THE 2017 GHANA HOME ECONOMICS ASSOCIATION’S INTERNATIONAL BIENNIAL CONFERENCE REPORT

Venue: The Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, Ghana.

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TO

IFHE

BY

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Executive Summary

Most people in Ghana are ignorant about the importance of the principles of Home Economics in sustainable national development as a result, look down on the course and profession. The general opinion about the course is that, it is about the three “S,” which is ‘Stirring’ (cooking), ‘Sewing’ and ‘Sweeping’ (maintaining the home). On the contrary, Home Economics is deeper and wider than it seems. It draws from a range of disciplines to achieve optimal and sustainable living standards for individuals, families and communities. By implication, Home Economics is an academic discipline and a curriculum area connected to everyday living in households and in wider societal arenas. It is a science and an art. It applies knowledge in sciences and the arts. Therefore, the need to educate Ghanaians/Africans about the importance of practicing the principles of Home Economics and its related fields for healthy and sustainable nationwide family living cannot be overemphasized. This conference therefore, lays a foundation for a vigorous public education on the subject as well as improve its teaching and learning.

The 2017 international biennial conference was organized with the objective of putting the subject in its right perspective. The theme for the conference was: “Home Economics for Sustainable Job Creation and Healthy Lifestyle in Africa”. Sustainable job creation and healthy lifestyle matters in a multitude of ways that are both immediate and far-reaching, ranging from food security through processing and packaging, healthy living and work life balance, entrepreneurship, to natural resource management and environmental health among others.

The conference theme covered across-the-board spectrum of contemporary perspectives, methods, and applications, which investigate those processes and outcomes that are associated with sustainable job creation and healthy lifestyle. Particularly, submissions from researchers combined theory with practice under seven sub-themes. A preconference leadership program was organized for executives of the association who were mostly teachers from all the regions in Ghana.

Conference activities included an Opening Ceremony, Training Program for representatives of teachers in senior high schools and basic schools across the country. Research papers were presented by some researchers from Nigeria, Finland, United States of America, Canada and Ghana.

Four guest speakers graced the occasion during the opening ceremony. The Minister of Employment and Labour relations gave the keynote address. Her Excellency the First Lady of the Republic of Ghana, who happens to be the patron of the association was deputised by Honorable Mavis Hawa Koomson, the Minister for Special Development Initiatives. Other guest speakers shared their entrepreneurial experiences and encouraged participants to improve on their teaching skills in order to equip their students to become entrepreneurs.

There were breakout concurrent sessions after the opening ceremony. While basic and senior high school teachers were engaged in their highly interactive workshop, researchers were also presenting their papers at the same time. Participants received their certificates of participation at the end of the conference. Seventeen conference papers are being reviewed to select the ten best papers for publication in the international Journal of Home Economics. Emerald has promised to give awards to the three best papers as soon as they are declared.
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Introduction
The Ghana Home Economics Association (GHEA) was established in 1965 as a Professional Association of all Home Economists and its related fields in Ghana. It is a member of the International Federation for Home Economics.

Vision
To be a dynamic, visible, influential and prosperous association capable of supporting its members in the provision of leadership and excellence in home economics for improved quality of life of individuals, families, and communities.

Mission
The Ghana Home Economics Association leads and supports members in providing excellence in home economics for the improved quality of life of individuals, families and communities in Ghana.

Its Objectives are:

- Promoting the status of Home Economics in Ghana.
- Providing opportunities through conferences, symposia and seminars to discuss developments in Home Economics and its related fields
- Promoting better living standards in homes, communities and the nation
- Maintaining high professional standards of its members
- Encouraging research and studies in Home Economics at all levels
- Maintaining relations with international organizations working for the sustainable improvement of homes, families and national development.

The 2017 Ghana Home Economics Association International Biennial Conference
The Ghana Home Economics Association (GHEA) organised its 2017 international biennial Conference on the theme “Home Economics for Sustainable Job Creation and Healthy Lifestyle in Ghana/Africa. This theme was carved out of the theme of its mother association the International Federation of Home Economics (IFHE). The conference theme invited an across-the-board spectrum of contemporary perspectives, methods, and applications, which investigate those processes and outcomes that are associated with sustainable job creation and healthy lifestyle. Particularly, the conference committee invited papers that combined theory with practice under the sub-themes listed below.

1. Guaranteeing our future: local foods, innovation and value addition
2. Sustaining food security through processing and packaging
3. Healthy living and work life balance
4. Culture, tourism, textiles and entrepreneurship
5. Child development and wellbeing
6. Sustainable/renewable energy in the home
7. Rural urban migration, street hawking and kayayei
8. Natural resource management, environmental sanitation and national development
The conference was carefully planned in consonance with the objectives and mandate of the Association. It provided a platform for all Home Economists at all levels of education and in all sectors in Ghana, Nigeria, United States and Finland among others to discuss research findings at macro and micro levels in national development.

The conference comprised a pre-workshop leadership training programme for GHEA executive members from across the country, capacity building workshop for Basic and High School teachers, and paper presentations by faculty (researchers) and graduate students. Representatives of Home Economics teachers from all the regions in Ghana were in attendance. Conference delegates were from Ghana, United States of America, Finland and Nigeria.

**Conference Participants**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Upper East</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Upper West</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Northern</td>
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<td>Brong Ahafo</td>
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<td>Central</td>
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<td>Volta</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Greater Accra</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total no. of Teachers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ghanaian Participants</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guests</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>02</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>505</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Paper Presentations**

The call for abstracts began from March 3, to June 15, 2017. Over 50 abstracts were received and reviewed out of which 30 papers were selected for presentations.

The papers presented covered a wide range of subthemes including:

1. Home Economics Education for Job Creation
2. Guaranteeing our Future: Local Foods, Innovation and Value Addition
3. Sustaining FOOD Security through Processing and Packaging
4. Healthy Living and Work Life Balance
5. Culture, Tourism, Textile and Entrepreneurship
6. Child Development and Wellbeing
Pre-conference Leadership Program for Teachers

A pre-conference leadership workshop was organized for National executives and Regional chairpersons of GHEA on Wednesday 26th July 2017. Twenty-five (25) participants across all the regions were in attendance. Some of the topics discussed by the resource person included attributes of a good leader, visioning, leadership/managerial grid and followership.

Conference Workshops

One of the purposes of education is to enable students/pupils to learn the important subjects on the school curriculum so they can further their professional goals and function effectively at work, family life and society. The extent to which students learn to engage in and utilize knowledge gained in Home Economics for sustainable livelihood and national development depends substantially on how subject teachers are trained and their quality of teaching.

Accordingly, the skills of First Cycle and Second Cycle school teachers were sharpened through a training program designed specifically to improve their teaching and learning skills. The purpose of the program was to revive the learning of the subject and promote its usefulness in developing the entrepreneurial and healthy family living skills of the youth for sustainable national development.

We undertook a needs assessment to identify specific weaknesses of teachers in Senior High Schools and Basic Schools across the country. The outcome of the needs assessment was used to design the training program meant to enhance their teaching and learning skills.

The objective of the program was: To improve the teaching and learning skills of Home Economics teachers in Senior High Schools and Basic Schools. Topics treated during the two days conference workshop were:

1. Teaching Methodology
   a. Strategies for effective teaching
   b. Use of teaching equipment
   c. Preparation of lesson notes
2. motivating students to read the subject
3. involving the school administration in the teaching and learning of home Economics
4. Teacher Attitudes
5. Home Economics terminologies
6. Handling practical lessons: Clothing construction, foods and Nutrition and Management in Family Living
7. Empowerment: Assertiveness, Stress Management, and Self-Concept/efficacy

Conference Activities

Day One

The Conference began with an opening ceremony on the first day, Thursday 27th July. The day started as early as 7:30am, with delegates/ participants going through registration formalities. The morning began with a paper presentation by Hille Janhonen-Abroquah (Ph.D.) and Hanna Posti-Ahokas (Ph.D.) of University of Helsinki, Finland on the topic ‘Educating Home Economics Professionals for sustainable Jobs: Views Through Cultural Sustainability’. Their topic was central to the overall theme of the conference, specifically because it emphasized the need to look at job creation from the cultural contexts
of each nation. The paper also shared some perspectives on sustainability and best practice. This set the pace for the official opening. Delegates were warmly welcomed by the representative of the Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana (who was out of the country), and wished participants fruitful deliberations.

**Speeches**

**GHEA President**
The president of GHEA Dr. Enyonam C. Kudonoo gave her address by appealing to members of GHEA to be computer literates, and learn to adapt to changing trends due to the dynamic nature of the course. In explaining the need for adaptation, she explained that “if they (GHEA members) do not change with the changing trends, change will change them. According to her, it is a painful thing for an individual to allow change to change him/her. She called on all Home Economists to join forces to build a vibrant Association by opening up to accept change. She also indicated that GHEA should not struggle to help families to survive, but rather, they should strive to help families thrive. Accordingly, she proposed that GHEA slogan should be changed to “*Home Economics for family thriving*”. This according to her, is due to the fact that words create worlds in unintended ways. Thus, GHEA members should come together to create not just worlds but best worlds using positive words in communicating with one another and contributing innovative and creative ideas to help create jobs as well as promote healthy family living in the country. The President also lamented the fact that for 52 years of GHEA’s existence (since 1965), the Association has never been able to acquire a secretariat and also a website. She ended her speech by launching the new GHEA website she developed out of practically nothing (no pesewa from GHEA members) but, out of her own coffers and benevolent individuals who are not Home Economists but believe in her vision). She also appealed to government and the private sector to support GHEA in living up to its goal of creating jobs for Ghanaians through Home Economics literacy.

**The Minister for Employment and Labour Relations**
The minister of state, Honourable Ignatius Baffour - Awuah who gave the keynote address, promised to support GHEA as job creation was his ministry’s mandate. According to him, every woman who manages the home is a home economist. He further stated that he never knew about the importance of Home Economics education in national development till he started writing his keynote address. He consequently realized the need for every individual to have some knowledge in the subject in order to be healthy and productive. He concluded by stating that a nation with healthy individuals experiences high productivity. Consequently, students should be encouraged to read the subject and home economists should also live up to expectation.

**Her Excellency the First Lady of the Republic of Ghana**
The first lady of the republic of Ghana, who is also the patron of GHEA was the special guest of Honour. Though she was away on an equally important official duty outside the country, she was deputised by a lady minister (Minister for Special Development Initiatives). The speech read on her behalf emphasized the need for Home Economists to lay emphasis on the identification of opportunities for creating jobs and how these identified opportunities can be translated into several jobs that would touch and transform lives, make an impact and create positive change in the communities in which the jobs are created.

As the patron of “*Infant Malaria*” a charity that strives to prevent malaria in children in Ghana, the 1st Lady believes Home Economists are well suited to join the fight against malaria in children and
adults, achieving their aim of ensuring a healthy population while creating sustainable jobs. In the fight against malaria, opportunities exist to address the challenges associated with environmental sanitation and the eradication of pools of stagnant water that serve as breeding grounds for mosquitoes in Ghana.

With their training in food science, nutrition, child development, the management of resources and extension, Home Economists have the tools and required skillset to create jobs throughout the various stages of life from when a child is conceived right through their education, adult life, marriage and old age.

She further stated that, street vending in Ghana provides some challenges and creates additional opportunities for job creation. She posed questions such as: How can we deliver the goods and services much needed by motorists in a safe manner without exposing street vendors to the risks and dangers associated with having to navigate between moving vehicles to make their sales? How do we ensure the safety of fresh-cut fruits being sold on our streets, when we know that without adequate refrigeration, there is the risk of microbial growth and potential for the occurrence of food borne illness? With cocoa being our major export crop, how can we innovate and include cocoa in our daily meals and snacks, beyond what currently exists? “These are some of the many questions that you as Home Economists can deliberate upon and find answers to.” (Excerpts from H.E. the First Lady’s speech) There are many job opportunities hidden within these questions. Over these two days, I trust that your deliberations will unearth ways in which Home Economics can be used to create sustainable jobs and maintain healthy lifestyles throughout Africa.” She wished participants the very best as they interact, deliberate and discuss the role of the Home Economist in moving our great nation forward.

Other Guest Speakers

There were other speeches by established entrepreneurs who encouraged participants not to wait for huge sums of money but to start small and work hard to achieve success. One of the entrepreneurs (Madam Amesika Barbara Baëta) emphasized the need to have the right attitude towards everything one does. She gave detailed explanation of what attitude is, how it is formed, what changes it and its importance to job creation and healthy lifestyle. She emphasized the need to start from a humble beginning and shared her story of success (from how she started to present) to motivate participants to teach their students well and imbibe entrepreneurial skills in them for sustainable job creation and healthy family lifestyle.

Apostle Dr. Alex K. Nkrumah, one of the guest speakers also emphasized the need for teachers to be mindful of the impact their attitude makes on student’s desire to pursue a particular profession. According to him, home economics teachers must not take their role in society lightly, since their duty is to promote healthy family lifestyles in every community they live in. He reiterated the fact that their job as teachers is a calling they need to fulfil and that one day, they will be held accountable for their actions or inactions. He then prayed to bring the opening ceremony to an end, giving way to breakout concurrent sessions in the afternoon and the following day. Group pictures were taken as a memoire.

Panel Discussion

A panel discussion on the topic “Moving the Home Economics Profession Forward” had five panellists sharing their rich experiences. It was a highly interactive session with participants contributing innovative and creative ideas concerning the way forward.
The panel discussion session was followed by a short snack break after which there were three concurrent breakout sessions. The sessions were based on themes generated from the abstracts submitted. Below is a list of the sessions.

1. Home Economics Education for Job Creation
2. Guaranteeing our Future: Local Foods, Innovation and Value Addition
3. Sustaining FOOD Security through Processing and Packaging
4. Healthy Living and Work Life Balance
5. Culture, Tourism, Textile and Entrepreneurship
6. Child Development and Wellbeing

The session held in the main Auditorium addressed teachers’ pedagogical issues. The other two sessions had researchers presenting their research papers concurrently.

**Day Two**

The day’s activities began at 8am prompt after participants had gone through registration procedures. There was a continuation of concurrent sessions as researchers presented their papers whilst teachers continued their discussion on best practices for effective teaching.

The conference came to a close at 5pm, after participants had been issued certificates of participation.

**Awards**

Due to the late submission of full papers by majority of authors, the winner of the best paper was not declared. It has been postponed until all 17 papers are reviewed by a team of editors after which Emerald will be communicated to, to give the award as promised.

**Publication of Conference Papers**

International Federation of Home Economics Journal (IJOHE) has promised to publish the best papers after review.

**Challenges**

1. Invitation letters not reaching the regional and district offices on time for teachers to be released and sponsored to attend skills enhancing programmes designed for them.
2. Lack of funds to engage Home Economics teachers and students in entrepreneurship projects that enhance the teaching and learning of the subject.

**The way forward**

1. GHEA in collaboration with the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) have planned to conduct biannual continuous professional development programs for Home Economics Teachers across the country.
2. There are ongoing discussions with international NGOs to partner with them to undertake job creation and healthy lifestyle activities. For instance, GHEA is planning a collaboration with GIZ under their Employment for Sustainable Development Project.
3. There is a plan underway to launch the **Best Home Economics Teacher Award** to motivate teachers in the field to put in their best.
4. High school students will be engaged in activities to develop their entrepreneurial skills, e.g., the Tasty Tom High School Kitchen competition, fashion and design, and handicrafts (e.g., accessories, clothes, processed local foods, etc.).

**Picture Gallery**

Conference banner

Group picture of some Participants

GHEA president, a guest speaker and some international delegates
A section of participants during panel discussion
Cross sections of participants during interactive conference workshop.
Breakout sessions- conference paper presentation
GHEA executives after pre-conference leadership workshop

Participant receiving a certificate of Participation