

Home economics, the COVID-19 global pandemic and beyond

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Abstract

As the world continues to pivot in response to the disruptive influences of the COVID-19 pandemic, our everyday lives are suspended in a liminal space—no longer completely familiar and lacking predictability; but not yet reconstituted to the new normal, indeed not knowing when and what that might be. We are in a transition space. In this paper, we explore the impact of the pandemic on those domains most familiar to home economics—individual, family and community—and look at key interfaces where home economics literacy has the potential to contribute to shaping our future, including: the notion of home; food literacy; financial literacy; social and emotional wellbeing; and building sustainable futures. Finally, we present a visual story of the Special Issue of the International Journal of Home Economics dedicated to the COVID-19 pandemic, to determine what home economists are focussing on at this time of global crisis.

Introduction

The 11th March 2020 is a date that signifies a change that has affected all of humankind in ways that we could not imagine. It was on this day the World Health Organization [WHO] (2020a) officially declared the viral infection emanating from a novel coronavirus and previously named COVID-19, a global pandemic. Up until that time, it had been characterised as a public health crisis. Three months later, on 2 June 2020, the records reveal 6,361,612 Coronavirus (COVID-19) cases with 377,150 deaths, and 2,900,072 recoveries recorded in 216 countries (Worldometer, 2020). A year later to the exact day—2 June 2021—there have been 171,962,456 cases, 3,576,847 deaths and 154,475,855 recoveries in 220 countries (Worldometer, 2021). These numbers are regarded as being an underestimation due to a range of factors including: a lack of efficacious tests and testing equipment; the need to prioritise rapid responses to the crisis; lack of confidence in the accuracy of statistical reporting; among a wide variety of other factors.

The death rate around the world is not consistent, reflecting a range of contextual impacts such as: management approaches, access to resources, and geopolitical forces. Hence, the pandemic does not impact equally globally, as visually represented in Figure 1, which displays the death rate per million in countries around the world.

Timeline to a pandemic

There are a number of significant dates that serve as key markers in the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic to date, as presented in Figure 2.

The pandemic has had a dramatic effect on the global community, not least of which is the unambiguous confirmation of the fragility of human life and the inadequacies of our capacity to respond to the scale and persistence of this challenge. As the scientific knowledge about the novel coronavirus deepens, the ability to put in place appropriate behavioural, social and medical responses

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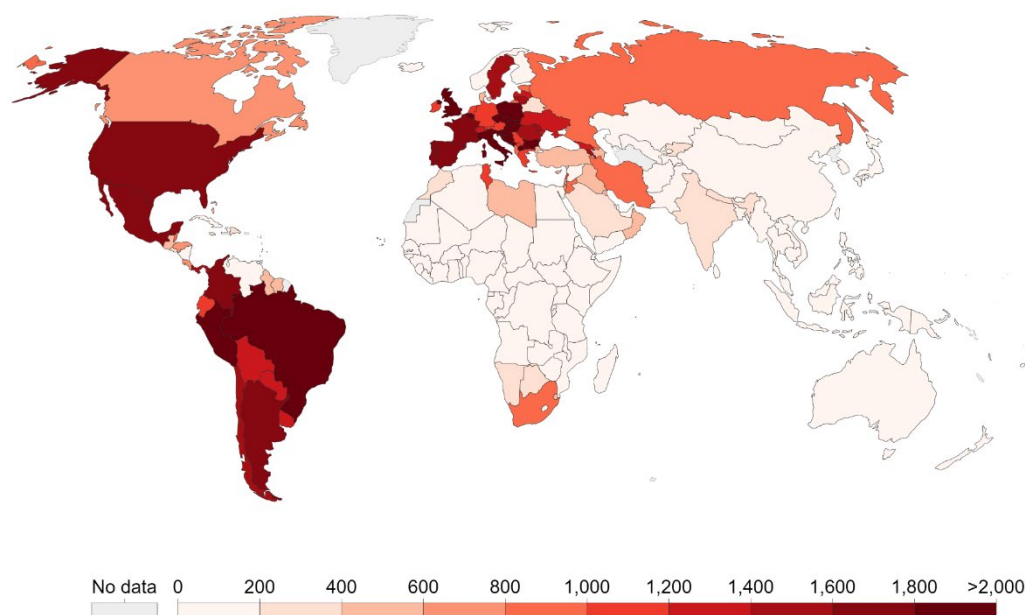
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is also evolving. Behavioural responses including: wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, face shields and gloves; frequent deep handwashing; wiping down surfaces with alcohol; and maintaining a physical distance to remain outside the range of aerosol droplet exchange, offer the first and most accessible level of defence. These are also disruptive to everyday living and have required short- and long-term restrictions and lockdowns in hotspots. A hotspot is identified when a growing number of people in a specific location are found to be exponentially catching the virus via locally acquired transmission. In particular, hotspots occur in high density population areas such as airports, certain suburbs or residential facilities for the elderly. Regardless, as mutant forms of the virus quickly evolve, the need for vaccination that lessens the intensity of the viral impact and builds immunity, particularly herd immunity, is the only conceivable way to imagine a future that may see features of our past life return.

Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 deaths per million people



Limited testing and challenges in the attribution of the cause of death means that the number of confirmed deaths may not be an accurate count of the true number of deaths from COVID-19.



Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

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Figure 1 Confirmed COVID-19 deaths per million people by country

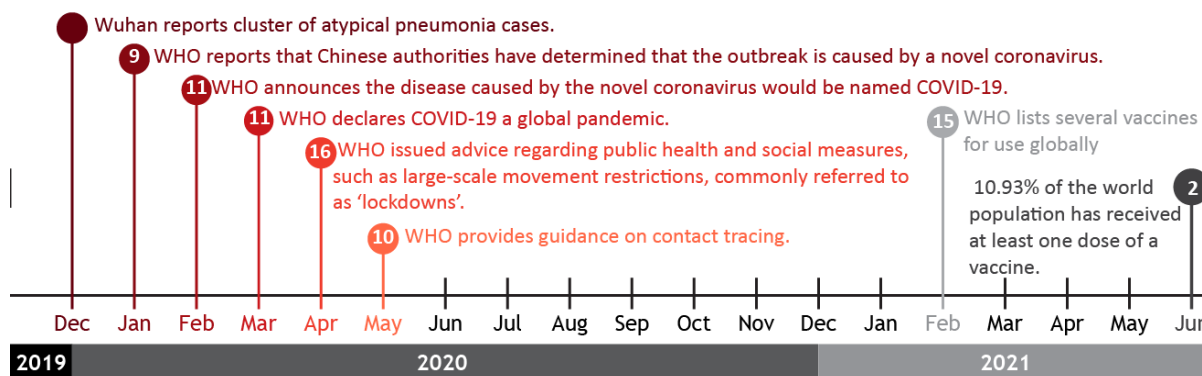


Figure 2 Key dates in the COVID-19 pandemic (Developed from Mathieu et al., 2021; WHO, 2021a).

Liminality: The transition phase

During an event such as this unprecedented pandemic, it is an important moment to capture current reactions, responses and research. According to Harris and Dakin (2020), it is imperative to ensure rapid innovation is underpinned by quality principles and features careful evaluation to enable “organisations to capture and evaluate these learnings: to identify what has worked, what has utility going forward, and what could or should be discarded” (p. 3). Phases of response are typically: crisis, adaptation, and opportunity. But it is not quite as simple as these three steps, given the breadth, depth, and comprehensiveness of the impact of the pandemic on every aspect of our lives. The loss of partitions separating what are typically binaries such as: home and work; private and public; home and school; leisure and work;—the list goes on—calls for a different way to understand the current scenario.

Bell (2021) provides a powerful way of potentially understanding our novel experience of the pandemic and the major transitions that are featured, and in so doing, potentially providing a way to make sense of the pandemic. Bell describes three phases typical of transition:

- Rituals to separate (leaving the world we care about)
- Liminal space (in between; crossing over; threshold; a waiting space; opportunity for transformation)
- Space of reincorporation (what are the new rituals).

The rapidity of the response to the pandemic meant that some of the rituals to separate were not fulfilled and this has the potential to impact long-term. We have moved from the liminal to an extent, and we are currently shaping the space of reincorporation. So this is where we can focus our energies as individuals, communities, and professionals. But first it is important to gain an understanding of the liminal space in which we co-exist at this time, as we struggle for signs that reincorporation might commence. Hints that reincorporation will not lead to a return to ‘normal’ but to a ‘new normal’ are increasingly apparent, and while the promise of vaccinations and achieving herd immunity are now common conversations around the globe, the reality that behavioural change is required to maintain a reasonably safe community is perceptible. The new normal is likely to feature regular vaccinations, continued mask wearing, social distancing and mandated space allowances, recording activities and contact tracing when outbreaks occur, and other recommended behavioural modifications, such as intense handwashing, avoiding shaking hands, and intentional cleaning of surfaces.

The infodemic: intersections between behaviour change and information literacy—facts and falsehoods

Forced or imposed behaviour change can be a distressing event for anyone. To take control of the pandemic, health agencies have called for some simple-to-implement strategies. Authorities are asking people to socially distance, wear PPE, increase frequency and intensity of hygiene practices and get vaccinated. These requests are not “new” per se, but because of the fast acting and serious health consequences of COVID-19, public health messages through television and social media have become pervasive. Observations of media commentary to health directives have seen mixed public reactions on a continuum of proactive to contemporaneous. Considering public divisiveness, it is important to acknowledge how “official” pandemic health messages are constructed, disseminated and received by the public. Public health messages are typically informed by application of behaviour change theory (Nutbeam, 2000), for example, in Australia, Albert Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory underpinned smoking cessation advertising and seatbelt wearing mandates.

Individual behaviour change is one of the hardest aspects of health and wellbeing to tackle. Complex factors contribute to up-take or resistance to a forced or imposed request for behaviour change (Nutbeam, 2000). Several mechanisms for changing behaviours are used to alter health behaviours. In their review of scientific literature relating to infectious diseases Weston et al. (2020) identified some of the more prominent theoretical models used to impact behaviour change including attitudes and beliefs about infectious diseases, vaccinations and health intervention strategies. They identified theoretical models used to include the Health Belief Model, Theory of Planned Behaviour, and Protection Motivation Theory; as the most common, followed by the Precaution Adoption Process Model, Extended Parallel Process Model, Theory of Reasoned Action, and Social Cognitive Theory (Weston et al., 2020). Regardless of the theoretical modelling used to enact behaviour change, the individual is the one ultimately responsible for the requested/required changes in behaviour. On the

face of it, the health directives are simple requests but are expounded by complex circumstances and sometimes, polarised points of view.

In the case of the pandemic, individuals have been forced by government agencies into their homes, directed to change habits, and discouraged from close human contact. Many aspects of a “normal” everyday life were disrupted. Some people may feel that the impositions are an attack on personal freedoms. Some people may, or may not, trust authority. Some people believe in science, some do not. Consequently, the prevalence of half-truths or incorrect information, particularly spread via social media, has hampered efforts to disseminate factual health messages. The WHO has coined the phrase “infodemic” defined as “overabundance of information—some accurate and some not—that occurs during an epidemic” where too much information released at inappropriate times can “lead to confusion and ultimately mistrust in governments and public health response” (WHO, 2021b). In addition, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines:

Disinformation: information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organisation or country;

Misinformation: information that is false but not created with the intention of causing harm; and

Mal-information: information that is based on reality, used to inflict harm on a person, social group, organisation or country (UNESCO, 2021a).

In an effort to increase *information and media literacy*, and limit conspiracies and unhelpful information, UNESCO developed seven education modules for journalists, health professionals, and other interested people. Their handbook contains strategies for fact checking, social media verification, and combating online abuse. Although these modules were released prior to the pandemic, because of political and journalistic influences of the time, stopping the spread of dis-, mis- and mal-information is just as important in COVID times. This is evident because the WHO also has Coronavirus Question and Answers; and Mythbusters webpages (WHO, 2021b). Furthermore, social media outlets, such as Twitter and Facebook started to display public notices on social media posts that are known to be factually incorrect, misleading or harmful to public interest.

An important feature of the home economics academy is the value of embedded critical thinking. Deagon (2014), for example, explored this area using Descartes’ *method of doubt* as a critical thinking and self-evaluation tool for Home Economists. We are encouraged to proactively teach students to critically evaluate information and check our facts—this has always been important because of our provision of accurate food and nutrition information and advice. To counteract doubt and uncertainty, education about critical thinking and media literacy may create new ways of thinking about the pandemic for professionals and for society.

Impact on the individuals and families in everyday life

The impact of COVID-19 on everyday life has forced change onto the whole human population. As the pandemic unfolds, people are experiencing grief and loss, not only for loved ones who have succumbed to the disease, but grief and loss of “normal” everyday life. Close interpersonal contact with other humans is a fundamental requirement for positive health and wellbeing outcomes. Isolation is known to cause, perpetuate and exacerbate mental health issues. Rates of trauma stress, anxiety, and depression have increased because of the pandemic where every aspect of our lives has been impacted and we are still figuring out what the priority consequences will be (O’Connor et al., 2020). For example, it is becoming apparent that the prevalence of burnout, hypervigilance and dissociation have had serious mental health consequences for frontline health workers (Miguel-Puga et al., 2021). All of the rapid changes and confronting scenes have complex consequences for individuals and families. We may not truly understand the consequences for years to come.

Home Economists are frontline workers and because we work closely with individuals and families, we will bear witness to the impacts of the pandemic. While uncertainty can cause fear; crises can also form the basis of hope (Deagon & Pendergast, 2014). The multidimensional and multidisciplinary lenses that we utilise in home economics, may enable us to identify innovative solutions to support people through this transition phase to the new normal. There have been many moments during the pandemic when people felt the need to contribute in positive ways. For example, social media posts with altruistic messages that wearing face-masks are a part of being in a civil society where it is everyone’s responsibility to look after those who are elderly or immunocompromised. Face-masks

were in high demand. In response, sewing of face-masks and home economics skills became a news feature (Smith, 2020). Home economics conversations enjoyed a spotlight, with people confined to home and with newfound time reverting to activities such as baking sourdough and sewing, and in so doing revitalising conversations about the values and the value that underpins home economics (Brady & MacCallum, 2021; de Zwart, 2020).

Financial literacy

The impact of the pandemic on global finances has been profound. Petersen and Bluth, (2020, p. 1) use the phrase “pandemonics” to describe the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on the global economy, predicting a global economic crisis that is extensive in scope and impact, and likely to lead to the collapse of some economies. When economies collapse, so too do individuals’ finances. The loss of reliable, paid work has been experienced by many. The pandemics’ impact on income, however, is not homogenous. For instance, direct impacts have been caused to some through loss of income due to premature deaths, workplace absenteeism, and reduction in productivity, leading to factory closures and the like (Pak et al., 2020). Furthermore, some industries can manage with relocation of work from home, such as office based employment, however other types of employment such as tourism, hospitality and transport cannot continue to operate during lockdown and are severely impacted by reduced numbers. The need for capabilities to manage finances and financial literacy in this situation is demanding, including the family budget (Yuesti et al., 2020), and overall family wellbeing depends on having the financial literacy to cope in unpredictable and challenging circumstances. A study conducted by Yuesti et al. (2020) of family financial literacy during the pandemic led to the recommendation that financial literacy—especially during times of crisis—must be improved in schools and universities. Home economics has a strong focus on financial literacy.

Individual and family wellbeing

A study conducted by the World Health Organization (2020b) in 130 countries reveals an accelerated demand for mental health support, coupled with a diminished capability to provide for these needs without enhanced financial commitment. According to the authors of the report, “the pandemic is increasing demand for mental health services. Bereavement, isolation, loss of income and fear are triggering mental health conditions or exacerbating existing ones. Many people may be facing increased levels of alcohol and drug use, insomnia, and anxiety” (n.p.). Another recent study reveals that 4 in 10 adults report symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder compared to 1 in 10 prior to the pandemic. Wellbeing is impacted in a range of ways, with direct impacts exhibited with difficulty sleeping (36%) and eating (32%) and with substance abuse increase (12%) (Panchal et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the impact on the social and emotional wellbeing of young people is increasingly concerning. A nation-wide survey of more than 2,200 young people aged 15-25 in Australia revealed that 40% felt the pandemic had impacted their confidence to achieve future goals and 51% felt their mental health had deteriorated during the pandemic (Headspace, 2020). This might not be surprising when the effects of the pandemic on schooling and education are considered. UNESCO estimates that over 1.5 billion learners, representing 91 percent of the world’s school population, was affected at the peak of the COVID-19 crisis (UNESCO, 2021b). Concerningly, UNESCO (2021c) has declared that “over 100 million additional children will fall below the minimum proficiency level in reading as a result of the health crisis. Prioritizing education recovery is crucial to avoid a generational catastrophe” (n.p.). The loss of class time for some young people has been extensive, with some missing more than a year of classroom learning time due to school closures. Home economics has at its core a focus on individual and family wellbeing and is a learning subject in many schools globally. The potential to contribute to the educational recovery agenda is one that home economists are keen to embrace.

Value and place of home

In order to manage the public health crisis that is the global pandemic, social distancing and isolation have been crucial behavioural strategies, with the home the centerpiece as the sanctuary. This has meant that at key times, the majority of the world have experienced home lockdown, with literally billions of people living, working and schooling from home, many for extended periods of time. With recent trends in modern homes towards open-plan living, reduced kitchen sizes, smaller gardens and outdoor spaces for children, the pandemic has disrupted these trends and pushed home designing trends to increase the size and number of home office spaces; better IT services with faster speeds,

greater capacity and enhanced cyber security; more closed zones; kitchen sizes increasing to accommodate a store of food and the ability to prepare food. There has also been a revival in home cooking and food-related hobbies such as bread and jam making (de Zwart, 2020). These trends reflect a disruption to the expected future direction for home plans, with the pandemic as the catalyst. Alongside these adaptations, the value of the home as a place for work and social connection has also increased. Indeed, the challenge of getting workforce members to return to their workplace has been significant for some enterprises, with employees struggling with anxiety and resistance (Gezici Yalçın & Düzen, 2021). The ability to avoid travel, and an unwillingness to utilise public transport, has exacerbated this trend. This reinvention of the home as a place of sanctuary, safety and retreat is repositioning the value of the home in our psyche, alongside the design of the home. Home economics contributes to many aspects of these pivots, from effective design to the repositioning of the value of home in our community.

A global frame for a global challenge: Home Economic Literacy Model (HELM)— Shaping the future

While home economics curriculum differs around the world (Pendergast, 2012), there is a shared theoretical and philosophical base and set of core practices that bind home economics curriculum globally (Pendergast et al., 2013). In 2008 the *IFHE Position Statement—Home Economics in the 21st Century* (IFHE, 2008, p. 1) explicated this global framing of the profession by committing to the position that as a curriculum area, home economics...

...facilitates students to discover and further develop their own resources and capabilities to be used in their personal life, by directing their professional decisions and actions or preparing them for life.

This therefore means that by engaging in home economics curriculum, individuals are enabled to develop capabilities to enhance personal empowerment to act in daily contexts. These contexts are diverse and may include: food, nutrition and health; textiles and clothing; shelter and housing; consumerism and consumer science; household management; design and technology; food science and hospitality; human development and family studies; and, education and community services (IFHE, 2008).

Delving into the global framing of the profession enabled by the *Position Statement* (IFHE, 2008) reveals that home economics is a “field of study and a profession, situated in the human sciences that draws from a range of disciplines to achieve optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families and communities” with content that “draws from multiple disciplines, synthesizing these through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary inquiry” (p. 1).

The *Position Statement* clarifies that there are four areas of practice:

- as an *academic discipline* to educate new scholars, to conduct research and to create new knowledge and ways of thinking for professionals and for society
- as an arena for *everyday living* in households, families and communities for developing human growth potential and human necessities or basic needs to be met
- as a *curriculum area* that facilitates students to discover and further develop their own resources and capabilities to be used in their personal life, by directing their professional decisions and actions or preparing them for life
- as a *societal arena* to influence and develop policy to advocate for individuals, families and communities to achieve empowerment and wellbeing, to utilise transformative practices, and to facilitate sustainable futures (IFHE, 2008, p. 1).

It also specifies three essential dimensions:

- a focus on fundamental needs and practical concerns of individuals and family in everyday life and their importance both at the individual and near community

levels, and also at societal and global levels so that wellbeing can be enhanced in an ever changing and ever challenging environment

- the integration of knowledge, processes and practical skills from multiple disciplines synthesised through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary inquiry and pertinent paradigms, AND
- demonstrated capacity to take critical/ transformative/ emancipatory action to enhance wellbeing and to advocate for individuals, families and communities at all levels and sectors of society (IFHE, 2008, p. 1).

In order to visually represent the deep connection between the four areas of practice and the three essential dimensions, Pendergast (2015) created the concept of the Home Economics Literacy Model (HELM), as presented in Figure 3 describing the co-dependence of the areas of practice and essential dimensions as the warp and weft that together form the pointy end of the field of study we know as home economics.

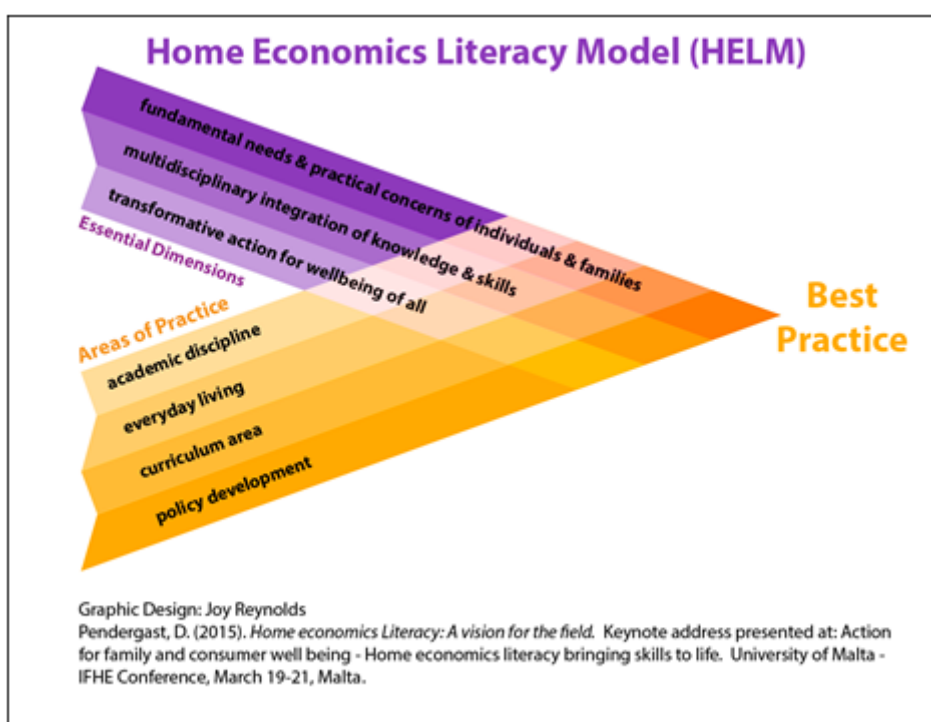


Figure 3 HELM—Home Economics Literacy Model (Pendergast, 2015)

The *Position Statement* preempted the importance of home economics at times of crisis, pointing to the profession as “constantly evolving”, with “new ways of performing the profession”. Indeed, the *Position Statement* emphasises that “[T]his is an important characteristic of the profession, linking with the twenty-first century requirement for all people to be ‘expert novices’, that is, good at learning new things, given that society is constantly and rapidly changing with new and emergent issues and challenges” (IFHE, 2008, p. 1).

The *Position Statement* points to the disciplinary diversity of home economics “coupled with the aim of achieving optimal and sustainable living”, this therefore “means that home economics has the potential to be influential in all sectors of society by intervening and transforming political, social, cultural, ecological, economic and technological systems, at global levels. This is driven by the ethics of the profession, based on the values of caring, sharing, justice, responsibility, communicating, reflection and visionary foresight” (IFHE, 2008, p. 1).

The value of the HELM at this time of the global pandemic, is in providing a tool that can be activated for members of the profession to proactively look to ways to shape the future, given this moment of crisis. To do this is to activate the HELM by looking at the intersections, made possible by completing the domains and capturing the possibilities. Using the tool developed by Pendergast (2015) and represented in Table 1 to highlight the role of home economics when focusing on wellbeing during isolation in the pandemic, provides an exemplar of this approach.

Table 1 Example of the Essential Dimensions and the Areas of Practice of Home Economics in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic—A focus on wellbeing during isolation

| Wellbeing during pandemic social isolation | Needs of individuals & families | Multidisciplinary integration | Transformative action |
|--|--|---|---|
| Academic Discipline | Incorporate an understanding of social and emotional wellbeing as a core of home economics academic learning | Identify a range of home economics disciplinary fields that contribute to building wellbeing - for example, food and nutrition, individual and family relationships, creativity | Provide virtual workshops to engage individuals and families in ways that enhance their social and emotional skills, building efficacy and self-regulatory behaviours |
| Everyday Living | Utilise knowledge and skills to ensure there is a safe and comfortable home environment with adequate resources, including social networks, in place | Utilise the range of multidisciplinary understandings to remain well informed and empowered to make changes as required to meet everyday living demands | Empower individuals to make decisions about their own and others wellbeing and to seek support and assistance when required |
| Curriculum Area | Develop curriculum that examines and develops an understanding of social and emotional wellbeing | Incorporate content from a range of knowledge bases (e.g. psychology, medical health experts) to ensure the development of a multifaceted understanding of wellbeing | Empower students to practice the implementation of wellbeing strategies through a range of practical applications |
| Society & Policy | Access information and policy documents for individuals and families | Consider the breadth of policies related to individual and family wellbeing that are impacted by the pandemic | Provide strategic advice to shape policy as an advocate on a government committee |

The range of impacts from the pandemic of deep relevance to home economics are vast, including areas such as:

- Food and nutrition—access, choice, affordability, quality, kitchen gardens and safety of food;
- Equity and access, opportunities and barriers;
- Home economics education;
- Mental health and wellbeing for individuals, families and communities;
- Habits and habitats—behaviour and attitude change

For these and many other aspects of home economics, the engagement of the HELM can enable a visible process for shaping the future needs and directions of the profession, in the context of the wellbeing of the individual and the family. Indeed, using the HELM tool, it is reasonable to conceptualise the ways in which a home economics education framework has the potential to contribute to leading proactively in the COVID-19 global pandemic—see Table 2 for some ideas.

Table 2 Example of the Essential Dimensions and the Areas of Practice of Home Economics in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic—A focus on home economics education

| Home Economics education as a lens for acting proactively to the COVID-19 global pandemic | Needs of individuals & families | Multidisciplinary integration | Transformative action |
|---|---|--|--|
| Academic Discipline | Use systems, ecological and holistic frameworks to study complex factors that impact on the unique needs of individuals and families | Apply a systematic process to critically analyse a range of data, information and knowledge sources to inform research and practice | Compile and disseminate critically analysed information in plain language for general audiences |
| Everyday Living | Apply the principles of autonomy and self-determination to assist individuals and families to identify and create solutions for their own unique needs and challenges | Learn and teach to use unfamiliar technologies | Embed multiple literacies (food, health, financial) into all age education programs. |
| Curriculum Area | Develop authentic assessment tasks with scaffolded activities that have real-world impact | Engage whole of community to implement best practices such as construction and maintenance of kitchen gardens and use of that produce in cookery lessons | Provide opportunities for students to engage with their glocal communities |
| Society & Policy | Increase and maintain media presence including media releases, blogs, podcasts, interviews, research papers, conference presentations | Work in multiple spaces outside of traditional home economics environments including government, hospitals, military, industry, commercial and private practices | Participate in community and advocate equality, equity and accessibility to resources and promote the SDGs |

Silver linings from the pandemic

Perhaps the global pandemic may serve as a trigger for a renewed valuing of the profession of home economics. This is not without precedent. In 2010, in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, an article entitled “Bring home economics back” argued that the field offered hope for dealing with the first-world obesity plague leading to a public health crisis (Lichtenstein & Ludwig, 2010). This led to a renewed interest and opportunity to focus on the benefits of home economics education and the contribution it makes to society. As Pendergast noted in 2015, triggers that lead to renewed attention are often unexpected, pointing to

[T]he public plea by Lichtenstein and Ludwig (2010) *to bring home economics back*, unexpected at the time though it was, points again to the need to privilege education which focuses on wellbeing and which develops not only knowledge, but the ability to apply this knowledge in theoretical and practical ways. Change is often triggered by a spark, often from an unexpected source (p. 3).

There is little doubt that the pandemic was unexpected, its effects widespread, and the effects profound.

The pandemic has shone the spotlight on some of the key aspects of home economics, including, the importance and need for individual and family capability in the domains of:

- value and place of home as a sanctuary
- wellbeing (a holistic understanding of spiritual, social, physical, mental, economic, occupational, intellectual and environmental domains)
- food preparation and particularly food literacy
- financial literacy
- sustainable futures

The International Federation for Home Economics highlighted a particular area of concern in a news release for World Population Day, 11 July 2021. The news release is presented in Box 1, and spotlights the health and wellbeing of women and girls with risks that are of particular relevance for this group.

Box 1 International Federation for Home Economics Press release

The *International Federation for Home Economics* (IFHE) and its members join 2021 World Population Day celebrations on 11 July to focus attention on the toll COVID-19 takes on health and wellbeing of women and girls.

- The global crisis has hit almost every household and community, but not everyone is affected equally. Women and girls' health and wellbeing is at risk in many ways:
- Women who represent the largest share of front-line health workers are disproportionately exposed to the coronavirus.
- Disrupted supply chains impact the availability of contraceptives and heighten the risk of unintended pregnancy.
- Sexual and reproductive health services are being sidelined and gender-based violence is on the rise.
- Women disproportionately work in insecure labour markets, are harder hit by the economic impacts of COVID-19 and risk falling into poverty.
- Women's unpaid care work has increased as a result of school closures and the increased needs of older people.

IFHE globally advocates for home economics education as a key factor to ensure health and wellbeing. Formal and informal home economics education include all sexes, provide knowledge on how to responsibly manage resources and strengthen the position of women who are predominantly heads of households. The *International Federation for Home Economics* (IFHE) and its members are committed to continuing this work, putting the brakes on COVID-19 and contributing to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Source: IFHE Press Release, 5 July, 2021

The Special Issue of the *International Journal of Home Economics*, 14(1) serves as an artefact of the ways in which the home economics community has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it features many of the elements aforementioned in this paper, which could be mapped against the HELM. In order to explore the details of the 14 papers published in response to the call for this Special Issue, Voyant Tools available at <https://voyant-tools.org/> is utilised to create visualisations which enable quantitative exploration of qualitative data (text) with confidence and replicability, and visualisation outputs are produced that are easy to analyse and interpret (Hetenyi et al., 2019).

The corpus of the journal has just under 84,000 words and 14 peer-reviewed papers. The word cloud presented in Figure 4 displays the terms scaled in proportionate size in the visualisation according to their frequency in the Special Issue.

The top 30 most frequently used terms and their frequency is presented in Table 3. Notable is the most frequently occurring word in this Special Issue is learning (628), followed by food, home, and teaching. Also in the top ten are teachers and teacher. If teaching, teacher, and teachers are combined the total is 1130 occurrences, by far the most frequent word stem in use. Indeed, most of the top ten words are related in some way to the pedagogical enterprise, with the exception of food, home, COVID and pandemic.



Figure 4 Word cloud visualising the frequency of terms in the IJHE COVID-19 Special Issue represented proportionately to each other according to size–top 55 terms

Table 3 Top 30 most frequently used terms in the IJHE COVID-19 Special Issue

| Rank | Word | Frequency | Rank | Word | Frequency |
|------|-----------|-----------|------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | learning | 628 | 16 | work | 207 |
| 2 | food | 535 | 17 | new | 192 |
| 3 | home | 497 | 18 | school | 192 |
| 4 | teaching | 481 | 19 | time | 186 |
| 5 | students | 400 | 20 | online | 144 |
| 6 | education | 361 | 21 | hybrid | 141 |
| 7 | teachers | 333 | 22 | face | 139 |
| 8 | teacher | 316 | 23 | research | 138 |
| 9 | covid | 313 | 24 | life | 136 |
| 10 | pandemic | 304 | 25 | family | 133 |
| 11 | economics | 298 | 26 | social | 129 |
| 12 | study | 290 | 27 | educators | 123 |
| 13 | health | 250 | 28 | skills | 121 |
| 14 | digital | 235 | 29 | families | 115 |
| 15 | nutrition | 222 | 30 | practices | 114 |

In addition to frequency counts, the Voyant Tool used for this analysis enables a range of text driven visualisations, including the visualisation of links between major terms. Figure 5 presents the most frequently occurring links of terms appearing in the Special Issue.

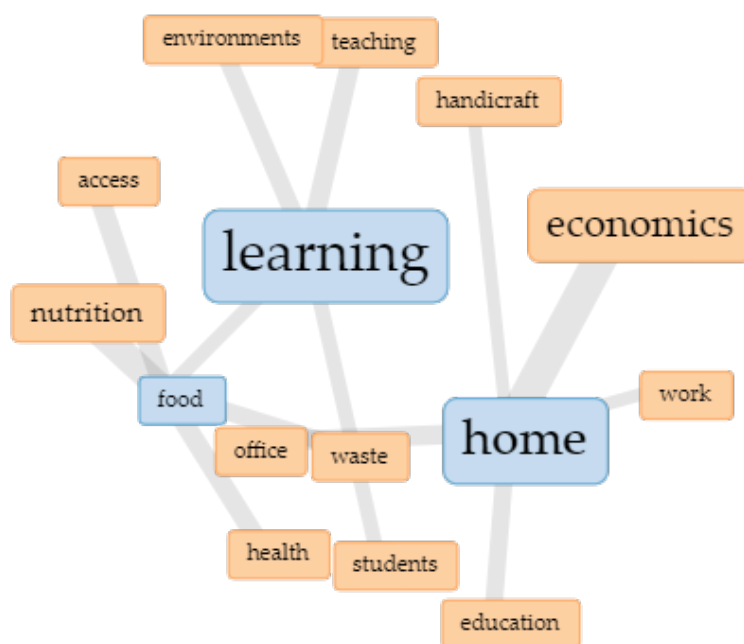


Figure 5 Links between major terms used in the IJHE COVID-19 Special Issue

What this link chart shows is the three top terms and the other terms that link most frequently to them. *Learning* links with: *environments*, *teaching*, *students* and *food*. *Home* links with: *economics*, *work*, *education*, *office* and *handicraft*; and *food* links with: *nutrition*, *health*, *access* and *waste*.

Given this call for papers for the Special Issue of the *International Journal of Home Economics* drew these 14 papers, this analysis reveals the emphasis of those papers, providing a folksonomy of the field at this unique time in our world history. The concept of *folksonomy*, a term coined by Vander Wal to reflect people-generated taxonomy (Pink, 2005), was first introduced to the home economics literature in 2010 (Pendergast, 2010) and is the use of tag clouds or word frequency clouds emerging from the content being analysed to form classifications relevant to a topic. In this case, the folksonomy of the profession related to this call for papers on the Special Issue topic of the global pandemic.

Conclusion

Our collective social reality has been tested by the pandemic. Ensuring that home economics across all essential dimensions reflect the needs of today's society is highly important. Gentzler's (2012) assertion that home economics is "ever timely, forever complex" holds fast. The positive impacts that home economics has in improving the quality of life and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities is sometimes *too obvious to see* (Deagon & Pendergast, 2019). The contributors to this Special Issue have made home economics visible by shining a light on our skills, capacity to adapt rapidly and work effectively within multiple spaces. The profession demands us to be mindful of our personal actions, our influence on other people, and the quality of the relationship that we have with our life sustaining Earth home. The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted that although we may be physically disconnected, the profession itself affords us connectedness. With an estimated 50,000+ Home Economists globally, we are empowered, knowledgeable and skilled professionals with a strong collective voice. Our profession remains ever relevant.

Author biographies

Professor Donna Pendergast is Dean of the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University. Donna works at state and federal levels in education policy shaping including as: a member of the Board of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL); Chair of the Teacher Education Expert Standing Committee of AITSL; Chair of QELi; Chair of the Queensland Council of Deans of Education (QCDE) and Deputy Chair of the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE). Donna is the recipient of the Vice Chancellor's Research Supervision

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Dr Jay Deagon is the Senior Lecturer of Home Economics in the School of Education and the Arts at Central Queensland University. Jay is an Executive Committee Member (Pacific Region) of the IFHE. Her research projects include cookery skill training with severely marginalised women in Kathmandu, Nepal; and food literacy work with rural and remote women in Queensland, Australia. Jay is the founder of the social media network HomeEcConnect that promotes home economics as a vehicle for empowering individuals, families and communities to make ethical and sustainable choices. Jay has received five CQUniversity commendations for Student Voice Distance Educator of the Year.

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