AFRICAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONALARCHIVES
Vol. 8, Issue 1, - April/June, 2023. ISSN p2536-748x, e-2565-7498

Leveraging Public Relations to Increase Students' Participation in Senior Secondary School Home Economics Program for Future Entrepreneurs

Mustapha Idayat Oyebola
Department of Home Economics Education
Faculty of Vocational, Innovation and Engineering Education
Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo

Abstract
This paper considered the perception of Home Economics teacher on the importance of identified public relations activities us strategies for improving enrolment into senior secondary school (SSS) Home Economics subjects. Male and female Home Economics teachers in Oyo education zone were used as the population. Analysis of the responses show that the identified strategies are important and that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of male and female Home Economics teachers on the issue. It was recommended that the strategies, which hinge on publicity should be explored and exploited to sell the subjects to the students and the pubic as they are subjects that prepare one for entrepreneurship

Keywords: Public, Relations, Increase, Leveraging, Participation

Introduction

Home Economics Education is a course that offers practical skills, knowledge and competencies for everyday life encouraging various aspects of individual and family wellbeing Mustapha (2020). Home Economics deals with

(a) Food and nutrition, cooking meal, planning, food safety and nutrition
(b) Clothing and textiles: sewing, fashion, textiles and apparel management
(c) Housing and interior design: home maintenance, decorating and organisation
(d) Family and child development: child care, parenting and family relationships
(e) Consumer education: budgeting, financial, literacy and consumerism

It is a mean that allows one to plan, organize, budget, control, invest and save in any type of economy. One that receives training in Home Economics can easily develop potentials for entrepreneurship pursuit especially in this era of economic meltdown and unemployment. Many national education policies have been going on in Nigeria to take care of national educational aspirations. The one of 1977 that has been revised up to 2004 provided for acquisition of appropriate knowledge, abilities, skills and competencies for self-reliance at both the individual and national levels. Thus, two tiers of secondary education emerged the junior and senior secondary.

At junior secondary school (JSS), five Home Economics subjects were integrated as Home Economics studies-shorthand, typewriting, bookkeeping, office practice and commerce. At senior secondary school (SSS), the students choose two or three in addition to other areas to make up for West African School Certificate Examination. However, the number of students

that are offering Home Economics subjects at SSS is dwindling at an alarming rate that the researcher moved into finding out the perception of Home Economics teachers as regard public relations activities as strategies for encouraging enrolment into them. This is in view of the fact that Home Economics subjects are vocational and helps one to venture into opportunities that make one become an entrepreneur and even create jobs instead of seeking for one that is farfetched.

Casual observation by the researcher from WAEC lists of candidates that have about 200 to 300 candidates show just about five candidates for special centres mapped out for shorthand and typewriting examination. The schools that offer bookkeeping are few but commerce is common. These are core commercial subjects in SSS. However, it should be noted that shorthand, has almost phased out in SSS list because of introduction of computer studies which is not yet seriously taught in schools. Something needs to be done to improve the number of students that offer SSS Home Economics subjects because the national policies confirm that Home Economics studies is a very important vocational study that equips students for entry level jobs. (FRN, 1998).

Hornby (2002) defined public relations as the Home Economics of giving the public information about a particular organization or person in order to create a good impression. This is an important aspect of any Home Economics and a dictum has it that 'if you don't say that I am, nobody will say that you are. Kindred (1963), Ikegwuani and Ibeneme (2005) gave analysis of the duties and responsibilities carried on by public relations officers in Home Economics education as:

1. Preparing newspaper releases.
2. Serving as consultant to authority.
3. Taking part in community improvement projects.
4. Organizing and directing Home Economics education day programs
5. Giving lectures to parents-teachers groups.
6. Collecting news within the school system
7. Preparing or editing special leaflets, booklets or brochures
8. Supervising press releases on school board meetings.
9. Taking photograph for publicity purposes.
10. Organizing total school public relations program.
11. Organizing and directing radio and television programs.
12. Directing fund raising campaigns in school for philanthropic organizations.
13. Dealing with criticisms and attacks on Home Economics subjects. These are enlightenment activities that can help motivate interests. They should be directed towards the right public

Ebinga (2003) defined a public as a group of people with common interest. The basic Public in essence are owners, colleague in management, employees, community neighbours, competitors, customers, public official, donor agencies, distributors and users, electors, the other citizens, depending on the kind of organization

In secondary schools, the target public is the government, the community, the students, the captains of industries, the employees, employers of labour, parents/teachers and alumni associations. Ebinga further pointed out that enrolment into Home Economics education programs in secondary schools over the years, is dwindling because of poor public relations programs. Thompson (1978:235) pointed out that "Educators have a professional obligation to inform the public through proper administration or channel when aspects of the program show. Diminishing need or effectiveness and to make recommendations for change and modernization"

Igben (1999) summarized public relations as the bridge builder for an organization between it and her publics in terms of interest, sympathy, acceptance, knowledge, ignorance, apathy, prejudice, hostility and other connotations and Impressions. So, efforts should be made by teachers and school authority to sell all vocations to students. More so, Home Economics education which prepares people for self- employment should be greatly considered.

The importance of Home Economics education can never be over emphasized. Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998) recommended it as a strong vocational area. The objectives as identified by Okwuanaso and Nwazor (2000) includes among others:

1. To educate individuals for and about Home Economics
2. To use the result of production as customers.
3. To provide career information that will enable students relate their interests, needs and abilities to occupational opportunities in Home Economics. These show that the nation will benefit when students who have acquired education for Home Economics are graduated.

The graduates may become self- employed or employers of labour in this era of economic crises with attendant problems that is manifesting more on unemployment.

Problem of the Study

Despite national programs and aspirations for Home Economics education in secondary schools, the enrolment into its subjects is dwindling. After the introduction 6-3-3-4 system of education, a good number of schools introduced Home Economics at JSS and quite a good commercial class was there at SSS. Now, SSS has only a few offering bookkeeping while others use commerce to make up their subjects. Shorthand and typewriting are no more talked about. Computer training being advocated for is not yet being practiced. The problem of this

study, therefore, is that few students after completing JSS, enrol into SSS Home Economics subjects. This has resulted in few candidates being available for further studies, entry level jobs or enterprising in Home Economics field.

Research Question 1: How important do Home Economics teachers perceive identified public relations activities as strategies for encouraging enrolment into SSS Economics subjects?

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female Home Economics teachers as regards the importance of identified public relations activities for Home Economics studies in secondary schools as strategies for improving enrolment into SSS Home Economics subjects.

Methodology

The study adopted simple survey design. The population of the study was the entire 103 Home Economics teachers in Onitsha zone of Post Primary Schools Service Commission (PPSSC) comprising of 38 males and 65 female teachers. The area comprises of Ibadan North, Ogbomoso South and Afijo local government areas of Oyo State. The questionnaire method of data collection was used. It adopted the Likert- type scale with five response categories varying from very important to not important. The instrument was validated by experts to ascertain face and construct validity. Pilot testing was done through test-retest reliability method and a reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained. It was considered high enough to regard the instrument as reliable. Analysis of the data was done using the mean to answer the research questions and t-test for independent samples was used for the hypothesis. Using the five-point scale, the following real limits of numbers were used for answering the research question:

Response	**Real limits**	**Rating**
Very Important (VI)	4.50-5.00	5
Important (1)	3.50-4.49	4
Undecided (U)	3.00-4.49	3
Little Importance (LI)	2.00-2.99	2
Not Important (NI)	1.00-1.99	1

Any item with mean of 3.50 and above was regarded as indispensable strategy for encouraging enrolment into SSS Home Economics subject Any below 3.00 was laid to be as little or not important for such encouragement. Again, if critical (table) values exceeds the calculated t-value, the effect is not significant and so, the mull hypothesis will be upheld. If on the other hand, the calculated value exceeds the critical value the null hypothesis will be rejected

Results

Table 1: Mean (X) Standard Deviation (50) and Degree of Importance Perceived by Home Economics Teachers on Public Relations Activities

S/N	Public Relations Activities	X	Remark
1.	Home Economic department prepares newspaper, releases about Home Economic department	3.97	Important
2.	Home Economic department organizes social programs	3.72	Important
3	Home Economics department holds enlightenment meeting with parents	3.94	Important
4	The Home Economics Teachers organize radio and television Home Economic quizzes	4.00	Important
5	The Home Economics department take photographs for publicity purposes	3.37	undecided
6	The Home Economics take part in community improvement projects	3.56	Important
7	The Home Economics department direct fund raising campaign for philanthropic organization	3.67	Important
8	The Home Economics Teachers direct formation clubs	4.07	Important
9	The Home Economics club activities compete with science clubs already in schools	3.73	Important
10	The Home Economics club aids needy students	3.6	Important
11	The Home Economics club organizes inter-school business studies debates	4.08	Important
12	The Home Economics department organizes career conventions	3.87	Important

From the date in Table 1, it was observed that Home Economic teachers mean scores for all items except for item five fell between 3.50 and 4.08. This means that all the identified activities were considered important and indispensable for encouraging enrolment into SSS business subjects.

Table 2: The t-test Analysis of Mean Responses of Male and Female Home Economics Teachers on the Importance of Public Relations Activities

Groups	No	Mean	S.D	Cal t-value	Df	fL	Critical t-value	Decision
Male	37	3.55	1.24	1.29	99	0.05	1.960	Ho Accepted
Female	64	3.86	1.14					

Table 2 on the hypothesis testing shows that a total of 37 male and 64 female Home Economic teachers responded. They had mean of 3.35 and 3.86 on one hand, standard deviation of 1.24 and 1.44 on the other hand respectively. Tested at 0.05 level of significance and at 99 degrees of freedom, the t-critical value came to 1.29.

Discussions of Findings

From the date in Table 1, it was observed that Home Economic teachers mean scores for all items except for item five fell between 3.50 and 4.08. This means that all the identified activities were considered important and indispensable for encouraging enrolment into SSS business subjects. These important strategies agree with Kindred (2023), Ikegwuani and Ibeneme (2020) on their listing of the following as public relations activities that should be done occasionally: preparing a column in schools newspaper, writing home contact letters, preparing report cards with enclosures on business studies activities, preparing calendars, organizing exhibitions and fairs, arranging student performances before community groups, advising parents/teachers association meetings, excursion to industries and small-scale entrepreneurs. These will stir up positive feelings in students and help them convince parents of their career choices in Home Economic education as against other loud-speaking' subjects such as the sciences.

Table 2 on the hypothesis testing shows that a total of 37 male and 64 female Home Economic teachers responded. They had mean of 3.35 and 3.86 on one hand, standard deviation of 1.24 and 1.44 on the other hand respectively. Tested at 0.05 level of significance and at 99 degrees of freedom, the t-critical value came to 1.29. The critical value is greater than the calculated value and so, the Ho was upheld. This shows that the perception of male and female business teachers do not differ significantly as regards public relations activities as strategies for improving enrolment into SSS Home Economic subjects. So, this supports Igben (2019) that public relations activities are bridge builders that connect interest groups.

Conclusions

It has been seen that students' enrolment into core Home Economic subjects – craft and design, Health education and embroidery is thinning down Much of public relations activities have not been utilized to enlighten the relevant public. Black (2013) states that schools public relations is a highly technical aspect of educational activities which if utilized fully will yield dividend. Education for and about Home Economic should be encouraged through identified activities of public relations. When graduates are produced, the Home Economic potentials they acquired will not only equip them for entrepreneurship or self employment, they will also employ and manage human capital for the development of the entire nation.

Recommendations:

The following are recommended for improving enrolment into SSS Home Economic subjects:

1. Home Economic teachers should explore and exploit more public relations activities in addition to identified ones to sell their department to the students and public.
2. Relevant authorities should be involved in encouraging teachers This they can do by organizing seminars and workshop for Home Economic teachers so as to motivate them to use the identified activities or more to attract interest into their areas
3. .Students should be used to carry out some of these activities as peers can easily be lured.
4. Funds should be made available by relevant authorities for organizing some of the activities. This may attract more funds from the public for improving the teaching and learning of business subjects.

References

Black, S. (2013). The Essentials of Public Relations. London: Kogan Page Limited

Ebinga, D.E. (2023). Public Relations Standard in Home Economics Education, Unpublished Pave. NABE, Port Harcourt.

Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2019) National Policy on Education. (3rd 2022 ed.) Lagos. NERDC Press

Hornby, A. S. (2022). Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English. (6 ed.) Oxford; University Press.

Igben, H.G. (2017). Effective Media Relation: Issues and Strategies. Lagos: Zoom Lens Publishers.

Ikegwuani, V. U. & Ibeneme O. T. (2020) Strategies Perceived by Business Teachers as Important for Improving Enrolment into Senior Secondary School Business Subjects in Onitsha Education Zone. M.Sc Thesis. Nnandi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Kindred, L.W. (2013). Assistant Superintendent Community Relation. In J.L. Donald and R.C. Herbert (Eds.). Preparation Program for School Administration: Common and Specialized Learning, (pp. 207- 218). Michigan: State University

Okwuanaso, S. I. & Nwazor, J.C. (2000). Instructional Strategies in Business Education. Awka: Ikenga DA Publishers.

Mustapha, I.O. (2020) Fundamental relationship of Home Economics. Book of Proceedings, School of Secondary Education (*Vocational and Technical Program Emmanuel Alayande College of Education*, Oyo. pp 295-303