciences, i.e., sociology, political science, economics, philosophy, psychology; and art in solving problems of families and individuals. Home Economics is a skill-oriented field of study that is expected to equip learners with survival skills for self-reliance/self employment and paid employment.

The importance of exposing learners to Home Economics curriculum for individual and societal

development has been widely acknowledged. For instance, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE, 2009) stated that the knowledge and skills gained within Home Economics make a considerable contribution to young people's personal and social development as well as prepare them for the world of work in a wide range of areas related to aspects of the subject. It provides the learners with opportunities to develop knowledge and skills in both theoretical and practical aspects of livelihood (Ministry of Education and Skills Development, 2010). The acquisition of such knowledge and skill has the capacity to augment, inspire productivity and further income generating life endeavors among people. A strong background in Home Economics curriculum is crucial for many careers and job opportunities in today's increasingly technologically society.

To accommodate the various multi-disciplinary areas and skills in Home Economics, and position it to prepare Nigerian students for global participation, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2008) reviewed and reoriented its curriculum to have a broad scope that covers virtually all aspects of human daily living. According to the NERDC (2008), the reviewed Upper Basic Home Economics curriculum is built on the 9-year Basic Education philosophy that seeks to provide quality learning experiences and pay attention to the all round development of the individual. Among the aims of the curriculum is to provide students with a broad based education that equips them with transferable knowledge and skills, as well as life skills to cope with changes in a technological, socio-economic and multi-cultural society. Contemporary societal issues have been integrated in the curriculum, more practical lessons are introduced, and lessons are organized in modules with specifications on a variety of instructional materials including instructional technologies for teaching. It is expected that if properly implemented, the curriculum would cater for a diverse range of students' abilities, help the students to learn practical skills which would be

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