HOME ECONOMICS IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

by Flemmie Kittrell*

Historically speaking the continent of Africa has not yet been hospitable to the field of home economics in university circles and higher education. The European background - France, England, Belgium - reflects itself throughout the African continent. A further handicap shows itself in the rigid continuation of domestic science and domestic arts prepared in Europe prior to independence and still adhered to by most of the newly independent countries. When I tried to encourage some new approach in the Congo, I met with stiff resistance -- "If this domestic science and domestic arts selection was good enough for the Belgians, it is good enough for us." But fortunately, this is not the whole story, though a large part of it. Nigeria is the exception. Let us look to see what is happening in this exciting and forward looking country.

Home Economics at the University of Nigeria

Nigeria, from my observation of education on the African continent, is unique in many ways. Its special uniqueness is its great love for education. It was on this note that Dr. Azikiwe, the governor general, was swept into office at the first election. Since independence in 1960, five new universities have come into being. They were designed to give adequate opportunity to any student who could profit from advanced study along the line of his choice. This philosophy is a complete break with Nigeria's past. Prior to independence from Britain, higher education dealt primarily in the areas of liberal arts as a background for medicine, theology, and other professions.

The European pattern, and its over-all philosophy of education, were closely adhered to. The new universities, on the other hand, are diversified. In the words of the first chancellor, "Nigeria needed diversity in higher education for excellence, breadth as well as depth; for the applied, the practical, and the vocational as well as the aesthetic, the historical, and the cultural." In securing this type of university, ideas were secured from Europe, the USA, and from Nigeria itself.

In his address delivered before the inaugural convocation of the University of Nigeria on October 13, 1960, His Excellency, The Right Honourable Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, P.C., Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Federation of Nigeria, and Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, said:

...We cannot afford to continue to produce or to encourage the continued production of an upper class of parasites who shall prey upon a stagnant and sterile class of workers and peasants... To stem this inevitability,

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the University of Nigeria at Nsukka has been founded as a leveling agent to discourage social stratification and to reduce unemployability to the barest minimum... By creating equal opportunity for those who have the intellectual aptitude without any social distinctions, we hope to build a new society in Africa. This calls for a realistic approach to the problems of higher learning in our system of education. We must frankly admit that we can no longer afford to flood only the white collar jobs at the expense of the basic occupations and productive vocations, which can be so intelligently directed to create wealth, health, and happiness among the greatest number of our people, particularly in the fields agriculture, engineering, business administration, education, and home economics.

Reporting on his views of the university, Dr. George M. Johnson, formerly the dean of the Law School at Howard University and now on the international team at Michigan State University working with the University of Nigeria, had this to say:

As I see it, the University of Nigeria established objectives which would cause it to be different from other universities in West Africa in three essential ways. First, the primary focus of the University is on the needs of Nigeria as a new nation. This is the primary concern which permeates all aspects of the curriculum, the research program, and the off-campus educational services of the institute.

Second, the university is chartered to provide more education to more people. This is a necessity if the great mass of Nigerian people are to prepare themselves for responsible citizenship in a democracy.

And third, there is an obligation to provide as many different and varied branches of learning as can be adequately encompassed under the university umbrella. Here the basic philosophy is that any pursuit by means of which men or women earn their daily bread and contribute to society is worthy of scientific research at the highest levels, and the knowledge which results from this scholarship, should be offered to all those who can benefit from it....

This above background here was needed in order to understand that the soil had been prepared favorably for home economics in higher education and that it was born in a congenial atmosphere.

Dr. Madelene Kirkland, former head of the Department of Home Economics at Howard University, was chairman of the school and spent four years developing the program. The first class was graduated in 1965 with B.S. degrees. The College of Home Economics is in the Faculty of Technology. Also other colleges under this faculty are the Colleges of Fine Arts, Engineering, Music, Physical Education, and Secretarial Studies.
The College of Home Economics encompasses the areas of humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. All first year students in the university enroll in the College of General Studies. Through the remaining years on campus, home economics students will take fewer and fewer courses offered through this general college, and an increasing proportion of their work will be in the College of Home Economics.

The home economics curriculum offerings are as follows: foods and nutrition, bio-chemistry, and bacteriology; clothing and textiles; child development; nursery school education; home economics extension; consumer economics; art and family health.

In three years time, after its founding in 1960, the university had transformed an erstwhile uninhabited farm land into a cosmopolitan settlement in which are represented nearly all of the geographical regions of the world and many nationalities including Nigerians, Americans, Indians, Chinese, Germans, English, French, and Swiss, to mention only a few represented on the faculties, in the student body, and on the administrative staff.

By 1963 there were no less than 200 large and small residential buildings, and academic faculty of nearly 200, and a student population of some 1200 (including 89 women.)

Home Economics in Kenya

Kenya has had many good schools at both the secondary and the college level, but there is, even now, only a diploma course in home economics. However, the present government and responsible school officials are considering increasing both the quantity and the efficiency of the program to a four year degree.

The diploma course is affiliated with the University of Manchester in England and examinations are prepared in England for graduation requirements. This custom of preparing examinations by outsiders has proved to be difficult and much of the work is based on theory.

When examining the course of study and when visiting the College of Nairobi, it was found that the technical work was of a very high standard, and the equipment and arrangement of rooms were adequate. The curriculum emphasized dress-making, cookery, budgeting, laundry, sewing, and housewifery. There is a staff of five European teachers. With the return of graduates from various colleges in the USA, the interests will no doubt shift to subject matter dealing with nutrition, child development, parent education, consumer problems, and the like.

A partial list of the students who have come to the USA to study home economics is listed below, along with the colleges they attended:

Degrees earned since 1962

Edith Gitea
B.S. degree, home economics general, University of California
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Education Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monica Mondara</td>
<td>B.S. degree, home economics general, San Francisco State College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace Mugone</td>
<td>B.S. degree, nutrition, Howard University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magdalena Muya</td>
<td>B.S. degree, home economics vocational ed., Indiana State College; M.S. degree in 1965 -Howard University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia Ododa</td>
<td>B.S. degree, child development, Howard University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Tuva</td>
<td>B.S. degree, home economics general, University of Nebraska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Wanara</td>
<td>B.S. degree, home economics general, 2 yrs. in Royal College and 2 yrs. at Colorado State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace Wagema</td>
<td>B.S. degree, home economics general, Howard University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Wangoi</td>
<td>B.S. degree, nutrition, 2 yrs. in the Royal College and 2 yrs. in University of Oregon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam Wanjuro</td>
<td>B.S. degree, nutrition, St. Mary-of-the-Woods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In addition to the Kenya students who have been graduated in home economics in U.S. colleges, other students from Kenya have taken special home economics workshops during the summer months. Many of these students were not home economics majors but have become interested in home economics and have changed their majors upon taking the special workshop courses in such colleges as Howard University, Ohio University, and the University of Pittsburgh. These institutes have been sponsored by the African Women's Committee of the African American Institute Headquarters, 345 E. 46th St., New York, N.Y.

**The Congo Program**

In September 1960, only three months after the Congo won its independence, the Women's Division of the Methodist Church, USA, was actively working on a program for higher education of women. This plan was to include a Faculty of Home Economics (College.) The sudden concern for higher education on the part of the women of the Methodist Church, was due, in part, to their conviction that leadership in the country would have to stem from liberal education,
which included the arts, sciences, and the humanities at the core. It was difficult to find eligible women to pursue education at the university level. However, the concept of what was needed was established. As a prerequisite to the university program, a secondary school for girls at Leopoldville was established to prepare them for university entrance. The secondary school is of a six year duration and is built around the European academic pattern. The first class of 38 girls will be graduated in 1966.

When the Congo received its independence there were no women in the country who had received an academic degree. Indeed, it was difficult to find either men or women who had completed the equivalent of a secondary school education.

Home Economics and Universities

There are three universities in the Congo located as follows: the University at Leopoldville, containing the College of Medicine, the College of Pharmacy, the School of Nursing, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the School of Theology; the University at Stanleyville, of a semi-technical nature; and the University at Elizabethville, offering engineering technology. The Faculty of Home Economics is to be located at Stanleyville.

Organization and Scope of Congo Program

There will be a central school of home economics with a dean at its head. This school will serve as an educational center for young women with superior secondary (high school) standing and who will upon graduation from college, receive a bachelor's degree. The number of girls in this category is small at present, but with more emphasis being placed on formal education for them, this number will increase rapidly. The young women who come from various parts of the Congo to attend the school of home economics will serve as teachers and leaders in various areas of education. Some of these areas will include the following:

1. Promoting nutrition programs and dietetics in the country as a whole through public health
2. Teaching home economics at all levels in the primary and secondary schools and college programs
3. Conducting research in family living
4. Directing extension programs in home economics
5. Promoting social welfare and community development programs

Organization. The organization of the school and building plans are under the leadership of a dean of home economics. Included in the course of study are the following subject matter areas:

1. General Cultural Courses
   a. Anthropology
   b. World and African history
   c. Art and music
   d. African, European, and Asian languages
2. Specific Home Economics Subject Matter
   a. Foods and nutrition, diet therapy
   b. Child development and nursery education
   c. Home and institution management
   d. Family health and hygiene
   e. Family clothing
   f. Consumer education
   g. Management in family living -- (1) human resources, (2) materials, and (3) natural resources.

3. Supporting Courses
   a. Bacteriology
   b. Physiology
   c. General chemistry and bio-chemistry
   d. Education and psychology
   e. Sociology and extension methods

Personnel. In the beginning there will be five teachers including the dean. This number is needed to deal with the home economics subject matter that will be immediately required as presented above. It is expected that each teacher will be able to deal adequately with at least two related areas in home economics. More teachers will be needed as the four years emerge.

In addition to the teachers listed above, there should be two women as general assistants, a secretary, and a full time janitor.

Location. It has been considered desirable to locate the school of home economics on a campus where there are sufficient and scientific instructors available to handle the general cultural courses and the supporting courses. Stanleyville has been selected for the location of the school.

Currently there are two women in the USA from the Congo studying home economics. One of these, Mrs. Eunice Kasono, is studying at Howard University and hopes to obtain her B.S. degree in June 1966. She is studying on a full time scholarship provided through the Methodist Church.

Home Economics in Rhodesia, Liberia

No home economics is available at the college or university level in Rhodesia. However, at the University of Rhodesia in Salisbury, a Department of Agriculture is being considered that leads to the B.S. degree. With some probing, home economics could enter also.

In Liberia there is not much home economics taught in secondary schools and no work offered at the college and university level.
Status of Women in Newly-Independent Countries

African women are speaking out for themselves and their families. Thus there has been a great deal of up-grading of the position of African women since the end of colonial rule. This fact can be accounted for by several obvious factors. The first is that women have been speaking out for themselves and have sought assistance from many sources. Among these sources are their own government, non-governmental women's organizations, International womens organizations, (YWCA, International Association of University Women, the Committee of Correspondence,) and agencies of the United Nations.

These words from the preamble of the United Nations Charter --

We the peoples of the United Nations, determined.....to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity, and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women....

have served as a powerful stimulus for women in the newly independent countries.

In time the Status of Women Commission, under the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, may prove to be just the agency needed today to help the African Woman, and indeed all women, to help themselves. The Status of Women Commission feels that its first concern in working with any group of women should be given to equal political rights. It has considered that the possession of political rights is fundamental to the improvement of the status of women in all fields. With political rights one can participate in government and can help to draft legislation that will improve women's condition as needed.

Women hold cabinet posts and other high government offices in the following countries: (partial list) Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Kenya. Measures dealing with health, marriage laws, brides' price, education at all levels, and other social needs are dealt with more forthrightly by women in Africa now than in the immediate past.

For the most part heads of states in the newly independent countries are actively seeking advice from women as to the needs of education and social welfare. Many of these countries have a cabinet post headed by a woman to deal with women affairs. Guinea, a state in West Africa, has from the beginning, provided leadership in this area. In outlining the policy and principles in 1959 of the Guinea Democratic Party, President Toure gave a large section of his address to the emancipation of women. There is at present great opportunities for the development of Home Economics in the newly independent countries of Africa. We in the USA can share if we know how to communicate with a bold approach.