

Challenges of Teaching and Learning of Home Economics in Selected Colleges of Education in Zambia

Esther Malama

The University of Zambia

Abstract

The study examined the challenges of teaching and learning of Home economics in colleges of education in Zambia. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of 22 colleges of education affiliated to the University of Zambia and offering Home Economics. A sample of 35 Home Economics lecturers were selected for the study using purposive sampling. A structured questionnaire with Likert Scale was used for data collection. The data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme. The findings of the study revealed that the challenges were associated with college administration and curriculum issues. The study further revealed seven factors that impeded the teaching and learning of home economics subject and these were; lack of well-equipped specialised rooms, insufficient funding, inadequate reference books and instructional materials, large classes, lack of motivation, heavily loaded timetable and insufficient time lead to the challenges of learning and teaching of Home economics in colleges of education. The study recommended that colleges of education administrators should provide a conducive environment and adequate professional and technical support to the lecturers.

Key words: Teaching, learning, home economics, teacher education, colleges of education, challenges

Introduction

Home Economics is one of the vocational subjects taught in the Zambia Education system and it is designed to provide sufficient practical skills to prepare learners for subsequent training or entry into the world of work (CDC, 2013). Okpala (2005) described Home Economics as a skill-oriented, decision-making subject, that equips learners with skills and knowledge which will help them to be self-employed and at the same time, contribute effectively to the socio-economic development of the

family and society. It is a skill-oriented subject that can equip an individual with the basic skill and knowledge that will enable one to be self-employed and so contributes effectively to the socio-economic development of the family and the society (Malama, 2019). Home economics offers a multidisciplinary content and environment for students to apply and practice skills and knowledge from a variety of areas including situations related to everyday life (McGregor, 2010). Although it is multi-disciplinary, it does not teach a skill for the sake of it, rather it teaches for application to inform decision-making in endless scenarios. In addition, it teaches evaluative and critical thinking skills and empowers individuals no matter what the context (International Federation for Home Economics, 2008; Pendegast, 2009). Paas & Palojoki (2019), opined that Home economics is designed to develop knowledge, skills, principles and attitudes that help the learner to survive and relate better to social economic realities of the society in which he/she lives.

As a subject in the Zambian school system, it is taught from grade one to tertiary level. At primary school level, home economics has been integrated with design and technology and it is referred to as Creative and Technology Studies (CTS). At junior level grade 8 and 9 it is taught as Home Economics (food and nutrition, health education, needlework and craft and home management). At senior secondary level grade 10 to 12, Food and Nutrition, fashion and fabrics and Home Management are taught as separate subjects. This is to enable students to explore a vast array of occupations in the field before making a career choice. Anyakoha (2012) confirms that the essence of separating the components of Home Economics is to ensure that students specialize in the fields of their choice. In primary college of education, Home Economics and Design Technology have been integrated as Technology Studies. On the other hand, in secondary colleges of education it is Home Economics comprising of food and nutrition, fashion and fabrics, home management and hospitality and health education.

The teaching of Home Economics as a practical subject is crucial if the needed skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes are to be imparted in the learners. It is critical that teachers have the professional competencies necessary to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes to learners. As such proper teacher education need to be employed in all colleges of education. According to Farrant (1990), the quality of every formal system of education is directly responsible to the quality of teachers who perform their duties in the same system. Hence, teacher education is vital and

important. Ministry of Education (MOE) (1996) echoes that, in order for teachers to teach effectively there is need to consider the quality of Teacher Education in colleges. Training of teachers is also necessary especially in today's environment to cope with the changing demands of the profession. As such, proper techniques need to be employed for the teaching and learning process to be real and fruitful. In other words, the quality of teacher education is as good as the quality of teacher. Adeosun (2009) stressed that teachers are important in any educational system because the quality of the teacher in any educational system determines to a greater extent the quality of the system itself. Ingersoll, (1996) states that a measure of the teachers qualification, teaching practice, teacher certification, teacher experience and teaching preparation all define teacher quality. If the quality of teachers is poor, the quality of education will be poor. What this means, therefore is that the quality of teachers will determine the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. Olojobi (2007) maintains that teacher education programmes are intended to impart not only a body of knowledge in teacher trainees but also to inculcate in them those skills, competencies and attitudes that would enable them to adapt effectively to the changing demands of the educational system and of the society. Lindblom et al. (2013) assess that an adequate formal education of teachers who teach home economics is a prerequisite to teach the contents of home economics at an appropriate level. As research has shown, teacher quality is an important factor in determining gains in student achievement and that level of formal academic education of teachers has positive correlation with the students' achievement (Burroughs et al., 2019).

Through the process of teaching and learning trainee teachers are provided with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situations in the country and the world. If they do not exhibit the required competencies and skills needed at the completion stage of their training, the goal of teacher education is defeated and becomes a mere wish by powers that be. This calls into question the quality of their training.

As a teacher educator teaching courses in Home Economics and as an External Examiner involved in moderation of both coursework and examination results in colleges of education, it was observed that multiple students performed exceptionally low in practical and skill-oriented components in most colleges of education. The researcher reflected more and more on what could be causing this situation and

ultimately, decided to investigate on the possible causes of low performance in home economics.

Statement of the Problem

Examination results from colleges of education shows that students teachers perform poorly in skill and practical oriented components of Home economics. This has been observed in most colleges of education affiliated to the University of Zambia by external examiners under Advisory Unit for Colleges of Education (AUCE) reports of 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023). Home Economics is a skill-oriented subject that is expected to equip learners with survival skills that make for self-reliance, employment, and paid opportunities. If the student teachers do not exhibit these needed skills during the training and after training, then one wonders how they will equip pupils with needed skills in schools. Banja and Mulenga (2019) observed that the combination of poor teacher preparation affects teacher quality, which in turn affects educational delivery by the teachers. It is against this backdrop that the study investigates the challenges of teaching and learning of Home economics in colleges of education in Zambia.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine challenges of teaching and learning of Home Economics in affiliated colleges of education in Zambia. , this study sought to:

1. To assess the impact of college authority on challenges in teaching and learning of Home Economics in colleges of education.
2. To determine the extent to which curriculum issues pose challenges to the teaching/learning of Home Economics.

Research Questions

The study sought to address the following research questions.

1. To what extent do college authorities contribute to challenges to the teaching and learning of Home Economics in colleges of education?
2. To what extent do curriculum issues pose challenges to the teaching/learning of home economics?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study for the purpose of examining challenges of teaching and learning of Home Economics in affiliated colleges of education in Zambia. This design is appropriate for the present study because it involved collecting information from a sample of respondent to answer the research questions.

The target population of the study consisted of all Home Economics lecturers in the 22 colleges of education offering Home economics and are affiliated to the University of Zambia across the country. The total population consisted of 96 Home economics Lecturers. This population's choice is justified by the fact that it is this category of respondents that will be able to provide relevant data for the study since the study is on teaching and learning and the lecturers are key to answer the research questions.

Purposive sampling technique; in particular, homogenous sampling was used to select respondents. This sampling method was relevant for the study since the researcher wanted lecturers who had 5 years and above of experience in teaching at the colleges of education. Purposive sampling was ideal for the study because only the lecturers from Home economics department who are currently teaching Home economics were targeted and the size of respondents was manageable. The respondents were made up of 35 Home Economics lecturers from the 22 colleges of education affiliated to the University of Zambia.

The instrument for data collection for this study was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised of close-ended items. The respondents were provided with a five Likert-type scale made up of the following responses: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1)

The instrument was validated by two experts, from the Department of primary Education University of Zambia. A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument. The structured questionnaires were administered to 20 lecturers. The reliability was determined using the Cronbach Alpha reliability method. Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.88 was obtained, indicating that there was high correlation between items in a questionnaire indicating reliability and a higher standard. The researcher with the assistance of the head of sections for Home

Economics administered the questionnaire to Home Economics lecturers. The respondents filled the questionnaire and returned the filled in questionnaires.

The statistical technique used was the percentage, frequencies, mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The descriptive statistics was used for the analysis of data. The following points were assigned to the responses.

Table 1: Interpretation of scores.

Scale	Respondents	Mean Interval	Verbal Interpretation
5	Strongly agree	4:21- 5:00	Agree
4	Agree	3:41- 4:20	Agree
3	Neither agree nor disagree	2.61 - 3.40	Undecided
2	Disagree	1.81- 2.60	Disagree
1	Strongly disagree	1 - 1.80	Disagree

Results

The results of the study are presented in descriptive statistics form through tables generated from the questionnaire.

Table 2: Personal Characteristics of Respondents N=35

S/N	Variable	Respondent	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender	Male	5	14.30
		Female	30	85.70
2.	Age	25 -35	2	5.71
		36 -45	8	22.85
		46 -55	17	48.57
		56 -65	8	22.85
3.	Qualification	Doctor of Philosophy	2	5.70
		Master's Degree	11	31.70
		Bachelor's Degree	19	54.30
		Diploma	3	8.60

The table above shows the frequency distribution of the respondents according to their gender. It shows that 30 (85.7%) of the respondents were females and 5 (14.3 %) were males. This implied that there were more female respondents than male respondents. The table shows the age range of the respondents, 2 (5.7%) were between age range of 25-35 years, 8 (22.9%) were between the age range of 36-45 years, 17 were between the age range 45-55 while 8 (22.9%) were between the age range 46-65. This shows that the majority age range of respondents were between 45-55 years. The table shows that 2(5.7 %) of the respondent had PhDs, 11(31.4%) had master's degree, 19(54.3 %) had bachelor's degree and 3 (8.6%) had diplomas. This implied the majority of the respondents had bachelor's degree followed by master's degree, PhD and Diploma's

Research Question one: To what extent do college authority contribute to challenges to the teaching and learning of home economics in colleges of education?

Table 3: Extent to which the college administration contributes to challenges in learning and teaching of home economics N=35

No	Items on college administration	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1.	Lack of profession development	2.94	1.37	Undecided
2.	Insufficient supervision by the head of section	2.57	1.19	Undecided
3.	Lack of well-equipped specialised rooms	3.80	1.08	Agree
4.	Inadequate reference books	3.66	1.16	Agree
5.	Insufficient funding to the section	3.80	1.30	Agree
6.	Inadequate staff in the section	2.74	1.40	Undecided
7.	Inability of the principal to provide needed learning and teaching materials	3.09	1.36	Agree
8.	Large Classes	3.57	1.46	Agree
9.	Lecturers not motivated to update their practical skills	3.54	1.29	Agree
	Valid N (list wise)			
	Average Mean	3.30	1.29	Undecided

From the table 3 above, the college administration to some extent contributes to the challenges of learning and teaching Home economics. This is evident by (M= 3.80 SD= 1.08) lack of well-equipped specialised rooms, (M=3.66 SD=1.16) inadequate reference books, (M=3.80 SD= 1.30), which state insufficient funding to the section, (M=3.57 SD= 1.46) large classes and (M=3.54 SD= 1.29) lecturers are not motivated to update their practical skills with a mean above 3. 41, showing that these are challenges. Only (M=2.94 SD= 1.37) lack of profession development, (M=2.57 SD=1.19) insufficient supervision by the head of section and (M=2.74 SD= 1.40) inadequate staff in the section indicated true to some extent. The average mean for the entire items scored 3.30. This means overall that the college administration partially contributes to the challenges in the learning and teaching of Home economics.

Research Question Two: To what extent did curriculum issues posed challenges to the teaching/learning of home economics?

Table 4: Extent to which the curriculum issues contribute to challenges of learning and teaching of home economics **N=35**

No	Items on The curriculum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1.	Lecturers not teaching components they felt not comfortable to handle	2.97	1.27	Undecided
2.	It is expensive to implement the syllabus	3.11	1.32	Undecided
3.	Inadequate hands-on experience	3.20	1.26	Undecided
4.	Students only have practical during final examinations	3.43	1.38	Agree
5.	Syllabus does not include field trips	3.54	1.52	Agree
6.	The syllabus is too wide	3.71	1.34	Agree
7.	The syllabus is heavily loaded	3.71	1.45	Agree
8.	Integration of technology and design in home Economics	3.80	1.41	Agree
9.	Insufficient time located for the subject on the timetable	3.97	1.32	Agree
	Valid N (list wise)			
	Average mean	3.49	1.37	Agree

From Table 4, lecturers revealed that integration of technology and design in Home economics ($M=3.80$ $SD= 1.41$), insufficient time located for the subject on the time time($M=3.97$ $SD= 1.32$), students only had practical during final examinations ($M=3.20$ $SD= 1.26$), the syllabus is too wide ($M=3.71$ $SD= 1.34$) and the syllabus is heavily loaded ($M= 3.71$ $SD= 1.45$) are challenges of teaching and learning Home Economics in colleges of education. On the other hand, respondents noted that lecturers not teaching components they felt not comfortable to handle ($M=2.95$ $SD=1.27$), inadequate hands on experience ($M=3.20$ $SD= 1.26$) and that the syllabus was expensive to implement ($M= 3.11$ $SD= 1.32$) did not indicate that they were factors that that contributed to the challenges of teaching and learning of Home Economics in colleges. The average mean was 3.49. This indicates that factors such as insufficient time located for the subject on the timetable, heavily loaded curriculum, the syllabus being too wide, students only having practical's during final examinations and the integration of technology and design with home economics are the factors contributing to the challenges teaching of home economics in colleges of education.

Discussion

The findings revealed that most of the respondents have bachelor's degree in Home Economics. This shows that most respondents have the minimum qualification to teach in the colleges of education. This is in line the Ministry of Education policy, that the minimum qualification for one to teach diploma programmes should be a bachelor's degree holder. In terms of gender, most of the respondents were females. This is in line with the finding by (Okorie et al., 2022) which revealed that there are more females enrolled in Home Economics programmes than males. Similarly, Abruquah et al., (2017) in their study observed that gender has been an integral part of development of Home economics throughout its 120 years history. The researcher assumes that the plausible explanation for this is probably because the curricula being offered are in the areas of food and nutrition, clothing and textiles and home Management which are domains ascribed to woman.

The findings further showed that the colleges lacked well equipped specialised rooms to conduct lessons. The study finding is strengthened by Chukwujekwu and Iyegbu (2019) who found that Home economics laboratories are not functional, equipment are not enough and those available are not maintained, this impedes the

effective teaching and learning of home economics. Iyere (2000) in agreement state that inadequate equipment in Home Economics sections is a major problem. This situation makes both students and lecturers to concentrate on the theoretical aspects of the subject forgetting that the subject is practical oriented. Lack of sufficient funding to Home Economics section was another factor. Home Economics is a practical-oriented subject and requires adequate funding to buy the needed materials and equipment. Mbwerengwa in her study (2004) observed that inadequate resources lead to inadequate practice in Home Economics. Mahundi (2015), corroborates with Mbwerengwa observations when she states that lack of the financial resource has resulted in most teachers conducting more theory lessons at the expense of the practical's thereby creating a barrier between theory and practical components.

The study further revealed that the college administration did not provide adequate reference books and did not motivate the lecturers to update their practical skills. The findings are line with the findings of Arubayi & Obunadike, (2011) who found that inadequate instructional materials, lack of improvisation and utilization of teaching aids, as well as inadequate laboratory constituted problems to the teaching and learning of home economics. The findings of the current study also confirm that of Asuquo (2007) that knowledge of teachers must be updated through further training programmes. They should update their knowledge in new trends in equipment and machines.

Finally, the findings showed that the syllabus was too wide and heavily loaded and insufficient time located for the subject on the timetable. This is similar to a study by Ezenwne (2015), which showed that limited time for practical activities and inadequate facilities for practical are factors that can lead to severe academical stress to the students. Moreover, the integration of Technology and Design in Home Economics is a serious curriculum issue in the teaching and learning of Home Economics. The findings give support to the findings Mubita & Kalimaposo (2016) that the integration of Home Economics in Technology Studies had compromised or diluted the Home Economics content in all the major components of the subject.

Implications

This study highlights the challenges faced by Home Economics education in Zambian colleges. The lack of well-equipped specialised rooms, financial constraints, and a wide syllabus are major issues. These can compromise students' practical

experience and hinder their application of theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios, but they also diminish the holistic educational experience that Home Economics aims to provide. The inadequacy of funding jeopardises the acquisition of necessary materials and equipment essential for practical learning. Home Economics, being a subject deeply rooted in practical application, relies heavily on the availability of resources. Adequate funding is instrumental in maintaining and updating equipment, ensuring that students receive a comprehensive and contemporary education. Colleges must prioritise investments in infrastructure and allocate sufficient funds to ensure a comprehensive and contemporary education. The identified challenges, such as insufficient time allocation and limited practical sessions, have the potential to impede students' mastery of practical skills, a fundamental aspect of Home Economics. The integration of design and technology in Home Economics further contributes to insufficient time allocation for practical sessions. Lecturer motivation and professional development are also crucial for the academic quality of Home Economics education. Lecturers who lack motivation to update their practical skills may struggle to deliver engaging and contemporary content to students. To improve the academic environment, colleges should implement strategies to motivate lecturers, including regular professional development opportunities and recognition for their contributions.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have shown that the poor performance of students in Home economics is attributed to so many factors as provided by empirical evidence in the study. Among other factors is lack of well-equipped specialised rooms, inadequate instructional materials and insufficient time allocated for home economics. These teaching and learning constraints are capable defeating the objective of teaching Home Economics in colleges of education. However, it is worth noting that these finding are useful for improving the teaching and learning of home economics in colleges of education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are made;

- (i) Colleges should prioritize the development of well-equipped specialized rooms, including functional Home Economics laboratories, to facilitate hands-on

practical experiences. Investing in infrastructure not only improves the teaching environment but also broadens the scope for practical demonstrations. Enhanced facilities will contribute to a more comprehensive and effective Home Economics curriculum.

- (ii) Colleges should to allocate sufficient financial resources to ensure the procurement of necessary materials and equipment for the Home Economics section. Financial support enables colleges to maintain a practical-oriented approach, ensuring that students have access to the resources required for a holistic learning experience in Home Economics.
- (iii) College administration should allocate adequate time on the timetable for Home Economics as well as equipping Home Economics specialised rooms, providing adequate facilities and learning materials. An enhanced curriculum will optimize students' understanding and mastery of practical skills. Aligning the syllabus with available time and resources will contribute to a more effective and learner-friendly educational experience.
- (iv) Home economics lecturers should improvise instructional materials and embrace new technology by using the internet to download some lectures (video) in areas such cookery, home management, fashion, and fabrics to be used as instruction materials where there are limited resources to conduct practical's.
- (v) The college administration should provide adequate professional and technical support to the lecturers. Investing in the professional growth of faculty is crucial for the sustainability and continuous improvement of Home Economics education, ensuring engaging and up-to-date content delivery.

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