

# Home Economics Sewing Skills Acquisition and Sustainable Economic Development in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria.

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## ABSTRACT

*The establishment of graduates and their ability to be employers of labour and entrepreneurs is the primary goal of Home Economics Education. The purpose of this study was to emphasis the relevance of Home Economics sewing skills acquisition as a tool for sustainable economic development. To give the study a strong ground, quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed through the use of questionnaires and key informant interviews. The sample size constituted 210 Home Economics students. Data generated were analysed using SPSS version-20, hypothesis was tested using chi-square and results were presented using descriptive statistics. The study results showed that 68% of respondents admitted that sewing skills has the capacity to establish them after graduation and 72% admitted that they are not readily willing to partake in the sewing practical with the explanation that they find it difficult to comprehend the process. The test of hypothesis showed that there is significant relationship between sewing skills acquisition and sustainable economic development. Based on the study findings it is recommended that students be encouraged to partake in sewing practicum in order to make them self-reliant after graduation.*

**Keywords:** Sewing skills acquisition, Entrepreneur, Practicum, Sustainable Economic Development, self-reliant, Establishment.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The establishment of graduates and their ability to be employers of labour and entrepreneurs is the primary goal of Home Economics Education. Home Economics as a vocational education is the education designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and appreciation, encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment. This means that vocational education is skill oriented. Most times when nations are faced with problem of unemployment, the first step towards providing solution is to introduce vocational education into the national education system. Vocational subjects happen to provide skills and competences that will make its recipients employable in industries, self employed and employers of labour and Home Economics sewing skills is one of such subjects.

In order to attain sustainable economic development, the Home Economic sewing unit seeks to achieve the following objectives in all institutions where the field is offered (Uwameiye, 2016):

- i. develop manipulation skills that will enable the student to function effectively in the society.
- ii. develop creativity and aesthetic values, attitude and skills.

- iii. develop interest in the world of work.
- iv. appreciate the dignity of labour.
- v. develop interest and passion in garment making/designing that will lead to start-up of self employment ventures in garment making business upon graduation thus becoming self-reliant, and;
- vi. appreciate the important the role of entrepreneurship/small businesses in the economic development of the individual family and the nation at large.

In order to achieve these objectives students are expected to avail themselves the privilege to acquire the skills especially tools and equipment that will help learners to acquire the necessary skills are available. Considering the concept of development, Usoro, Usoro, Akpan and Otu (2010) define development in terms of reduction in the levels of poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment and income inequality. However, looking at national development, Dike in Ozoemena (2013) emphasizes that, “national development encompasses social and political development as well as economic development defined as the attainment of a number of ideas of modernization such as a rise in productivity, social and economic equity, improved institutions and values”. Never the less, one needs to understand as author’s rendition and assertion that sustainable economic development is a development that serves the need of today and that of future needs. According to Nwogu (2009), the well being of any nation largely depends on its sustainable economic development. Ozoemena (2013) described economic development as an important part of general development in any society whose main objective of is to raise the standard of living and the general wellbeing of the people in an economy where almost everybody can be self-reliant. To corroborate this, Akande and Tihamiyu (2015) cited women in colleges of education (WICE, 2013) definition of sustainable development to imply a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Similarly, Yiljika (2014) asserted that sustainable development improves the quality of life for all the earth’s citizens without increasing the use of natural resources beyond the capacity of the environment to supply them indefinitely.

## **2.0 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to emphasis the relevance of Home Economics sewing skills acquisition as a tool for sustainable economic development.

## **3.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

It is discouraging to experience that Home Economics profession is not attracting great relevance and acceptance by institutional applicants. It is disheartening to even observe that students who manage to find themselves admitted into the profession do not have the passion to participate in Home Economics sewing skills acquisition classes. Students will rather prefer to specialise in food and nutrition, home management and other sub-specialties of Home Economics leaving clothing and textile unit with few or no students. On the other hand, it is observed that the few who are found in the sewing units do not perform well. In other word have poor grades. However, reasonable proportion of students and the nation at large may be ignorant about the fact that sewing skills acquisition can contribute positively to sustainable economic development. This area of Home Economics has been neglected and has led to the decrease in teachers in this field. Therefore, it is based on this foreseen challenges the researchers were motivated to emphasis the relevance of Home Economics sewing skills acquisition as a tool for sustainable economic development.

## **4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

It is no doubt that education is the basis for nation building and the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills as well as the establishment of the entrepreneur is the basis for sustainable economic development. Home Economics Education as a vocational field offers students at all levels the opportunity of becoming entrepreneurs by creating a learning environment where students can be skilful in sewing and be established after graduation. This is targeted towards sustainable economic development. It is in this regards Uwameiye and Osho (2011) posited that nations use education to inculcate knowledge, skills and attitude considered useful and desirable into its citizens. Adding that in consonance of this, Nigeria as a nation, equips its teachers at various levels of teacher education with knowledge, skills, and attitude to be able to transmit them to the school age children to live in the modern age of science and technology. The primary aim is for sustainable economic development.

However, several factors affect the teaching and learning of practical subjects. One of such factors is the availability and utilization of tools and equipment. Tools and equipment for teaching are the educational resources that are available in schools that can be used to achieve educational goals and objective. These include workshops, equipment and tools. These tools and equipments influence the academic performance of students and prepare them for useful living. Taking secondary schools as case study, sewing otherwise known as garment making is one of the vocational trade subjects in the newly approved Senior Secondary School (SSS) curriculum structure in Nigeria. It is an aspect of Home Economics specifically Clothing and Textiles. As a skill oriented subject, it possesses the potential of equipping the learners with manipulative skills which enable student to be self employed thus reducing the problem of employment in the country. That is sustainable economic development. According to Uwameiye (2016), as good as this policy may seem, graduates from the programme still seek for jobs rather than creating jobs, as it is well known fact that it is only vocational subjects that can provide its recipients with practical skill and the success of any curriculum can only be determined by the product of the system, which implies that manipulative skills are the only means to justify that meaningful learning has taken place in vocational education. The author added that garment making is a skill oriented subject and skills can only be learnt when judicious teachers make use of equipment and tools for training the students and each tools such sewing machine, measuring tapes, long rulers, T. square, arm hole curves and large tables to mention but a few are expected to be utilized for the teaching and learning of garment making. This some schools have but students are still reluctant towards sewing unit.

It is pertinent to understand that Home Economics as a field of study includes among others: child development, home management, consumer education, foods and nutrition and clothing and textiles. Sewing units has many courses embedded in it, which encompasses, pattern drafting, pattern adaptation, pattern manipulation, tie and die, etc. It is constitutes knowledge, attitude and skills needed to choose, design and sew clothes. It also includes knowledge of the different textiles, clothing selection and maintenance. Sewing skills equips individuals with skills which prepares them for enormous employment opportunities in many clothing related occupations including fashion and design, modeling, fashion editing etc.

It is worrisome as despite the importance of clothing and textile, as a skill oriented part of Home Economics education, students' academic achievement in these courses has been found to be very low (Igbo in Uwameiye, 2016), especially if compared with other home economics courses. This can be attributed to some certain factors. These factors responsible vary from lecturers handling the course, who sometimes are not well groomed in the area, thereby making clothing courses boring and difficult particularly in situation where lectures are not challenging, stimulating and result oriented. Teachers need to understand that assignments in sewing require patience, endurance and time for completion. Most often, this is a herculean task for students to accomplish. When they fail to achieve their expectations in a short time they become discouraged, which may influence students' performance negatively. Other factor could be seen in the fact that some internal variables may influence students' willingness to succeed because students may develop negative self perception and see a given task as impossible; consequently not motivated and may develop a negative attitude towards the subject. It seems that in clothing courses, students are not giving adequate encouragement to motivate them to achieve highly in the courses. It is based on these factors the study of Uwameiye (2016) determine if attitude and motivation from teachers can predict academic achievement of students in clothing and textile courses while this present study sort to investigate it from the students' perspective. That is does students' attitude and perception to sewing classes predicts their academic achievements toward the attainment of sustainable economic development.

There are a number of challenges facing sewing skills acquisition which has impacted negatively on national economic development in Nigeria. The specialty is regarded as inferior to other specialties hence acute shortage of devoted and skilled teachers (Oguntuyi, 2013). Further, Ekpenyong (2008) identifies lack of adequate training facilities as he stressed that about 50% of the institutions running vocational and technical education in Nigeria are yet to meet approved national standards. In many of the schools, basic facilities such as furniture, laboratories, running water, electricity, machines, computers, etc. are missing (Ozoemena, 2013). Amoor (2008) also highlighted funding of vocational and technical education programme as inadequate. According to Ozoemena (2013), financial sustainability facilitates the development of knowledge which requires innovative measures so as to ensure that public vocational and technical education institutions are not deprived of much needed resources for their future expansion. Nwanaka and Amaehule (2011) also identify lack of awareness about vocational business education programmes at various levels of school curricula as other shortcomings. This has affected students' perception toward Home Economics profession in general and sewing skills acquisition.

## 5.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a simple survey design. Study population and area constituted all Home Economics students in University of Calabar. University of Calabar grew out of the Calabar campus of University of Nigeria (UNN), Nigeria which began functioning during the 1973 academic session with 154 students and a small cadre of academic, administration and professional staff. In April 1975, the Federal Military Government of Nigeria announced that as part of the National Development Plan, seven new Universities were to be established at various locations in the country. The University of Calabar was one of the seven Universities set up under this programme.

Located in Calabar Metropolis (Calabar Municipality and Calabar South), an ancient city with a long tradition of culture and contact with western civilization, the already developed area of the University occupies a 17-hectare site on the eastern side of the town, between the Great Qua River and the Calabar River. Additional land has been acquired on both sides of the Great Qua River for the development of the University. Academic activities actually commenced in the 1973/74 session, in what was then a Campus of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). However, the new autonomous institution started academic work with the faculties of Arts, Science and Social Sciences in October 1976 with an initial enrolment of 896 students. Of this number, 406 students were carried over from the University of Nigeria. The teaching, administrative, and technical staff either transferred from the University of Nigeria (UNN) or newly recruited, numbered about 156. At the beginning of the 1977/78 academic year, the Department of Education, formerly a part of Faculty of Arts was upgraded to the faculty of Education.

In 1978/79 academic year, the college of Medical Sciences was added, while the Faculty of Law established during the 1979/80 academic year began offering courses in October 1980. The Faculty of agriculture was established during the 1980/81 academic year. The University has one Graduate School, ten faculties, and three Institutions. These are; the Faculties of

- i. Agriculture
- ii. Arts
- iii. Education
- iv. Law
- v. Management Sciences
- vi. Sciences
- vii. Basic Medical Sciences
- viii. Clinical/Dental Sciences
- ix. Social Sciences
- x. Allied Medical Sciences
- xi. Institutes of
  - a. Education
  - b. Oceanography
  - c. Policy and Administrative Studies

It is worth noting that as any other Universities in the country, the University of Calabar places great premium not only on learning, but also on character. UNICAL founded in 1<sup>st</sup> October 1975 under the National Higher Education Expansion Programme of the Federal Military Government, has its nucleus on the Duke Town Campus which was later expanded to students' residential halls and staff quarters. Students' population rose from 896 in 1976, to 30,000 in 2001/2002. Currently the student population is above 40,645 with newly established programme for engineering and pharmacy. To give this study a strong ground, quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed through the use of questionnaires and key informant interviews. The sample size constituted 210 Home Economics students who were selected through convenience sampling. Data generated were analysed using SPSS version-20, hypothesis was tested using chi-square and results were presented using descriptive statistics.

## 6.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The gender distribution of respondents showed that 182 (86.7%) were females and 28 (13.3%) were males. This is in conformity with the study findings of Forster (2014) and Forster, Quarcoo, Ashong and Ghanny (2017) who observed that Home Economics as a profession is generally viewed as the domain of females. The study results showed that 68% of respondents admitted that sewing skills has the capacity to establish them after graduation and 72% admitted that they are not readily willing to partake in the sewing practical with the explanation that they find it difficult to comprehend the process. Sewing is an aspect of home economics that students have least interest in. This



has been observed in the students' choice of optional areas for career in home economics as students seem to prefer other aspects of home economics such as foods and nutrition or home management to clothing and textiles. The study of Ofoha (2011) corroborates this finding as she presented in her study that 50.5% of the sampled studied admitted that they have acquired Home Economics sewing skills and 30.5% (out 374 respondents studied) admitted that they produced confessionary products while in school and this has sustained them financially. The test of hypothesis showed that there is significant relationship between sewing skills acquisition and sustainable economic development. This study finding showed that 28% of the respondents were the students that like to partake in sewing classes. This agrees with the results of Forster, Quarcoo, Ashong and Ghanny (2017) which showed that only 36.4% of their respondents admitted that they participate in sewing lessons.

The null hypothesis was stated thus: there is no relationship between sewing skills acquisition and sustainable economic development. The independent variable was sewing skills acquisition while the dependent variable was sustainable economic development. To test the hypothesis, the test statistical technique used was the Chi-square Test. This result is presented in Table-1. The result of the analysis in table-1 reveals that the calculated chi-square ( $X^2$ ) value is 17.238 and the critical value of chi-square at 95% confidence interval ( $X^2_{95}$ ) is 7.815 at degree of freedom (df) of 3. Since the test statistic ( $X^2$ ) is greater than the critical value ( $X^2_{95}$ ), the researcher rejected the Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) in favour of the Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_a$ ). This implies that, sewing skills acquisition can guarantee sustainable economic development. This is by implication shows that there is a statistical significant relationship between the two variables studied (Table-1).

**Table-1:** Test of hypothesis- there is no relationship between sewing skills acquisition and sustainable economic development [Chi-square ( $X^2$ )]

Variables	$f_o$	$f_e$	$f_o$	$f_e$	Cal. $X^2$ -value
Sewing skills acquisition	72	52.5	61	52.5	17.238*
Sustainable economic development	33	52.5	44	52.5	
Totals	105	105	105	105	

\*significant at 0.05; df=3; Critical  $X^2$  =7.82

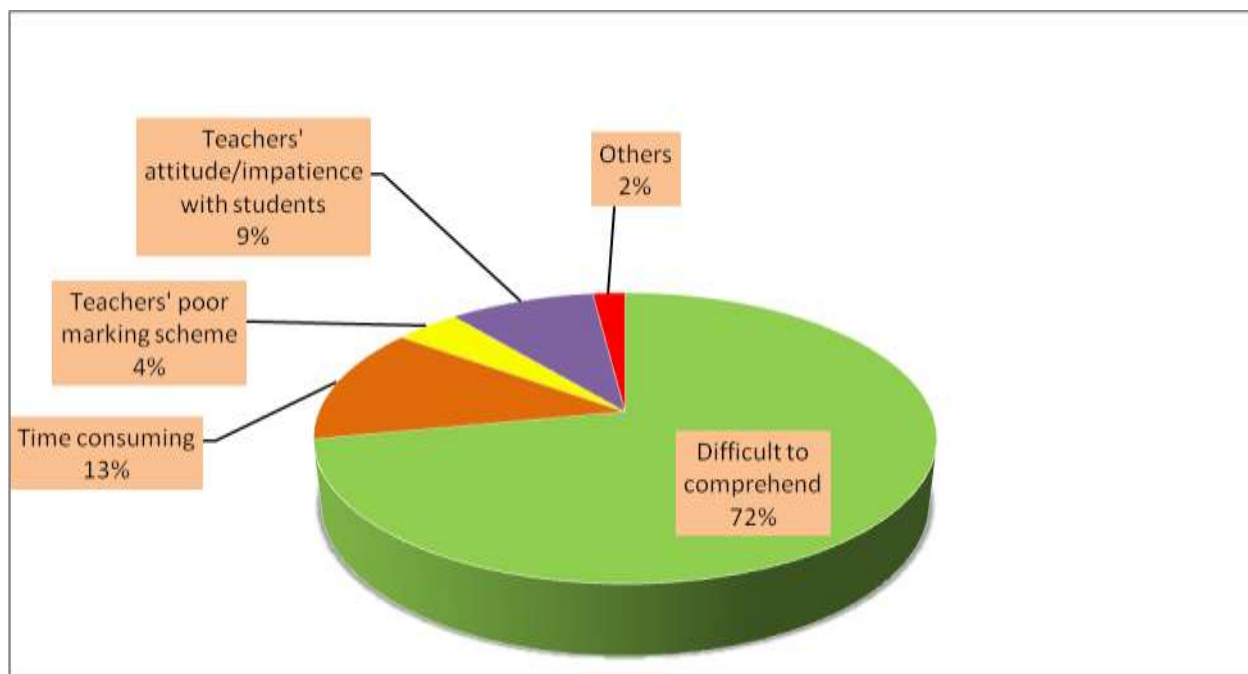
The result of the key informant interviews as the qualitative data source affirms that Home Economics is viewed as a profession for the female. This is also observed as some key informants submits that they are not comfortable being in a class where the number of women outweighs the men. This is seen in the comment of some of the key informants as quoted below:

*"I am not comfortable study Home Economics because you have more girls so plenty that I use to be ashamed. I wish I can change from it."*  
(Male key informant).

*"I do not see Home Economics as a profession for women but I observe that there are more men than women just like nursing profession. May be this is why people have such perception but my male colleagues are never comfortable in the profession especially sewing classes".*

(Female key informant).

Establishing the factors that militate against effective participation of Home Economics students from sewing classes, respondents listed that the field of sewing is difficult to comprehend (72%), time consuming (13%), poor marking scheme of teacher (4%) that contributes to their poor grades against students expectations, teachers attitude and impatience with students (9%) and others (2%) this is presented in figure-1. These findings are corroborated with the study results of Ezema (2017) who had similar findings.



**Fig.-1: Respondents reasons for non-participation in Home Economics Sewing skills Acquisition. Source:** Author's data analysis, 2017.

## 7.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is not debateable that when a student acquires basic skills through school, he or she will graduate to be useful to his or her self, family, and nation at large which by implication depict that the personal, family and national economy can be developed and sustained. Based on the study findings it is recommended that students be encouraged to partake in sewing practicum in order to make them self-reliant after graduation. Teachers also need to be motivated by good remuneration, provision of equipment and sound facilities to reduce stress felt as a result of poor work environment. Teachers also need annual training/workshops to update their knowledge and as well meet up with international and national standards in clothing and textile. Lastly, teachers need to be trained on how to be patient with clothing and textile student as this specialty is truly technical and as such requires patience with students.

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