
CHILD DEVELOPMENT COMPETENCY INTEGRATION IN HOME MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: EVIDENCE FOR CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT AND FAMILY POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN KOGI STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study looked at child development competencies in Home Management Education in Kogi State, Nigeria, as a basis for curriculum improvement and family policy development. The study used two different theories and several literatures review to identify child development competencies in Home Management Education. The study maintained that instruction remains predominantly theoretical, hindered by outdated curriculum content, teacher-centered methodologies, and a systemic lack of instructional facilities such as childcare laboratories. Theoretically, the study anchored on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory and literatures was established to understand child development elements which exist within the Home Economics framework, their integration was often fragmented and lacks experiential depth. Findings indicate that inadequate teacher professional development and the absence of simulation-based learning environments significantly impede competency acquisition. Furthermore, the study underscored the foundational role of the home environment in cognitive, emotional, and social development, highlighting the necessity for learners to master these dynamics to contribute to national human capital formation. The study concludes that effective competency integration requires a holistic transition from rote learning to learner-centered pedagogy. Recommendations include a comprehensive restructuring of the Home Management curriculum to align with contemporary developmental theories, the provision of functional demonstration centers, and mandatory capacity-building workshops for educators.

Keywords: Child Development Competency, Home Management Education, Curriculum Improvement, Family Policy, Kogi State, Vocational Education.

Introduction

Education is a critical instrument for national development, social transformation, and economic growth, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria where human capital development is central to national progress. Child development remains a fundamental concern in education, family life, and national development discourse due to its direct influence on the formation of human capital and lifelong outcomes (Tran, Luchters, & Fisher, 2017). Child development refers to the progressive changes that occur in a child's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social capacities from infancy through adolescence (Goodway, Ozmun, & Gallahue, 2019). These developmental domains are interdependent and are shaped by both biological endowment and environmental influences, particularly the family and educational contexts in which the child is nurtured. Pan, et al (2025) emphasizes that early childhood

experiences and continuous developmental competencies support systems significantly determine children's academic success, social adjustment, and economic productivity in adulthood.

Child development competencies encompass the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values required to support optimal growth and development in children (Wijaya, et al 2023). These competencies are not only expected of caregivers and parents but are increasingly being recognized as essential learning outcomes for students, particularly within family-oriented educational disciplines. Child development competencies include understanding developmental stages, providing appropriate care and stimulation, fostering emotional security, ensuring proper nutrition and health, and creating supportive learning environments (Ilahy, et al 2025). These competencies are developed through both formal instruction and informal experiences within the home learning environment. Home learning environment (HLE) has been identified as a determinant of children's competency development, which includes both structured and unstructured interactions between caregivers and children, such as shared reading, play, communication, and daily routines (Niklas, et al 2021). Niklas, et al (2021), shows that the quality of the HLE significantly influences children's literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills, as well as their long-term educational trajectories. Hence, the HLE is not limited to deliberate teaching but also includes incidental learning experiences embedded in everyday family life. This underscores the importance of equipping individuals especially future parents with the competencies required to create enriching developmental environments through Home Management Education.

Home Management Education is a discipline that focuses on the efficient utilization of human and material resources within the family setting to achieve optimal well-being. Home Management Education is conceptualized under Home Economics or Family and Consumer Sciences which provides a structured platform for developing such competencies. Home Economics is an interdisciplinary field that focuses on human development, family living, resource management, nutrition, clothing, and housing, all of which are essential for improving individual and family well-being, which equips learners with practical life skills and decision-making abilities necessary for managing personal and family life effectively (Hekmat, Hekmat, & Karrimi, 2025). Thus, Home Management Education serves as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical application in everyday living. An important dimension of Home Management Education is its emphasis on integrative learning, which involves combining knowledge, skills, and values from multiple disciplines to address real-life challenges. Integrative approaches in Home Economics have been shown by Heinmae, Callaghan, & Taar,

(2025) to enhance students' ability to apply learning across contexts, thereby fostering holistic development and problem-solving skills. Despite this potential, current curricula often treat child development as a discrete area rather than integrating it comprehensively across various components of Home Management Education.

The integration of child development competencies into Home Management Education is essential for preparing individuals particularly students, future parents, and caregivers to effectively perform their roles in raising well-adjusted and productive members of society. This integration ensures that learners are not only exposed to theoretical pedagogy concepts but are also equipped with practical skills such as child care practices, developmental assessment, health monitoring, emotional support, and behavior management (Jeong, et al 2021). Effective integration implies that child development concepts are systematically embedded in the curriculum, taught using appropriate pedagogical approaches, and reinforced through practical experiences. rapid socio-economic changes, including urbanization, changing family structures, and increased participation of women in the workforce, have altered traditional caregiving patterns, thereby necessitating a more structured and competency-based approach to preparing individuals for family responsibilities.

This requires the incorporation of practical, experiential, and learner-centered pedagogies that facilitate the development of relevant skills and attitudes. Curriculum improvement involves revising content, teaching methods, assessment strategies, and learning resources to ensure that they adequately reflect the realities of child development and family life (Chhatria, et al, 2024). The integration has implications for family policy development, where educational research can inform policies aimed at strengthening family support systems, promoting effective parenting practices, and enhancing early childhood development outcomes (Berger & Font 2015). Therefore, educational curricula with family policy objectives, becomes possible to create a coherent framework that supports both individual learning and societal well-being. In Kogi State, child development competencies integration into Home Management Education remains uncertain. Despite the importance of child development in fostering strong family systems and national development, there are concerns regarding inadequate curriculum content, limited practical exposure, insufficient teaching resources, and gaps in teacher preparedness. These challenges hinder the development of essential competencies among learners, thereby affecting their ability to apply child development principles in real-life situations. Furthermore, weak integration of these competencies contribute to broader societal issues such as poor parenting practices, child neglect, and suboptimal child outcomes. This study, therefore, investigated to provide evidence for child

development competency integration in Home Management Education for curriculum improvement and family policy development in Kogi State Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Child development competency is critical, as it prepares learners to understand the physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of children within the family and society. However, in Kogi State, the integration of child development competencies into Home Management Education have not be effectively implemented due to the fact that many students completing Home Management Education programmes demonstrate limited practical understanding of child growth and development principles after graduation. Instruction in some schools appears to be overly theoretical, with inadequate opportunities for experiential learning such as childcare simulations, observation, and community-based practices. As a result, learners lack the necessary skills to apply child development knowledge in real-life family settings. This therefore undermines the objective of producing competent individuals capable of promoting healthy child upbringing and family well-being.

Also, the inadequate integration of child development competencies within the curriculum and instructional delivery has been an issue, were some curriculum content are outdated, fragmented, or insufficiently aligned with contemporary child development theories and practices. Teaching methods are often teacher-centered, limiting students' active participation and skill acquisition. Several factors appear to contribute to this problem. These include inadequate teacher preparation and professional development in modern child development practices, lack of instructional materials and facilities such as model childcare centers or laboratories, and limited exposure to practical experiences. Thus, without adequate competencies, graduates be ill-prepared to contribute meaningfully to family life, community development, and national human capital formation. There is therefore a pressing need to systematically assess how child development competencies are integrated into teaching and learning processes, identify existing gaps, and provide evidence-based recommendations for improvement. It is against this background that this study becomes necessary that the researcher assessed the level of child development competency integration in Home Management Education in Kogi State. The findings of this study enhanced the quality of Home Economics education, strengthen family life education, and support policies aimed at promoting child well-being and sustainable societal development.

Literature Review

Home Management Education

Home Management Education is a core component of Home Economics that focuses on equipping learners with knowledge and skills required for effective family living, including nutrition, childcare, resource management, and household decision-making. It is designed to promote the well-being of individuals and families through the acquisition of practical life skills and competencies. Akande, Adebayo and Tihamiyu (2024), emphasizes that Home Economics education contributes significantly to improving standards of living, family stability, and national development by equipping learners with employable and life-sustaining skills. Thus, Home Management Education integrates multiple domains, including child development, which is essential for nurturing healthy and productive future citizens.

Child Development Competencies

Child development competencies refer to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices required to support the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development of children. These competencies include understanding developmental stages, providing appropriate care, ensuring nutrition, promoting learning, and safeguarding child welfare (Breiner, Ford, Gadsden 2016). Thus, child development is described as a continuous process involving physical growth, emotional maturity, cognitive advancement, and social interaction from infancy to adulthood. In Home Management Education, these competencies are critical because they prepare learners especially future parents and caregivers to create nurturing environments that support optimal child growth.

Curriculum Integration on the Extent of Integration of Child Development Competencies

Curriculum integration refers to the extent to which specific competencies, such as child development, are embedded within course content, teaching methods, and learning experiences. Effective integration ensures that theoretical knowledge is translated into practical skills that can be applied in real-life situations (Suputra, et al, 2024). Beinert, et al (2021) indicates that while Home Economics curricula are often well-structured, there is frequently a gap between curriculum content and the actual application of competencies in everyday life. This suggests that integration must go beyond content inclusion to include practical teaching strategies and experiential learning. (Pam, 2024) suggest that Home Economics education includes components of child development; however, the depth and effectiveness of integration vary significantly. Child development topics such as growth stages, childcare practices, and

health are often included in the curriculum but not be adequately emphasized in teaching practice. Yüksel, Green, and Vlach, (2025), noted that although students are taught relevant competencies, their ability to apply these skills in real-life contexts remains inconsistent, indicating partial or ineffective integration. This highlights the need for more practical and experiential teaching approaches.

Teacher competences are the role in the integration of child development competencies. Studies reveal that instructors' pedagogical skills, experience, and subject knowledge significantly influence students' learning outcomes (Amadi-Ali, 2025). Where teachers lack adequate training in child development or modern instructional methods, the effectiveness of competency integration is compromised. Research also indicates that instructors' teaching methods directly affect students' attitudes and engagement in Home Economics education (Blazar, and Kraft 2017).

Teaching Methods, Instructional Resources and Learning Environment

Availability of instructional materials such as teaching aids, childcare equipment, and demonstration facilities is essential for effective learning. The lack of functional facilities limits students' exposure to real-life childcare practices, thereby reducing the effectiveness of competency acquisition. This means that resource constraints negatively impact skill development in vocational education (Rad, et al 2022). Thus, effective integration of child development competencies requires learner-centered teaching methods such as demonstrations, simulations, role-playing, and project-based learning. Traditional lecture-based approaches are often insufficient for developing practical competencies. Kong (2021), shows that experiential learning enhances skill acquisition and retention, enabling students to apply knowledge in real-life situations. However, many institutions still rely heavily on theoretical teaching methods, limiting the practical application of child development knowledge. Institutional support, including curriculum design, supervision, funding, and policy implementation, should play crucial role in competency integration, because weak institutional frameworks often result in poor curriculum implementation and inadequate monitoring of teaching practices. Although Nigeria's educational policies emphasize skill acquisition and functional education, gaps in implementation persist due to inadequate funding, poor supervision, and lack of accountability.

Role of Home Environment on Child Development and Family Context

The home environment and family context constitute one of the most powerful and immediate influences on individuals' behaviour, particularly in areas related to consumption,

lifestyle, fashion preferences, and nutritional food choices. Home environment refers to the physical, social, economic, and psychological conditions within the household, while family context encompasses parental influence, family structure, cultural norms, values, and interaction patterns that shape behavior (Schmeer and Yoon 2016). These two constructs are deeply interconnected and play a foundational role in shaping the consumer behaviour of Home Economics students, especially as it relates to social media influence, fashion selection, and dietary practices. Breiner H, Ford M, (2016), emphasizes that the home is the primary setting where behavioural patterns are formed and reinforced. Individuals, particularly young people and students, acquire attitudes, beliefs, and habits through continuous interaction with family members. Significant proportion of daily food consumption occurs within the home, making it a critical environment for shaping dietary habits and preferences. Similarly, family systems serve as primary agents of socialization where values, norms, and consumption behaviours are transmitted across generations. Therefore, the role of home environment and family context in influencing consumer behaviour can be examined under several key dimensions:

Role in Cognitive Development: The home environment significantly shapes children's intellectual growth and learning abilities. Access to educational materials, parental involvement in learning, and stimulation through interaction all contribute to cognitive development. Yang, et al (2021), indicates that home-rearing environments are strongly associated with children's academic competence and cognitive functioning. Children exposed to literacy activities such as reading, storytelling, and problem-solving tasks tend to develop better language, numeracy, and reasoning skills. Similarly, a stimulating home environment encourages curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking. Furthermore, Lobo, et al (2025), shown that home learning environments influence early mathematical and problem-solving abilities, which form the foundation for later academic success.

Role in Emotional Development: The emotional climate of the home is characterized by love, warmth, support, or hostility which helps in shaping a child's emotional well-being. A nurturing family environment promotes emotional security, self-esteem, and resilience, while a negative or stressful environment may lead to anxiety, aggression, or withdrawal. Wang (2023), shows that early family nurturing environments significantly influence children's emotional and social development, including their ability to regulate emotions and form healthy relationships. In addition, emotional harshness or instability within the home has been linked to poor developmental outcomes, highlighting the importance of positive parenting practices.

Role in Social Development: The home environment is the first setting where children learn social norms, values, and behaviours. Through interactions with parents, siblings, and

other family members, children develop essential social skills such as communication, cooperation, empathy, and conflict resolution. Breiner, Ford and Gadsden (2016), reveal that the emotional quality of the home environment strongly influences children's prosocial behaviour, including kindness, sharing, and cooperation. Children raised in supportive and communicative households are more likely to exhibit positive social behaviours and build healthy interpersonal relationships.

Role in Behavioural Development: The home environment plays a fundamental role in shaping children's behaviour patterns. Parenting styles, discipline methods, and family routines influence how children behave and respond to situations. Consistent discipline, clear expectations, and positive reinforcement contribute to desirable behaviours, while inconsistent or harsh parenting may lead to behavioural problems. Studies show that the home environment is closely linked to children's self-regulation abilities, which affect attention, impulse control, and behavioural adjustment.

Role in Physical and Health Development: The home environment directly affects children's physical health and overall well-being. Factors such as nutrition, hygiene, living conditions, and access to healthcare play significant roles in physical development. A well-structured home that provides balanced nutrition, safe living conditions, and proper healthcare supports healthy growth. Conversely, poor home conditions may lead to malnutrition, illness, and developmental delays. Jiang, et al (2024), shows that inadequate home nurturing environments are associated with increased risks of neurodevelopmental delays in children.

Role in Language Development: Language development is strongly influenced by the quality of communication within the home. Children learn language primarily through interaction with caregivers. Homes that provide rich verbal interaction, storytelling, and exposure to diverse vocabulary foster better language acquisition. On the other hand, limited communication or excessive passive screen exposure may hinder language development. da Silva Junior, et al (2025), highlights that the context of family interaction significantly shapes language outcomes, sometimes more than screen exposure itself.

Role in Moral and Value Development: The family serves as the primary agent of socialization where children learn moral values, cultural norms, and ethical standards. Parents and caregivers transmit values such as honesty, responsibility, respect, and empathy through modelling and instruction. These values guide children's behaviour and decision-making throughout life (Breiner, Ford and Gadsden 2016). The home environment thus plays a critical role in shaping a child's character and moral development.

Role in Academic Achievement: The home environment influences academic success through parental expectations, involvement, and support. Gu, Hassan, and Sulaiman, (2024), show that family environment factors can mediate up to a significant proportion of children's academic achievement outcomes, highlighting the role of parenting, home resources, and educational support. Thus, parents who set high expectations and actively participate in their children's education tend to raise academically successful children.

Role in Digital and Media Exposure: In contemporary society, the home environment also determines children's exposure to digital technologies and media. Parental regulation of screen time, type of content accessed, and co-viewing practices influence how digital media affects children. Khanani, et al (2025), indicates that screen time and digital exposure within the home environment indirectly affect children's behavioural and academic outcomes. Thus, the family context plays a crucial role in shaping healthy digital habits.

Role in Identity Formation and Personality Development: The home environment contributes to the formation of a child's identity and personality traits. Through family interactions, children develop self-concept, confidence, and a sense of belonging. Positive family relationships foster strong identity development, while dysfunctional family environments may lead to identity confusion or low self-worth (Elshanum 2024).

Role in Family Context and Intergenerational Influence: The home environment operates within a broader family context that includes cultural traditions, socio-economic status, and intergenerational influences. Family context determines the values, beliefs, and practices transmitted across generations. It also shapes access to resources and opportunities that influence child development. Importantly, family environments interact with genetic factors, meaning that development is influenced by both heredity and environmental conditions working together (Feinberg, et al 2022).

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on human development theory and Constructivist Learning theory

Human Development Theory

Human Development Theory is largely attributed to Urie Bronfenbrenner in (1979), with additional foundational contributions from scholars such as Jean Piaget (1952) and Erik Erikson (1950). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, a major strand of human development theory, explains that a child's development is influenced by multiple environmental systems ranging from the immediate family to broader societal contexts. Human Development Theory shows that children grow and develop through sequential and predictable

stages, and each stage is characterized by specific physical, cognitive, emotional, and social developmental tasks. Successful development depends on the quality of interaction between the child and their environment, particularly the family, school, and community. The theory further emphasizes that appropriate support, stimulation, and guidance at each developmental stage are critical for achieving optimal developmental outcomes. In addition, Piaget's cognitive development perspective highlights that children actively construct knowledge as they progress through stages such as the sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational stages. Erikson's psychosocial theory also underscores that individuals pass through eight stages of development, each involving a crisis that must be resolved for healthy personality development.

This theory is highly relevant to the study as it underscores the importance of equipping Home Management Education students with adequate child development competencies. Understanding developmental stages enables future caregivers, parents, and educators to provide age-appropriate care, guidance, and learning experiences for children.

Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist Learning Theory is primarily propounded by Jean Piaget in (1952) and later expanded by Lev Vygotsky in (1978). This theory posits that learning is an active, constructive process in which learners build new knowledge based on their prior experiences and interactions with their environment. Constructivist Learning Theory shows **that** knowledge is not passively received but actively constructed by the learner through engagement, exploration, and reflection. Learning occurs most effectively when learners are involved in meaningful activities that allow them to apply concepts in real-life situations. Vygotsky further introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which emphasizes the role of social interaction and guided learning in cognitive development. This theory is directly applicable to the integration of child development competencies in Home Management Education. It implies that students should not only learn theoretical aspects of child development but also engage in practical, hands-on activities such as child care simulations, role-playing, observation, and real-life applications. Constructivist Learning Theory further supports the need for curriculum improvement by advocating for teaching methods that actively involve students in learning child development concepts. It also reinforces the idea that competency-based education is essential for preparing students to function effectively in family and societal roles. By adopting constructivist approaches, Home Management Education in Kogi State can produce graduates who are better equipped with

practical skills necessary for child upbringing and family management, thereby contributing to effective family policy development.

Major Findings

The following are the findings from the study

1. The level of integration of child development competencies into Home Management Education in Kogi State was moderate and inadequate.
2. Students possessed limited practical competencies in child development despite receiving classroom instruction.
3. Teacher competence significantly influenced the integration of child development competencies.
4. Teaching methods employed in Home Management Education were predominantly teacher-centred.
5. Instructional resources and learning facilities were inadequate.
6. Institutional support for competency integration was insufficient.
7. The home environment and family context were found to play a significant role in reinforcing child development competencies.
8. The study established that experiential and learner-centred instructional approaches significantly enhanced competency acquisition.
9. There was a noticeable gap between curriculum content and practical application.

Implications for Curriculum Improvement

The literature suggests that curriculum improvement should focus on: strengthening the practical components of child development education, incorporating modern teaching strategies and digital tools, enhancing teacher training and professional development, providing adequate instructional resources and facilities, ensuring continuous curriculum evaluation and feedback mechanisms

Conclusion

This study examined the integration of child development competencies in Home Management Education in Kogi State within the broader context of family life, teaching practices, and learning environments. The study underscores that child development competency is a fundamental component of Home Economics education, as it equips learners with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective child care, family management, and societal development. However, despite its importance, the study reveals that the

integration of these competencies into teaching and learning processes remains inadequate and largely ineffective. Furthermore, the study highlights that curriculum integration of child development competencies is often fragmented and outdated, lacking alignment with contemporary theories and practical realities of child development. While elements of child development exist within the curriculum, their depth, coherence, and practical application remain insufficient. Teacher-related factors also emerged as critical determinants of effective competency integration. Inadequate teacher preparation, limited professional development opportunities, and reliance on teacher-centered instructional methods significantly hinder the delivery of competency-based education. In addition, the lack of instructional resources, such as childcare laboratories, teaching aids, and demonstration facilities, further constrains the development of practical skills among students. Therefore, the inability of graduates to effectively apply child development competencies has far-reaching implications for family well-being, child upbringing, and national development. Anchored on Human Development Theory and Constructivist Learning Theory, the study concludes that effective integration of child development competencies requires a holistic approach that combines curriculum improvement, learner-centered pedagogy, teacher capacity development, and provision of adequate learning resources. Without these, the goal of producing competent individuals capable of fostering healthy child development and sustainable family systems cannot be fully achieved. In essence, the study establishes that strengthening the integration of child development competencies in Home Management Education is not only an educational necessity but also a societal imperative for promoting child welfare, family stability, and human capital development in Kogi State and beyond.

Recommendations

Based on the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. There is a need for periodic review and restructuring of the Home Management Education curriculum to ensure that child development competencies are fully integrated, up-to-date, and aligned with current global practices.
2. Teachers should adopt innovative instructional strategies such as simulations, role-playing, project-based learning, fieldwork, and childcare observations.
3. Government and educational authorities should organize regular training, workshops, and seminars for Home Management teachers to update their knowledge in modern child development practices and pedagogical skills.

4. Schools should be equipped with functional childcare laboratories, teaching aids, and demonstration materials that will enable practical learning.
5. Educational stakeholders, including government agencies and school administrators, should ensure effective supervision, funding, and implementation of policies related to vocational and Home Economics education.

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