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Welcome to the new Editorial Board Members of the International Journal of Home Economics. Following the call for membership of the board last year, eight people have been appointed. They represent a diverse range of specializations in the Home Economics field, and each is a prominent scholar in their own right, recognised internationally in their field. Being a global journal, there is a need for a global editorial board. This is still being shaped, with the following countries currently represented: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Korea, Swaziland and Taiwan. I remind readers that the aim of IFHE is to achieve the highest quality in this e-journal. To realize that goal, there is a need to continue to refine and develop our processes. The e-journal requires: a prominent international editorial board; high quality submissions; a thorough and comprehensive review process; a high quality finish. I encourage you to contribute to building this dream by submitting high quality papers for review, and by assisting in the extension of the editorial board to include a larger number with wider global representation.

Issue 1, 2009 provides the Home Economics professional with a range of current topics of interest to the field. In the peer reviewed section of the journal, there are four articles, each of which has undergone a double-blind peer review process prior to acceptance for publication.

Also featured in this Issue are three plenary addresses from the IFHE World Congress, held in Lucerne, Switzerland last year. While more than 1000 Home Economists were in attendance, many others in our profession could not be there. All keynote and plenary papers were published as a book for delegates, and these papers are now being reprinted progressively over the next Issues of the IJHE, in the order in which they were presented at Congress. This will make the important messages from the presentations more widely available to all Home Economists internationally. The theme of the Congress, Home Economics: Reflecting the past; creating the future, was embedded in the presentations at the Congress. The Congress celebrated the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the International Federation of Home Economics (IFHE) and looked ahead to the future years of the professional body and the field of study it represents. The title of the conference and the subsequent thematic directions served to focus Home Economists and allied professionals on the questions of sustainability, advocacy and the active creation of preferred futures for Home Economics, relevant disciplinary fields, and the profession itself, while critically reflecting upon and being informed by its historical roots.

The final section of this Issue of IJHE is the review of an important artifact developed to celebrate the 100 year centennial of IFHE. A DVD detailing the establishment and development of IFHE will serve as a key record of the first 100 years of the professional organization, and provides insights into the future.

Donna Pendergast, PhD
Editor, IJHE
Practical wisdom, understanding of coherence and competencies for everyday life

Jette Benn, PhD
Danish School of Education, Aarhus University

Abstract

The focus of this article is Home Economics education in the primary and lower secondary school in the 21st Century. Practical wisdom, understanding of coherence and competencies for everyday life are suggested as aims of Home Economics education. It is argued that these elements should be included as part of general education and ‘Bildung’ in late modern society. (Bildung is the German word for education, but it is used as a pedagogical term in English literature as it has another and more specific meaning than the word education.) This article raises the following questions: what, how and why should these elements be included?

A literature review and developmental work within two Home Economics classes over two years commencing with observations and interviews, followed by an action research approach, is reported. The work was further used for developing textbooks for Home Economics education in the primary and lower secondary school with the following titles: ‘Home Economics in words and actions’ and ‘Home Economics in thoughts, words and actions’. This paper shares the concept of a new paradigm based upon a critical pedagogy, which for Home Economics education implies to know, to be able to, to want, and to be. This paper will share a Scandinavian perspective of Home Economics in order to enrich the global understanding of different ways of knowing and experiencing the profession.

Introduction

The new millennium marks the second century of the profession of Home Economics. After more than 100 years of Home Economics education we ought to be able, capable and willing to educate in and to practice Home Economics. We should be able to educate the reflective practitioner. This concept is developed by Schön (1983) and further described by Vaines, Badir and Kieren (1988) as the reflective Home Economics professional. There are implications if we cannot achieve this for Home Economics education, as the late modern society puts pressure on the human being to be reflective. The global society and late-postmodernism of the new millennium have great impact on and significance for Home Economics education.

In keeping with previous historical research of Home Economics in school and teacher education, there are four periods. The first from 1890s to 1920 was the Introduction, the second from 1920–1960s was the Stabilising and refining period, and the third from 1960–1990s was the (Re)Creative time (Benn, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a). The Introduction period was
focused on defining aims and content of the profession, the Stabilising period was dealing more with methods—both teaching methods and methods concerning practical work. The third period came as Women’s Liberation was having a significant impact and housekeeping was devalued and limited so that the aesthetic-practical creative processes in Home Economics were seen as a plausible aim.

At this time, the profession can be said to be in the Fourth period, which could be termed the “didactics of challenges”. The expression didactics of challenges was developed by Karsten Schnack (2000). ‘Didactics’ is used here in the Nordic sense of the word, as encompassing all aspects concerning education, not merely methods. (For a further description of the history of Home Economics see Benn 1999a, 1999b, 2000a). The challenges at issue concern what it means to be a “Home Economist” in the new millennium and what it means to be educated in the 21st Century.

This paper will share a Scandinavian perspective of Home Economics in order to enrich the global understanding of different ways of knowing and experiencing the profession. In particular, the paper is informed by curricular innovations in Denmark during the 1990s. In Denmark, new curricula and approaches were developed as official documents for Home Economics in the primary and lower secondary school (the Danish Folkeskole) in 1994 and 1995 and for Home Economics teacher education in 1997, 1998 and 2000 (Ministry of Education). It is essential to understand the theory and thinking behind these earlier developments in order to develop a newer concept or paradigm for the school and Home Economics teacher education, as well as for research within these areas (Smith, 1991; Thomas & Smith, 1994). There is ideological conflict between the aims expressed in the official documents and the practices in school and teacher education that must be considered. An attempt to overcome this has been made in a developmental project within the school setting (Benn, 2000b). This developmental project was initiated by one year of classroom studies in two schools and classes, followed by another year with an action research approach changing what seemed to be the problems in Home Economics education. The paper draws on this project which involved interviews of teachers and pupils, observations and literature review attempting to examine the main problems, possibilities and perspectives that are facing Home Economics (Attar, 1990; Benn, 2000; Hjälmeskog, 2000; Petterson, 2007; Tornieporth, 1979).

It should be pointed out that during the latest years the Danish Ministry of Education has adopted a narrower view of education. According to this, the aims of the 1994 curriculum, which are still valid, must be accomplished by setting measurable national goals. This tendency towards evaluation, which can be seen in many European countries, is based on a shift in paradigm within education policy brought about partly by the OECD PISA surveys and comparisons and other studies, and partly by a shift in political power. (OECD is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an internationally standardised assessment that was jointly developed by participating countries and administered to 15-year-olds in schools.) Evaluation focuses in particular on easily measured results as part of cost-benefit analysis, while qualitative and less easily measured aspects, the so-called soft values, are not taken into consideration to the same degree.
The main research focus in this article is the general problem encountered within the Danish Home Economics education as a result of the theory-practice dilemma or dualism. Also of interest is the "translation" of the curriculum and syllabus, that is, how the overall aims of Home Economics are matched with possibilities and realities in the school context. The findings of the classroom study reveal a lack of clarification of goals in the single teaching period and a lack of evaluation and involvement of pupils as responsible parts of the education process.

The subject Home Economics in primary and secondary school

School subjects may belong to:

- the classical subjects within education (languages, math, religion);
- be rooted in a science or an applied science; or
- be grounded in recognised problems in society (Schnack, 2000; Nielsen, 2000; Klafki, 1997).

Where does Home Economics belong? Does Home Economics have its own basic science? Is Home Economics necessary in order to obtain a 'Bildung' in the classical sense? Has it been created in order to cope with societal problems? The author believes that only the last question can be answered with a definite yes. Home Economics was part of modern society's utility-oriented philosophy in the late 18th Century. One of the reasons for introducing Home Economics into schools and teacher education was its applied use of natural science (Benn, 2000a). How then can a subject like this be justified today when many tasks formerly done in the home have been taken over by society and industry?

To answer these questions, this paper will take a closer look at the issue. Firstly, it must be stressed that Home Economics revolves around the home, household or everyday life as this is lived and experienced in a Scandinavian environment. In this context there is a diversity of homes and households, but there are common features. It is essential that Home Economics educators bear this context in mind. But, as seen in earlier research and studies of Home Economics education in history and today (Benn, 1996, 2000b), there are different views of what the profession should focus on, which can be highlighted through four different teacher ideal types within the Home Economics profession, see Figure 1. These comprise: (a) householder, (b) crafts(wo)man, (c) housewife/mother, and (d) aesthetician.

As indicated in Figure 1, the four ideal teacher types have different contextual relations, house is the whole setting in which people live together, whereas kitchen is a room or place in or outside the house where cooking and other work for the house is managed. Lastly home is the place where people feel they belong. The main aims of education differ for the different ideal types:
the householder has preferences towards the theoretical or analytical parts of household/Home Economics—episteme—and towards an understanding of economy, ecology, nutrition and other necessary scientific tools bound to the content of Home Economics. (The references are all here in Swedish language: Gustavsson (2001): Vidensfilosofi (Philosophy of knowledge)).

the crafts(wo)-man focuses on the practical actions—techne—, the handicraft skills and the pragmatic advantages of what is learned: the ability to use artefacts, tools and materials and foods through practical actions. Here the actions are said to be in a kitchen—it might be any place where practical handicraft is done.

the housewife/mother values the unreflected doxa or the meaning of care; in other words, the more ethical parts of Home Economics. Therefore this ideal type is related to home in a broad sense.

the gastronome or aesthetician values the artificial, sensory im- and expression—poiesis.

Episteme is one type of knowledge: the theoretical-scientific knowledge as described in an Aristotelian way of thinking, and is connected to the first ideal type. Another type of knowledge is techne: the practical-productive capability, including both handicrafts and arts, which are the focuses of the ideal types of the crafts(wo)man and aesthetician respectively. The latter may also be related to poiesis and the housemother to doxa; together they compose phronesis or practical wisdom. This exemplifies that the teacher needs to take all ideal types in their professionalism in order to cover all knowledge and learning areas of Home Economics.

Returning to the question of what it means to be a reflective practitioner—a Home Economics professional—it is clearly impossible to find a simple and unambiguous answer. This question will be explored by connecting with the qualitative data collected in the study.

Methods
The qualitative study was conducted over three years in two schools in two different communities and in two Home Economics classes. The first year was used for observations, interviews with pupils in both classes (12 in both classes in autumn, and 12 and 22
respectively in the spring, both boys and girls) and with the teachers, and by the end of year one, planning was made for changes in the second year. In the second year, an action research approach was undertaken and changes were made concerning supporting pupils’ active involvement in responsibility, making tasks more problem-oriented: some based on pupils’ preferences and others decided by the teacher. Different evaluation procedures were also introduced and carried out. Interviews of the pupils were also used as stimulus for change. The third year was spent on transferring results for a textbook for grade 4—7: Home Economics in words and actions, and a teachers’ guide to support this.

In the interviews, teachers responded to the question using the words to know, to be able to, to be willing to and to be, which hearken back to the cover page of an old issue of the English Home Economics Journal Modus: to be able, capable and willing. (In Aristotelian terms it would mean to be knowing (episteme), capable (techne) and wise (phronesis)). The question is then to be able, capable and willing to do what? Perhaps, to be able to solve an everyday problem? This mastering of everyday life is what Methfessel (2004) points to in the article Haushalt und Bildung - Anmerkungen nach Pisa, which is translated as mastering of everyday life necessities by learning some basic competencies. These basic competencies must be aimed at emancipation, self-decision, participation and empowerment to fulfil the aims of education or ‘Bildung’, when you recognise education as a means for the human being to navigate in life (Klafki, 1985, 1998; Methfessel, 1996).

Home Economics, education and learning:

The core content of the Danish Home Economics curriculum is described as handicraft, cooking, foods, meals, nutrition, consumption and hygiene. But these core issues have to be put into a broader context concerning health, environment, culture, and technology, meaning that education should aim at the ability to see and understand the connections between what one does in a home/household context and what one wants, taking into account one’s own needs and those of one’s family, but also the consequences for others. From this stance, professionalism involves working not only with isolated core subject matter items in Home Economics, such as food, textiles, housing and hygiene, but also with related perspectives, such as the significance of these areas for health, and the quality of life, and for resources, and the environment, taking into consideration social and cultural aspects, technological and societal connections, ethical and aesthetic aspects, and working with these towards action competence. Working with just the core items alone would make education easier to plan, conduct and measure. The problem is, however, that it would not fulfil the need for children’s Home Economics education in the 21st Century in the risk society (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992). Education needs to aim at emancipation, citizenship and solidarity. Education and professionalism also imply being able to organise one’s subject beyond the sense of planning without pupil involvement, or using a curriculum without thinking it through; rather, it means working in and with the subject and its content in co-operation with the pupils. This idea is presented visually in Figure 2.

This model requires that Home Economics teachers’ professionalism also encompasses what we may call subject educational/didactic thinking, which means “that a teacher always has to transform—translate, arrange, mediate, reconstruct—the subject professional in an accessible way for the pupils. (Didactics is used in the Scandinavian and German sense of the word to
mean consideration of how to obtain a ‘Bildung’—in other words, to be educated. The pedagogical questions raised are: How, what, who and why.) The teacher must assist the pupils in interpreting (breaking) the code,”(Schnack, 2000, p. 19, author translation). Breaking the code means finding:

- the elementary
- the fundamental and
- the exemplary.

These three components comprise elements in teaching and thinking of teaching.

**Figure 2: The didactic triangle**

First, the elementary is the essential and basic (not just elementary) content that opens one aspect of life, or the world, up to the pupil. In Home Economics, it refers to everyday life, the household area, for example, content as the basic meaning of food, the sense of the food while it is being prepared and eaten, and the meal eaten together with others.

*The effects on a child of contents that are mastered are the ‘fundamental’. In a fruitful didactic unlocking (presentation) it is possible for a child to achieve considerably more insight than merely an understanding of the learning content. The child (learner) gains insight into reality itself, and even into means of dealing with it.* (Krüger & Yonge, 2007, p.215)

In other words, it refers to what is of fundamental importance in the lives of children and youngsters in their encounters with Home Economics, themes that will ‘move’ them.

*There is a path from the elemental to the fundamental that should always be kept in mind, and kept open by a teacher. The elemental has an unlocking function and facilitates presenting the contents to a child, but it is valid didactically only if it is transformed into a fundamental learning experience by a child/learner.* (Krüger & Yonge, 2007, p.215)

Finally, the exemplary refers to commendable themes, themes useful for the unfolding and expansion of the subject: the professionalism. An example of that could be ‘our daily bread’.
In this exemplary issue, it is possible to work with bread in a cultural context as well as nutrition, as symbol or material. Bread can be produced or bought, and made a subject for all sorts of investigations.

In the European context, the basic field of Home Economics must have the home or the household and everyday life at its core. Home Economics is a broad subject field. It consists of (transferred from the subject of music):

- the basic subject,
- sciences,
- arts (expressed as aesthetics) and
- crafts and everyday culture.

This is a markedly different way of conceptualizing Home Economics than that used in North America or other global contexts. It is unique to the European context. Each element of Figure 3 is now described.

Figure 3: Content of subject (Nielsen, 2000, p. 72)

One by one these parts act towards a “full Home Economics education”, empowering people to be able, capable and willing to act, or should I say towards the reflective (competent) practitioner, or perhaps to obtain a practical wisdom and an understanding of coherence. In reality the single parts or roles can not be seen as featured here, but you do see these differences in teaching content and methods in the school. All bits and pieces from the expressions can more or less be referred to the official documents, from textbooks and from reality. In the Danish primary and lower secondary school ("Folkeskolen") the subject is belonging to the group of practical-aesthetical (or music) subjects. It might as well have been put to the group of natural scientific subjects or into the social sciences or the humanities.

With regard to science, the subject of Home Economics, in contrast with other practical-aesthetic subjects, has been very closely connected to natural sciences. Gradually, the cultural and societal sciences have been added as elements of the basic sciences. These changes are now evident in the official laws, regulations and policy instruments (the school act, curricula, syllabi etc) concerning primary and secondary school and teacher education. A second element of Figure 3 is Arts and aesthetics. In Home Economics it can be impressions,
expressions and sensory experiences within food composing, producing, eating, tasting and the meal occasion. A third element is the basic subject, in Home Economics; it is simply said home and economics. The problem is that defining the basic in Home Economics is not as simple as may be read in this article. Home Economics as a basic field or subject is defined in curricula, syllabi and textbook. Introducing the Danish understanding from the Ministry of Education, Home Economics was presented as food, cooking, meals, hygiene and consumption in relation to culture, environment and technology. The core element of Figure 3, Craft and Everyday Culture, encompasses handicraft as the expression of practical and partly tacit knowledge, which are what some teachers and pupils alike see as the essential part of Home Economics. Pupils like the practical work. But today everyday culture and life also includes the aspect of consumerism, as crafts and care (and art) have been taken over by professionals (industry, social services, official art, life/the fine arts, etc.). Crafts or practical-productive capability, at core, encompass or strive to encompass both science and arts/aesthetics (Nielsen, 2000). In schools, practical knowledge has been considered inferior to theoretical knowledge, which is part of our heritage from classical Greek society and also a general view of practical work in the society. Gustavsson (2001) notes that:

The theoretical, which is connected to human beings' intellectual capacity, and the practical, which is bound to the hands and the body, have, according to longstanding tradition, been viewed as separate from each other. Theoretical knowledge has been seen as superior to practical knowledge. A central thought, when we talk of practical-productive capacity today is that, when our actions and our ability to reflect are connected, we think and act at one and the same time, (p. 33, author translation).

Through practical-productive action, pupils can experience theory or vice versa, when offered the right opportunities.

Actions and competencies

Up until now there has been a presentation of Home Economics in a Danish context in the school setting. The aim and content has been discussed in the light of the late modern society, with the aim of education as empowerment, citizenship and critical thinking. The pupil is seen as an active and responsible participant in education; and the teacher as a responsible and reflective practitioner planning and thinking Home Economics. The figures presented reinforce this understanding.

The developmental work gave rise to a broader understanding of Home Economics, as Home Economics education encompasses a broad range of elements, which are neither learnt nor expressed in the same way. This idea refers to the forms of action developed for the official Home Economics guidelines (Ministry of Education 1995). See Table 1 for an elaboration.

Our understandings of what constitutes the professional teacher must include the ability to organise and arrange learning situations that include all the different and differing activity forms profiled in Table 1—not necessarily at the same time but in the course of the whole Home Economics education (which, in Denmark, demands a minimum of time and resources—at least one year with 3 classes a week or more intensive courses several times). The action
forms cover the whole range of knowledge described earlier as episteme, phronesis, and techne.

**Table 1:** **Actions or action forms within Home Economics (Benn, 2001)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions—Action forms</th>
<th>Expanding comments</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analytic Actions</strong></td>
<td>The theoretical part, in which knowledge of different conditions gives rise to discussion - background information found in different materials, on the Internet or as teacher’s or pupil’s introductions or ...</td>
<td>To analyse a recipe, a label, a composition of smells, tastes, colours, textures and temperatures, to ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicative Actions</strong></td>
<td>The social part, comprising dialogues, discussions in connection with tasks and problems</td>
<td>To be able to submit and discuss for example the choice of a dish, its energy consumption, its nutrient composition, price, ... To make a recipe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practical-Craft Actions</strong></td>
<td>The practical part, comprising production and reproduction (of known dishes)</td>
<td>To be able to cook, bake, roast, clean ....by use of ordinary methods and techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expressive Actions</strong></td>
<td>The aesthetic part, comprising impressions and fantasy which can be transformed into different expressions</td>
<td>To be able to compose a dish according to taste, colours and texture, serve it beautifully ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impressionistic Actions</strong></td>
<td>The individual part, comprising sensorial, emotional, physical and intellectual, social and other experiences in connection with practical and theoretical activity and action</td>
<td>To sense for example a variety of foods, to develop skills by use of different materials and tools, to develop a “new language” by working with Home Economics themes and an understanding, which expands the individual’s possibilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenges and perspectives

Home Economics is knowledge in action or thoughtful practice. Both concepts express dialectic coherence between theory and practice. Home Economics professionalism (Home Economics in action) or competencies in thoughtful practice can be expressed in the following concepts and terms:

- understanding of coherence
- everyday life competencies
- responsibility, and
- carefulness.

These concepts are expanded in Table 2. Many Home Economics professionals may object that these concepts are too broad and do not adequately take into account the interpretation, understanding and accomplishments of Home Economics and the ability to use basic techniques and methods and to make nutritiously correct choices. Home Economics also comprises these aspects, but the very essence of Home Economics professionalism is to ensure that pupils or students are able to participate actively in everyday life, now and in the future. They must also be able to act on a practical level, but this does not necessarily mean they only have to learn technical processes, such as ‘how to follow the recipe’. Rather they have to be able to question modes of acting: individual, social, and societal (and global).

Table 2: Competence elements of professionalism in Home Economics education (Benn, 2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements in Home Economics professionalism / Competencies</th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To know</td>
<td>Understanding of coherence (knowing)</td>
<td>to know the coherence between what you do and the result”, for example, between resource use and the environment, between intake of food and drink and health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able</td>
<td>Everyday life competencies (capable and cope-able)</td>
<td>To be able to cook and to handle everyday life. To be able to sense and create a delicious meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To want</td>
<td>Responsibility and (willing) participation</td>
<td>Citizenship might be a better term for the concept - to participate in solving the problems of everyday life for example concerning foods, taking a stand on production, choice and no choice, ”the food policy of Home Economics, the environmental policy of... and so on”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be</td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>The life world - to care for each other for example when working and planning together in the school and at home, to assist others ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Practical wisdom and understanding of coherence

This broad way of thinking is presented on behalf of the empirical study and on theories from the field of education and pedagogy, mainly from a Nordic and central European understanding, both within general pedagogy, but also from Nordic and European Home Economists, as well as economists from Americas and Australia as can be seen in the references of the article.

To know, to be able, and to want to be regarding Home Economics and the aims written in Table 2 are what formed the foundations for the research project in the school and the subsequent development of textbooks. It means that the teacher has to take into consideration that all elements are covered in the course of education but not at the same time. It is also a means to present the broadness and importance of the field for pupils, parents, curriculum planners and school administration.

In short, teacher professionalism within Home Economics—the reason for being educated within Home Economics—implies that one is able to plan and create a learning environment and situation that offers pupils opportunities to obtain an understanding of coherence and competencies, which can be used in everyday life, and make them responsible and caring participants in life. This is not a fundamental answer to the question of what it means to be a Home Economics professional; in other words, it is not a canon-based way of thinking, which regards the profession and education as something obtained through definite texts and tasks. Rather, what is offered here are some perspectives on, and considerations of professionalism and content in Home Economics from a European context.

One answer to the question of whether Home Economics is necessary in education today is, that if one wants to be able to make choices that are meaningful for the individual and the group and are perhaps also meaningful in terms of cultural heritage—not only as nostalgia but as a necessary tool for promoting action and development and for understanding the coherence between nature and culture and between home and society. The Norwegian philosopher Erling Lars Dale (2000) has explicitly mentioned Home Economics as being part of an ethical education:

*The school subject Home Economics is important, for example, for fostering positive attitudes towards carrying out tasks and taking care of obligations in everyday life.... Home Economics can be seen as a basic element in the students' ethical language, which encompasses care, responsibility and equal values in human interrelations (p. 34, author translation).*

It is hoped that the European notions of Home Economics introduced in this paper will appeal to Home Economists around the world, further extending our conversation about what we ought to be able, capable and willing to do as Home Economists in the 21st Century.
Biography

Associate Professor Jette Benn, PhD is employed in the School of Education, University of Aarhus, Copenhagen, Denmark. Jette researches and writes about home economics and consumer education, history and practice. Jette is Chair of the IFHE research committee, and is referee of journals within the area of home economics and has been working both within Nordic and international research projects. She has been involved in curriculum development for the Ministry of Education and developed textbooks for the school. She serves as the National Liaison of IFHE. Email: benn@dpu.dk

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Preserving integrity: University program changes

Sue LT McGregor PhD, Yvonne S Gentzler PhD
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Abstract

This paper proposes and outlines connections among personal, professional and program integrity during regime changes. If members of the Home Economics profession rethink the place of these three types of integrity within their practice, especially during regime changes, they can live and practice with conviction, speak with legitimacy and credibility about the profession, and act with authority and confidence. Eleven principles are tendered to help Home Economics professionals practice with integrity within a dynamically changing context.

Nearly everyone has a story, or has heard someone tell a story, about the reorganization, restructuring or closure of a Home Economics or Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) program, department, or college. The authors are no exception. Carver (1979) commented on this phenomenon in our profession, as did Firebaugh (1980), reporting on closures dating as far back as 1967. Our intent is to make this political reality more visible in the literature. Grounding the discussion within the context of professionalism, ethics and moral integrity sets the stage for further dialogue as this powerful wave of change spreads across the country, even the world.

Why integrity matters and how regime change compromises it

Several issues emerge at the onset of this professional controversy. There is no question that Home Economics has established a proud heritage of accomplishments of improving the daily lives of individuals and families. Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) professionals throughout the world have contributed knowledge, research, service and expertise to address the many and varied issues faced daily by individuals and families. Given these contributions, it seems unthinkable that anyone would attempt to dismantle or undermine secondary and university programs in Home Economics whose primary purpose is to socialise new generations of practitioners to improve the quality of life and augment the human condition. Perhaps it is because those making the decisions regarding the departments, programs, and profession are uninformed or do not understand the integrated nature of a profession that generates research and knowledge to address the complex problems that people face daily as a result of human actions and social realities. Pendergast and McGregor (2007) further argued that these decision makers often are grounded in a patriarchal ideology that favours natural sciences over human sciences, men’s work over that generally associated with women, or both. From this stance, decision makers assume the FCS profession lacks the sophistication of other fields of study; hence, they conclude it is a less-than-legitimate area for scholarly endeavour. Quite the contrary.
The contributions of the FCS profession have helped shape and sustain the family as the primary social unit of society. People need assistance and preparation to learn how to “be in a family”; it does not come naturally (McGregor, 2008a). Without this support, the most basic social unit at the heart of our ever-changing society cannot fulfill its contributions to human life. Marjorie East (1978, p. 141) claimed, “Home Economics is a focus on the home in order to improve humanity”. With this as its raison d’être, the Home Economics profession has a powerful role to play in society with attendant moral and ethical responsibilities. Indeed, FCS is a profession and as such is defined by a number of characteristics including personal and professional integrity via:

- the provision of services that benefit society as a whole
- a high level of intellectual activity, especially moral judgments
- adherence to a recognised code of ethics with attendant sanctions if the public is harmed
- strict supervision of education and socialization into the profession (involving licensing, certification and advanced degree credentials)
- a limited scope and purpose dependent on complex knowledge and practice with adherence to an agreed upon social end (Brown & Paolucci, 1978; McGregor, 2005).

In interpreting Brown and Paolucci’s (1978) work, Vaines (1980) explained that while a mission-oriented profession (like Home Economics) needs knowledge to accomplish practice with moral overtones, a discipline-oriented field sees knowledge as the end in itself. It is clear that FCS’s role is different from the pure disciplines that seek knowledge for the sake of more knowledge (Brown, 1980). As professionals with a moral imperative, Home Economists are expected to exhibit certain moral and ethical characteristics and actions that set us apart from those who are not bound by the same codes. People entering the profession need a special form of socialization if they are to embrace this moral imperative. This socialization should happen within philosophically grounded FCS programs (Gentzler, 1987; McGregor, 2006a, 2006b; McGregor & MacCleave, 2007), something that has been profoundly compromised due to Home Economics program closures and restructuring.

Specifically, over the last few decades, those who have not understood the magnitude of our contributions have made program-related decisions based on their knowledge and perceptions of our work, decisions that have profoundly impacted FCS’s future (see Barnes, 2001). In response, to avoid losing faculty positions, members of the Home Economics profession have tended to capitulate and/or have fallen prey to:

- the whim of the person(s) in charge,
- his or her (their) political agendas and ideological stances, and
- their (mis)understandings of our profession (Pendergast & McGregor, 2007; Vincenti, 1997).
The purpose of this paper is to look at the professionalism, ethics and moral integrity inherent when FCS professionals experience supervisors, administrators and governing boards making decisions that negatively influence the profession’s ability to accomplish its mission.

Ethics and morally grounded practice are at the heart of Home Economics (Craig, 1991). Although a review of FCS literature provided an adequate overview of ethics, little was revealed about personal and professional integrity related to FCS and Home Economics program changes. Current FCS literature does not contain any discussion of the intricate process of maintaining one’s personal integrity, or the profession’s integrity, during regime mandates and changes. This paper serves to initiate and inform that discussion. To that end, it does not look at individual decisions, programs, or incidences that have impacted on the profession; rather, this paper aims to help FCS professionals understand themselves as they wrestle with their personal questions and ruminations related to program reconfigurations and closures.

**Professionalism, ethics and integrity**

Houle (1980) identified 14 compelling characteristics of professionalism. Two of those are related to ethics and integrity. First, as part of professionalism, people should contribute to the creation of a subculture through acculturation into the profession. This subculture includes the lore, traditions, prestige systems, special language and other features that are not generally understood by those outside the profession. Second, this subculture respects ethical practices and settings where ethics can be discussed and dialogued. These ethical activities should contribute to ongoing public acceptance and personal esteem enjoyed by the profession.

The American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) lists, as a core value of the organization, and by association, of individual members: “integrity and ethical behaviour.” Ethics is an integral part of professionalism; integrity is a fundamental element of ethics. Ethics is considered as one of five branches of philosophy. It studies people’s actions and queries: *What should I do? How should I act?* Ethics is a requirement of human life. It is a means of deciding a course of action. Without ethics, actions may very well be random, aimless and even unethical. If actions are considered unethical, it could be said that people lack scruples or principles, or ruthlessly seek a personal advantage (Laundauer & Rowlands, 2001; McGregor, 2006c). Ethics refers to the quality of one’s inner character or to one’s moral philosophy of what is right and wrong behaviour. One’s system of ethics must consist of elements that help one deal with both emergency situations and regular, day-to-day choices. One of these crucial elements is the virtue of integrity. Personal integrity refers to the reputation of a person while professional integrity refers to the reputation of an entire profession, shaped by the actions of its individual members. Each is outlined below, as is the notion of the resultant integrity of the program after a regime change (see Figure 1).
Personal integrity

Integrity is the modern name used to describe the actions of those persons who consistently act from a firmly established character pattern of doing the right thing (Wakin, 1996). This character trait is called a virtue, a moral habit generally resulting in gaining and maintaining one’s value system. Integrity is the virtue of practicing what one preaches or believes to be right. Any deviation from what one knows to be right is an attack on one’s own life, and a threat to others. One has to be able to look oneself in the mirror. To have integrity, one has to be a person of principle, meaning that one understands, accepts and lives by one’s principles. Personal integrity refers to the complex notion of moral wholeness or unit of the self (Ascension Health, 2007b). To act without integrity means others may become mistrustful, because one’s actions are not predictable (Laundauer & Rowlands, 2001).

The key to integrity is consistency on a daily basis. It means being bound by and following moral and ethical standards even, and especially, when making life’s hard choices. The Latin root of the word integrity is similar to that of integer, meaning whole number. The concept of wholeness, or consistency, is clearly relevant to integrity (Sherman, 2003). To act with integrity is to engage in behaviour and make decisions that are consistently in line with one’s principles. Other words often used when trying to define integrity are: scrupulous, honest, truthful, open, fair, faithful, as well as those already mentioned, including: principled, whole, trustworthy and consistent (The Teal Trust, 2002). Morality aside, behavioural integrity is the extent to which people’s actions align with their espoused principles (Simons, 2002).

Different types of personal integrity

Personal integrity can be separated into four different categories: self-integration, self-identity, standing for something, and moral purpose (Cox, La Caze & Levine, 2001). These
definitions, distinguished below, provide professionals with various ways to maintain personal integrity, depending on how they understand the concept.

**Self-integration.** People can endorse certain things they want in their lives and then outlaw other things that get in the way of these higher order desires. This is called integrity as self-integration (Cox et al., 2001). The capacity to overcome temptation, when faced with something that one has outlawed, is seen as a display of character, a sign of one’s integrity. As well, people can maintain self-integration integrity in other ways. For example, a Home Economics professional may endorse always having some role to play in the field, and will inhibit any other desires that get in the way of having that role. When a department is closed, if people really endorse having some role in the field, they will find a way to do that, even if the department is closed. They do not lose their self-integration integrity if they move on and find a way to apply FCS practice outside the field of FCS. Also, people’s self-integration integrity can be challenged in ways other than by encountering an outlawed desire—it can involve inner conflict over principles, values, commitment and wishes, which are always in flux. Self-knowledge is crucial to self-integration integrity.

**Self-identity.** The second type of personal integrity pertains to maintaining one’s identity. This process entails holding steadfastly to one’s commitment rather than ordering and endorsing certain desires (the intent of self-integration integrity). It means doing the right thing even though no one else is watching. Identity integrity stays in place whether the test is adversity or prosperity; acting from this stance always costs something, sometimes everything. Ultimately, identity integrity is an issue of commitment (De Bly, 2003).

**Standing for something.** The third type of personal integrity refers to when people stand up for what they believe in, and they do this standing within a community of people trying to discover what in life is worth doing. This position of integrity means being able to stand up for what one believes, while respecting the judgments of others. People striving for this type of integrity face a challenge because they can easily be seen as fanatical, someone who does not give proper respect to the deliberations and views of others. Exemplary figures of integrity stand by their judgments in the face of enormous pressure to recant. This approach is different than fanatically standing by something, with fanatic meaning unruly passion, extreme devotion to a cause, and overzealousness. Without respect for others’ deliberations and judgments, it would be easy to become a fanatic (Cox et al., 2001). Retaining professional integrity would mean retaining respect for others as one consistently stands up for what one believes (professional assertiveness) (McGregor, 2006b).

**Moral purpose.** A final type of personal integrity involves the morality of the commitment to which people intend to remain true. Because this type of integrity is concerned with deliberating about how to live, people have integrity if they intellectually pursue the nature of a morally good life. People would consistently display intellectual integrity in all moral deliberations, and then act with moral purpose. There are some things, however, that people of integrity cannot do, no matter how intelligible and defensible their actions are—such actions are just not right. Judgment of this type of integrity would involve either (a) judgments about the reasonableness of another’s moral point of view, rather than the absolute correctness of their view; or (b) judgments about how intellectually responsible the
person was when he or she thought about the moral question (Cox et al., 2001). The key to applying this notion of integrity is to make sure that the action one is judging is definitely a moral project. Failing to complete a book is not reflective of a lack of integrity, no matter how committed the person was to writing the book, because writing a book is not a moral project. Being committed to preventing the commission of evil, and then letting that evil event happen, could be construed as a lack of integrity because the person did not apply his- or herself intellectually or rigorously enough to address the moral problem.

Professional integrity

Whereas the previous section presented a perspective on personal integrity, this section focuses on professional integrity. Each profession has a set of core values by which it identifies its very essence. These values constitute the profession’s moral conscience, its sense of what is right and scrupulous. A conscience is an inner voice that guides everyday decisions to act. Part of each practitioner’s decision involves the application of the profession’s values to a particular situation (Brown, 1980). Professional integrity refers to people acting in accordance with the core values of their chosen profession—acting with a professional conscience, the quality of being true to one’s profession (Ascension Health, 2007a; Sherman, 2003).

Wakin (1996) theorised about professional integrity. His thinking coincides with the thinking in our field, and is a useful way to view the FCS profession’s discourse on the topic. Like Brown and Paolucci (1978), he maintained that professions exist to serve some societal need. Because of the critical, personal service they provide to society, members of professions are educated and supported by the society they serve. He cited as examples: health practitioners, educators and peacekeepers. Brown (1980) added Home Economics. This inherent link to the community is why professions require integrity. This obligation is especially germane to family and consumer sciences. We serve society by ensuring that individuals and families are strong, resilient and empowered. To act with professional integrity, each member of the profession has the responsibility to have personal integrity, and the best of us create environments that nourish the integrity of others (Sherman, 2003).

Integrity of personal service professions

Brown (1980) distinguished between personal service professions and impersonal service professions, with Home Economics being an example of the former, as are medicine, education and social work. By their very nature, personal service professions are imbued with ethics and integrity. FCS service is personal because it often requires face-to-face contact, an inherently high-touch approach, high levels of personal trust, and location-specific requirements not readily replicated elsewhere (e.g., meeting in a family home). Citing Halmos (1971), Brown offered a powerful profile of Home Economics as a personal service profession (rather than impersonal service, like engineering). The full intent of Home Economics professionals is to bring about a change in the person(s) they serve. More to the point, the intent is to foster changes in the system of concepts that a person uses when interpreting and acting upon the self and the environment. As well, FCS provides services with specific ends that are in the interests of those served and of larger society. Such ends are examined and judged within the profession in collaboration with those persons served;
hence, they are called valued ends rather than predetermined or given by some expert (called a given end)—to value something means it is important to you.

The actions of FCS professionals also have moral overtones because any decisions made assume that doing one thing is better for the person being served than doing something else. These are called value judgments, because they concern both the values held by the people being served and the values of the FCS professional, as to what is the desired, valued end. The actions of FCS professionals intentionally affect the lives of other people; hence, FCS professionals have a moral obligation to determine what goals or end states are desired by the people they serve. Their guiding, normative question is, “What should be done?” (Brown, 1980). This question must be posed from a position of professional integrity. Because the Home Economic professional’s intervention purposively affects the lives of those served, the latter must have a voice—agency—in determining the nature of the valued end results of the intervention (McGregor, 2007).

Brown (1980) asserted that Home Economics can assume this moral position in their work because, in the case of personal service, the relationship between the professional and people being served is reciprocal. The prevailing attitude is one of mutual respect, trust, unity, sympathy, confidence and interdependence. The assumption is that to have a true understanding of the import of professional activity, the FCS professional must understand the meaning the person being served attaches to the valued end. Also, members of personal service professions believe that people can take action because they are conscious beings and because they assign meanings and purpose to things in their life. As well, members of personal service professions believe that humans are capable of critical reflective thought and self-initiated action (self forming). From this stance, FCS professionals believe they can effect changes in the persons they serve by working collaboratively with them in a context of respect and mutual gain. To that end, Brown believed Home Economic professionals must practice from a position of deep integrity because there is such great moral significance and obligations in their professional actions.

Relationship between professional and program integrity

These assertions beg the question, “How does a deeper, personal understanding of professionalism, attendant ethics and moral integrity relate to the integrity of program changes?” We posit that the connection is undeniable. When FCS academic units are under threat of changes that diminish their ability to prepare FCS professionals, FCS practitioners have a special responsibility to the institution, colleagues and the professional community to act with professional integrity. This response entails taking guidance from a communal set of values associated with being FCS professionals. When people subscribe and act in accordance with this value set and accompanying principles, constraints are placed on their behaviour; that is, their professional integrity is bound up in competing moral principles and values. Integrity is the bridge between character and conduct (Wakin, 1996). If, when a department in under threat, people act expediently, in desperation, in a make-shift manner, or in a way that renders a personal advantage, it can be said that they did not act with professional integrity—the professional community of FCS is affected by their actions. Each time a secondary or university program is threatened, the profession as a whole is compromised. Furthermore, if people are members of a profession, then ‘who I am’ (integrity) must involve
their social role as a practicing professional. The social aspect of integrity is very significant because, when people fail to act with professional integrity when programs are under threat, the whole professional community is diminished.

Wakin (1996) noted that, in all professions, the issue of personal competence is directly related to professional integrity. The obligation to be competent is a moral one. Competence refers to the capacity and power to take action. Wakin suggested that even those colleagues and superiors who tolerate incompetence (academics acting without power) are culpable in a breach of professional integrity. So, the case can be made that when Deans, Chairs, Vice Presidents and Provosts tolerate the restructuring of programs that stem from persons acting without the power they claim to have, or for their own self interest, the former are contributing to the breach of integrity of the Family and Consumer Science profession. This line of reasoning applies also to cases where fellow colleagues take initiatives to change existing organizational arrangements, changes that affect the integrity of program offerings, and potential graduates.

Furthermore, this line of thinking can be taken to actions that happen outside one’s home institution. Wakin (1996) made the case that if professionals do not take joint responsibility for the conduct undertaken by other members of the profession, they are breaching professional integrity. Simply put, if one discovers that a sister institution is trying to merge, restructure or close an existing program, and one does not take action to address the ethical implications of these changes, one “sins against professional integrity” (p. 5). Home economists may find it difficult to accept Wakin’s assertion that we are sinning against professional integrity if we do not speak up for other programs. An automatic, defensive response is, “Why do I have any responsibility for what happens at another university?” He would answer that, because only fellow professionals are capable of evaluating the competence of others in their field, they must accept the professional responsibility of upholding the standards and mission of the entire profession. Fellow FCS professionals are best able to spot failures of leadership, abuses of power, or the venalities of conduct (personal gain) that interfere with achieving the profession’s mission.

Wakin (1996) also recognised the conundrum faced by people in these situations, that their obligation of professional integrity may be pitted against personal loyalties and friendships. He maintained that where the stakes to the professional community and society at large are high enough, professional integrity should win out. This obligation is complicated when the program is led by those who have tenure, are not interested in leaving, are not conversant with leading edge innovations in the field, or some combination. As well, Griffore and Phenice (2005) pointed to the vulnerability of human ecology programs when there is no cohesiveness or support amongst the faculty affected by pending or imminent program changes. This collegial solidarity is difficult but necessary in the presence of university-wide resolve to eliminate programs, in concert with a lack of support from university administrators. Even the best efforts from outside the school can be undermined when the internal professional integrity is weakened or missing.

Another dimension of professional integrity that plays a role in program changes is our obligation to the future generation of Home Economics practitioners. Pre-professionals are
supposed to learn the importance of the social and community obligations of their chosen profession. They should learn that they inherit the responsibility to maintain standards and conduct in the entire profession, and not just for themselves. Society gives them the authority to act as a professional. With this authority and autonomy comes a serious professional obligation to society (Brown, 1980). If their pre-professional socialization does not prepare them for this, they may not develop the confidence to act with integrity. Worse yet, when departments are moving through the painful process of restructuring or closure, students are exposed to deep tensions and the nuances of professional integrity being played out on their watch. As FCS programs experience restructuring and other changes, FCS professionals have a profound obligation to the next generation. This obligation exists because professional integrity reflects on not only the reputation of individual FCS and attendant organizations, but also on the image and credibility of the profession as perceived by others (McGregor, 2007). It is important that the tradition of ethical behaviour be carefully maintained and transmitted with enthusiasm to future generations. Any breaches of professional and personal integrity could be devastating to society in the long term, because these breaches will taint the socialization of the incoming generation of practitioners (Wakin, 1996).

Program integrity after a regime change

In all but a few cases, the regime does change. The final section of this paper discusses the challenge of trusting the integrity of the results of the program changes. Has the integrity of the programs been retained or compromised? To discuss this aspect of the issue, we turn again to the idea that wholeness and integrity complement each other. Wholeness refers to being intact, pure, unadulterated, not corrupted, not breached (Cox et al., 2001). If a Home Economics program is divided or siphoned off to other departments, it is no longer intact. If foreign substances (people or subject matter) are introduced into a stable program, it can become adulterated. If faculty members cannot leave the emerging new unit because of job security issues, they may be corrupted over time by being demoralised. If the walls of the department are being climbed or scaled by others wanting resources (or saying the department does not have any resources so they pull the walls down), then the department is being breached (Pendergast & McGregor, 2007). When any of these situations materialise, the integrity (wholeness) of the entire unit is in jeopardy.

Consequently, one aspect of integrity inherent in regime changes at universities is whether we can trust the integrity of the results of the changes. What does the new program structure look like and can we trust that it is serving society? If we accept that families have five basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, family relations/human development, and resource management and consumption) (McGregor, 2008a), then any program that leaves any of these out lacks integrity. If we assume that any program that shapes future FCS professionals should be interdisciplinary (McGregor, 2008b), then any program that does not have students taking courses from a collection of related disciplines lacks integrity. If we assume that families are better served if Home Economic professionals are prepared in fundamental family processes (decision making, communication, problem solving, resource management, etc.), then any program that omits these lacks integrity. If we assume that families are better served if FCS professionals have skills in leadership, policy and advocacy, a critical science perspective and
knowledge of the history of the profession (McGregor, 2008b; McGregor & MacCleave, 2007),
then a program that excludes these lacks integrity.

Standing up for such a comprehensive approach to Home Economics programs is a challenge if
people believe they can maintain personal and professional integrity only if they do not
engage in blaming, criticizing or breaching etiquette. But it is a legitimate stance to take.
FCS has a solid record of historically endowing comprehensive university programs with
integrity, and we are obligated to assert their merit. Any deviance from this
comprehensiveness, any short cuts, any taking of people’s arguments for change at their word
(without speaking out), can reduce the integrity of any results that stem from regime change.
And program fragmentation does occur. At many universities, whole FCS departments are
broken up and then the smaller pieces are transferred to other departments, usually
medicine, agriculture, sociology, business or education and, recently, human sciences or
human development (Griffore & Phenice, 2005; Pendergast & McGregor, 2007). In some
instances, these programs within FCS colleges have become so large, they have become new
colleges. The result is a total breach of integrity of the professional offerings. Often, the
professional orientation courses, capstone courses, and the collection of processes needed to
work with families and represent their interests are lost as well: leadership, management,
policy and advocacy, communication, problem solving and decision making. Without this
grounding in FCS principles and processes, the future of the profession is compromised, along
with its integrity. How can the Home Economics profession remain ethically responsible if it is
not preparing graduates who have the historical grounding, skills, competencies, processes,
principles and values to serve society and its members? How can the new program
arrangements have professional integrity if people are forced to acquiesce or agree to
embrace the new model for the sake of saving their jobs or a funded position or rescuing bits
and parts of the program?

Principled conclusion

Maintaining program integrity and professional and personal integrity is a complicated dance,
often with unwilling partners. Yet, we know the dance continues—program changes are
inevitable, for many reasons. FCS professionals have to find a way to live through these
changes with personal and professional integrity. A recommended strategy is to assume a
principled approach to practice. It is very important that FCS professionals determine what
their principles are, as well as the principles of the profession, so they have a moral
benchmark when they encounter these very difficult and life altering situations (The Teal
Trust, 2002).

If FCS professionals act from a principled stance, others may not agree with what they are
saying, but they will respect them and know that they are acting with personal integrity. This
respect helps ensure open lines of communication. If FCS professionals believe they cannot
live with how a program is being transformed, their decision to stay or depart must come
from a place of personal and, ideally, professional integrity. Regarding the latter, in order to
make sure FCS professionals can strive to ensure that university program changes respect the
underlying principles of the profession (professional integrity), resulting in program integrity,
it is imperative that mission and vision statements, codes of conduct and ethics, framework
documents, body of knowledge documents and the like actually contain these principles and
are readily available to all practitioners (McGregor, Pendergast, Seniuk, Eghan & Engberg, 2008; McGregor & MacCleave, 2007).

This paper proposed and outlined connections among personal, professional and program integrity during regime changes. Our intent was to make this political reality more visible in FCS professional discourse in such a way that members of the profession feel more empowered to preserve all three dimensions of integrity. This approach is a more powerful professional stance than assuming that one is a victim of forces beyond one’s control (Sherman, 2003). To that end, several principles are worth remembering, if Home Economic professionals want to practice with integrity within a dynamically changing context:

- gain self-knowledge, especially through taking an inventory of both personal and professional values and principles (McGregor, 1997);
- assume the responsibility to act in accordance with the core principles and values of the profession as well as one’s own value system, and work on acknowledging and reconciling conflicts between these value systems;
- become familiar with, and critique, the profession’s code of ethics, principles, missions, and philosophical underpinnings (McGregor, 2006a) so that one can be ready to defend them during regime changes;
- make decisions that are consistently in line with one’s principles. Doing this on a daily basis builds one’s character and readies one to meet the really difficult situations;
- respect the difference between, but total interdependence of, personal integrity (reputation) and professional integrity (reputation);
- retain respect for others and their judgments while consistently standing up for what one believes (professional assertiveness);
- intellectually pursue the nature of “What is the good life, what is right and wrong, what should I do?” These initiatives prepare one for situations that can compromise one’s personal and professional integrity;
- begin to perceive maintaining integrity as both a process of elucidation and cleansing (coming clean with oneself);
- accept the challenge that one has responsibility for what happens at other institutions because the results impact the integrity of the entire profession. Not acting in these situations places society and the profession at risk;
- accept one’s responsibility to the future generation of the FCS profession by ensuring a tradition of ethical, moral behaviour, especially during regime changes;
- accept that FCS university programs are susceptible to regime changes (for many reasons) (Barnes, 2001), recognise the ways that wholeness of these programs can be breached, and prepare to embrace different notions of integrity as these changes play out;
Finally, even though this paper was about individual practitioners, the power of the collective profession needs to be used more overtly. If a principled individual practitioner practices from a place of inner integrity, there is a better chance of the entire collective moving towards a similar, principled position. From this stance, members of the profession could recognise the need to act politically as well as personally when circumstances warrant.

Integrity is a quality of spirit that lives in all of us (Sherman, 2003). A professional stance of personal integrity can lead to enhanced professional and program integrity during regime changes. If members of the profession rethink the place of these three types of integrity within their practice, especially during regime changes, they can live and practice with conviction, speak with legitimacy and credibility about the profession, and act with authority and confidence.

Authors’ note

The message in the paper has relevance to the entire profession, regardless of the name used in various countries. In this paper, we use Home Economics and FCS because that is the name used in our part of the world and in some other countries. The label does not negate the message.

Biographies

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References


Corporate involvement in education: Considerations for Home Economics educators

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Abstract

Fuelled by the ideology of privatization and marketplace values, corporate involvement in public education is on the increase. This paper explores different levels of corporate involvement, examining the discourse used, and contrasting each with an alternative discourse linked to the original intent of public education of preparing students to participate in a democratic society and act in the common good. It raises questions and suggests actions for Home Economics educators to ensure that their mission not be compromised by hidden agendas.

Introduction

McGregor (2003b) challenged Home Economists to take up critical discourse analysis to uncover the ideological underpinnings of text and talk. She pointed out that language is not neutral and that it is a professional responsibility to “take the voice of those in power into question to reveal hidden agendas and motives” (p. 2). This paper examines the discourse used in the educational system around the issue of corporate involvement in education. According to Molnar (2003/4), corporate involvement in schools “has become so pervasive that it is virtually invisible” (p. 83). Notwithstanding this claim, some authors have begun to make the invisible visible by critically examining corporate involvement in education to determine implicit ideologies and underlying political agendas (e.g., Apple, 2001; Goodman & Saltman 2002; Kohn & Shannon, 2002; Saltman, 2000).

This paper concentrates on corporate interests in the public school system but some of the information also applies to tertiary institutions (see for example, Roosevelt, 2006). To begin, the focus will be on the language related to corporate sponsorship, contractual agreements (including product placement), and choice and contrasting two points of view on corporate involvement in schools. One, located in economic/managerial discourses connected with marketplace values that are most often associated with the neo-liberal agenda of free market capitalism. The other, located in political/moral discourses of societal values is associated with a liberal education in a democratic society functioning to create an educated citizenry committed to the common good. Implications for Home Economics educators and actions that can be taken to counter the dominant discourse of the marketplace that prevails will be discussed.

Corporate sponsorship

For almost a century, groups outside the education sector have been involved in education (Molnar, 2001). The most common involvement is reflected in the language of sponsorship. For example, posters, pamphlets, videos, CDs, ready made lessons, and student handouts
produced by organizations or corporations are called sponsored educational materials (SEMs). Local businesses and corporations sponsor incentive programs providing rewards for educational achievement. Organizations and corporations sponsor scholarships or particular school events such as motivational speakers or educational programs such as field trips. Others sponsor particular school initiatives by donating products, such as computers, or supporting fund raising opportunities that involve either (a) the sale of products with a portion of the profits returned to the school or (b) reimbursements to the school for the collection of labels. Corporations “adopt” schools (Fearnley, 2000) providing a wide range of support from donations and in-store fundraising events to volunteerism for special school projects.

Corporate sponsorship may not appear to be controversial and the significant contribution to funding and supporting education is often welcomed. This understanding of sponsorship is located in economic discourse, akin to the way it is used in television or the arts, whereby it is reasonable for a corporation to support a project or activity in return for limited advertising during its course. This is a fairly modern use for the term sponsor, first appearing in the 1930s (Barnhart, 1988). When sponsor is used in this way, it is quite acceptable for outside interests to choose sponsorships and donations that produce measurable returns in support of their marketplace goals. Indeed, the norm of self-interest is deemed desirable, and this is considered a “win-win” opportunity as both parties gain. The organization or corporation gets positive exposure with a large audience who are potential consumers of their goods or services, and the education system gets much needed funding and educational resources. Proponents argue that students are exposed to advertising everywhere and so this exposure is insignificant in the scheme of things.

Opponents take issue with the motivation behind corporate sponsorship in education and express concern that the education system has unwittingly become an ambassador for corporate interests and promoters of the neo-liberal ideology of marketplace values (e.g., Apple, 2001; Giroux, 1998; Korten, 1995; Shaker, 1998, 1999). This intrusion of corporate interests in schools can be described as undermining the credibility and integrity of public education (Gariepy, 1998) as schools become “branded” spaces (Klein, 2000) that are “cashing in on kids” (Molnar, 1999, p. 1). Concern is expressed regarding the disparity created between sponsored schools and those that are not, and contend that this exclusion might exacerbate already existing inequalities in the education system or lead to schools competing for sponsorships (Shaker, 1998). Questions are raised related to the power that the sponsoring organization can gain over educational programs and schools. Also, the accuracy and efficacy of some of the SEMs is questioned. Wrong or misleading information is common (e.g., Giroux, 1998). There is evidence of corporations associated with cigarettes and alcohol funding anti-smoking and responsible drinking projects to give themselves a veneer of legitimacy by appearing to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem (see for example, Hardy, 1999; Eyre, 2002).

Rather than producing students who are consuming subjects ready for the marketplace, opponents of corporate involvement in schools argue for an “educated person” who is an autonomous, critical thinker participating in a democratic society working toward a common good. These arguments point to another use of sponsorship that is grounded in political/moral
discourse deriving from as far back as 1651 (Barnhart, 1988). In those days, sponsor was used in the sense of “sponsor in baptism,” and involved making a solemn promise to assure religious education (Barnhart, 1988). So, the notion of a sponsor was that one assumed a moral responsibility for the person or people being sponsored. To sponsor also meant, “to provide a surety or guarantee” (Barnhart). It is still used in this way today as in sponsor a child in a foster care plan or when an organization sponsors a refugee family. In teacher education, a sponsor teacher is one who agrees to mentor and guide a student teacher, and has a similar responsibility in that they provide an ethical assurance that the student teacher is qualified to join the profession when they determine whether the student teacher passes or when they provide a reference for the student teacher. Here, the underlying meaning of sponsorship is more akin to altruism and genuine philanthropy when money or goods or services are given in support of a cause or event without a sense of gain but rather as a socially, morally, responsible contribution to the common good.

Contractual agreements

Corporate involvement in education also includes contractual agreements with schools and school boards. The most common contractual agreements are known as “pouring rights” that allow only one beverage company the exclusive right to sell drinks in a particular school or school district (Dunsmore, 2001; Molnar, 1999, 2001, 2003/4; Sheehan, 1999). Schools, or even whole school districts, sign exclusive sometimes multimillion-dollar marketing agreements with beverage providers like Pepsi and Coca Cola. This is essentially a monopoly arrangement for the corporation as only their branded drinks can be sold on the premises during school hours. The contract involves establishing a set price for the product and usually stipulates that no one else in the school can sell the product for a cheaper price. There is often a signing bonus, money paid up-front for signing the agreement and the contract can also have additional conditions such as access to the school through other promotions to increase the soft drink volume. The percentage of the profits returned to the school is usually established by the volume sold (Dunsmore, 2001). In addition to beverages, it is not uncommon for schools to contract out food services to McDonalds, A&W, Subway and the like (Schaefer, 2000).

 Contracts can also involve advertising space and naming rights. Advertising space can range from space in school washrooms, to school buses, to school rooftops, to product placement in exam booklets and textbooks. Naming rights is a form of recognition or acknowledgment of a corporation’s contribution to an institution. The corporation gets its name attached to school property. It may be the school itself or gymnasiums, theatres, computer labs, libraries, or the like (Molar, 2002).

There are also contracts that impose certain conditions in exchange for SEMs and donations. This can include provision of televisions and satellite dishes in exchange for compulsory daily viewing of news programs with commercials (Shaker, 1999) or computers with internet connection that also includes advertisements but could also include monitoring of students’ web browsing habits for commercial use (Miller, 1999).

Similar to sponsorship, the use of contracts in educational settings can hold different meanings, depending on the dominating discourse. A political/moral discourse would locate
the concept in social contract theory that holds to the view that persons' moral and/or political obligations are dependent upon a contract or agreement, hypothetical or otherwise, between them to form a civil society (D’Agostino, 2003; Friend, 2004). Although social contract theory has been critiqued by feminists and race scholars (Friend, 2004), it nonetheless is a powerful, influential theory that has shaped our collective consciousness regarding political and moral obligations and responsibilities. Social contracts or agreements from this point of view have to do with policy makers and educators upholding a public trust to do what is in the common or public good.

For those who argue from a political/moral point of view, the further encroachment of corporations in education is considered a violation of this public trust. They claim that, as corporations appropriate space and time, educational programs or activities in schools that are in the common good are displaced. Concern is expressed regarding: the continued undermining of public education (Giroux, 1998; Kuehn, 2003); the loss of public space (Klein, 2000); the potentially biased curriculum (Dunsmore, 2000); the questionable financial gains (Sheehan, 1999); and violation of the ethical commitment to do no harm to students, for example, sanctioning advertising to children at this vulnerable and suggestible age (Commercial Alert, n.d.). There is also a concern that allowing the corporate presence is an endorsement of consuming as a moral imperative. An implicit contract is formed between corporations and people, including children (Schor, 2004), whereby the former agrees to provide products for consumption and the latter agree to consume. Rather than students becoming consuming subjects, opponents argue for critical thinkers who consume responsibly. In addition, there is a fear that all the fundraising for school programs and projects masks the decrease in government funding for public education. Then, in the form of ironic backlash, when schools and school districts start to generate revenue themselves, governments responsible for funding public education often reduce the tax dollars allocated to schools and as government funding decreases, the need for outside funding increases. When this happens, schools/school districts are put in the position of soliciting, rather than negotiating. The power is on one side; that of the corporate business interests.

On the other hand, those who hold to the neo-liberal economic discourse of the capitalistic marketplace view a contractual agreement as strictly a business agreement for the exchange of goods or services. While the schools and school districts get much needed funds and some of the most advanced educational tools, the corporations get longer term access to students and the general public. The short term, relative benefits for education can be substantial. Schools can be outfitted with state of the art technology, with world-class fitness and sports facilities, with theatres, and the like.

The dialogue of choice

Since the 1980s, choice has increasingly become part of the discourse in education, particularly increasing choice within public schools (Levin, 1999). Choosing schools has always been an option for some parents. They could send their children to private schools. They could choose to live near the school they wished their children to attend. Within high schools, there has often been an element of choice in the selection of some of the courses students take. However, the role of public education was generally considered to provide a common
educational experience contributing to the social cohesion, stability of society, and democratic participation (Levin, 1999).

More recently however, democratic participation has been interpreted as individual choice rather than action in the common good. Apple (2001) characterises this as transforming democracy from a political concept to an economic concept. Choice in the form of consumer satisfaction and autonomy of special interest groups is used to reform the education system (Buckley & Schneider, 2007). This has given rise to magnet schools designed to cater to special themes, charter schools and voucher systems.

Charter schools are publicly funded elementary or secondary schools that have been freed from some of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools, in exchange for some type of accountability for producing certain results, which are set forth in each charter school's charter (National Education Association, n.d.). A charter school is not usually governed by a district school board but by their own board. They operate under a charter that they negotiate with an authorizing agency. In exchange for greater autonomy, they accept greater accountability for student results and are supposed to lose their charter if they do not reach their stated goals. Charter schools can be either for-profit or non-profit.

A voucher is a full or partial tuition reimbursement that parents receive from the government to use to send their child to any eligible school, public or private that they choose (Fowler, 2003). The voucher amount represents tax dollars already being collected from citizens and used for education. Parents receive a voucher and present it to the school of their choice. Schools are not to charge tuition beyond the value of the voucher.

Choice alternatives have allowed for increased corporate involvement in education. Corporations can manage and/or own schools and market educational programs through education management organizations (EMOs), that purchase ‘contracts’ from the district to manage schools and provide educational content (Molnar & Reaves, 2001; Shaker, 1999). They can participate in Public Private Partnerships (P3s), agreements between public school boards or government ministries of education that usually involve the private company or corporation building a facility that can be used for a fee by the public institution. This is not exclusive to education. Similar negotiations are proceeding for roads, bridges, government buildings, and so on. But in education this is mainly manifested as lease back schools. Done under the guise of cost saving, study after study has shown that P3s do not save money and actually cost more in the long run as schools are no longer public assets (Mackenzie, 2007).

For-profit and lease back schools are just the beginning of a wide range of commodification of educational services allowing corporate involvement in curriculum, textbooks, examinations, distance education, building maintenance, janitorial services, and selling seats to international students. These are all commercial enterprises designed to generate income for the owners, shareholders, or both. Maintenance and janitorial services are often privatised under the guise of cost cutting, but they also serve to “union bust”, as these services are outsourced (Shaker, 1998) for greater profitability for the corporation. Additionally, school boards are “buying” into the business model seeking sources of generating income such as selling seats to international students, initiating distributive (on-line) learning, selling
education overseas (BCTF Research Division, 2007), and privatizing such things as audiology and tutoring services (Thomson, 2003).

An examination of the dialogue of choice requires teasing out the values, beliefs, underlying assumptions, and motivations that have given rise to this emphasis on choice. Many of these educational reforms have been shaped by the market ideology of accountability and economic efficiency. The advocates of this point of view claim that public schools have become monopolies, are increasingly bureaucratic, and are stagnant and uncreative places. Privatization is touted as the way to improve learning, increase opportunities for students, and encourage the use of different, innovative and creative teaching methods (Levin & Belfield, 2003; Lubienski, 2003). Common arguments suggest that markets are much more efficient at allocating resources and distributing rewards than government bureaucracies and that by subjecting public education to market pressure and competition student achievement will improve (e.g., Carnoy, 2000). Thus, the whole movement to standards, standardization, and standardised testing feeds into the choice model as test scores are used to rate and compare schools. The bottom line is schools will either become more effective or go out of business and the business can be very lucrative (Ellwood, 2003). Albert (2002) estimates that over $3 trillion dollars are spent on education globally each year. It is evident that choice is really consumer choice. This means that education becomes a commercial enterprise, and students become clients or consumers of educational products.

Those who hold to the view that education should serve the common good express concern with the consumer model. They worry about the use of public funding for privatised educational services claiming that private sector will only invest in schemes that make money. What is masked is the privilege it gives to those who have the advantage to engage and exploit the model. They point out that corporations have an obligation to their shareholders not the public. An additional concern is related to trade agreements. As education becomes privatised and commodified, it becomes subject to trade agreements (Kuehn, 2000). According to Barlow (2000), predatory and powerful entrepreneurial transnational corporations aim to dismantle public education by subjecting it to the rules of international competition and the discipline of the World Trade Organization. Korten (1995) claims, "the real agenda of those promoting these trade agreements is not to eliminate borders, but rather to redraw them so as to establish what once belonged to the community, to be shared among its members, now belongs to private corporations for the benefit of their managers and shareholders" (p. 156). Giroux (1998) argues that educators must reclaim public schools as a public good where democratic values, human rights, economic justice and cultural diversity as ideals replace the trend to corporate interests and narrow consumer demands.

Discussion
What is evident in education today are competing discourses that highlight enduring tensions regarding the purposes of education. Two contrasting discourses that appear to be the most dominant have been presented; (a) an economic discourse linked to corporate capitalism and the neo liberal commitment to marketplace efficiency (Apple, 2001; Saltman, 2002, 2003); and (b) a political/moral discourse concerned with education as an important element in
The economic discourse is very powerful at this moment in history as neo-liberalism ideology is dominant on the political scene in many parts of the world. Neo-liberalism posits the market as the solution to all social problems characterised by wide scale privatization, liberalization of trade, and reduction of government involvement in regulating the private sector. Under this ideological system, democracy becomes synonymous with capitalism, couched in “free” markets, “free” enterprise and individual choice thereby transforming it from a political concept to an economic concept (Apple, 2001; Dobbin, 1998). Democracy becomes the right of consumer choice. The notion of a community committed to common values, where rights come with responsibilities, is replaced by the concept of a shopping mall where people are objectified as consumers. The discourse of efficiency replaces the ethical, political, cultural discourse of democratic values. One discourse aims for equity, efficacy, and diversity while the other potentially exacerbates inequalities in society (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Two Competing Discourses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Economic/Marketplace Discourse</th>
<th>Political/Moral Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Underpinnings</td>
<td>neo/liberal, corporate capitalism</td>
<td>democratic participation is essential to creating a civil society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Values</td>
<td>managerial efficiency</td>
<td>democratic values, social justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conception of Education</td>
<td>education is an economic concept</td>
<td>education is a political concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>corporate controlled</td>
<td>public controlled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>education as commerce, profit making, supports the economics system; a private good</td>
<td>education as an institution that supports social cohesion and stability of a society; a common good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>education as a tradable commodity</td>
<td>education as a social right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>market driven, private</td>
<td>free, universally accessible, public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prepares students for the global economy</td>
<td>prepares students for civic engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphors</td>
<td>education/schooling as a shopping mall</td>
<td>education/schooling as a community committed to common values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students as consumers, good corporate citizens</td>
<td>students as autonomous citizens in a democratic society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teachers as managers/accountants</td>
<td>teachers as pedagogues and fellow citizens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
beliefs and motives in order to determine our position. It may not be an either/or decision, but recognition of the potential effects of one discourse dominating. Some of these tensions have been enduring in education and Home Economics, for example, the tension between a liberal education that emphasises active participants in a democratic society and vocational education where students are prepared with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enter the world of work (e.g., Apple, 1997; Brown, 1993).

**Implications for Home Economics education**

When the economic discourse and a neo-liberal agenda dominates, public education and Home Economics education is threatened in many ways. This has been characterised as increasing intrusion of corporate interests and presence in schools, actual predation by corporations as schools provide captive audiences for marketing, and as a move to dismantle and take over the education system (Smith, 2003). Others have highlighted the way it compromises curriculum and pedagogical approaches, what counts as knowledge, and the meaning and future of work, leisure, consumption, and culture (e.g., Saltman, 2003). What implications does this discourse have for Home Economics programs? The next section highlights two implications that appear most pertinent: (a) misinterpretation of the name of our profession and the intent of our programs and (b) undermining and/or compromising Home Economics educational program programs.

**Misinterpretation of the name of our profession and programs**

The field in Canada, and in many places around the world, is known as Home Economics. In the United States, family and consumer science has become the accepted label. Both these descriptors contain terms, “economics” and “consumer”, more likely associated with the economic/marketplace discourse. The general public and people with whom we work could interpret these labels as an indication of our association with the ideologies of neo-liberalism and capitalism. As Home Economists/family and consumer scientists, it behooves us to clearly articulate and communicate the ideological positions that guide the profession and our work in educational settings. If these two labels are linked to free marketplace discourses, they become steeped in individualism, mindless materialism and maintaining the status quo.

Since its inception and continuing today, Home Economics has been concerned with improving the well-being and quality of life of individuals and families (Brown, 1993). However, the improvement in quality of daily life tended to concentrate more on the material quality of life than on non-material aspects of life (Brown, 1985, 1988). Embracing the concept of quality of life adds a political/ethical dimension to Home Economics that has been commonly ignored (Arcus, 1999; Brown, 1985, 1993) even though there have always been some in the field who have argued for a more critical approach because it helps us reveal power imbalances, inequalities and injustice (e.g., Brown, 1985, 1993; Johnson & Fedje, 1999). The most recent position statement created by the International Federation of Home Economics (IFHE, 2008, p. 1) states

*Home Economists are concerned with the empowerment and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, and of facilitating the development of attributes for lifelong learning for paid, unpaid and voluntary work; and living situations.*
Empowerment is generally used to describe the multi-dimensional processes that help people gain control over their own lives. This implies being able to identify the power structures, to probe beneath the surface of words and texts, and to challenge “taken-for-granted” and hegemonic practices. Thus Home Economists themselves have to have these skills, abilities and dispositions, in order to give “more adequate political-moral and intellectual direction to Home Economics” (Brown, 1985, p. 985), and to think carefully about the terms they use and the values and beliefs behind what they do (Brown, 1993).

As a recent example, McGregor has challenged members of the profession to question how they understand the notion of consumerism. She agrees with Brown (1993) that we “bought into” capitalism without critically examining its import on family well-being. To counter the fallout from 100 years of perpetuating capitalism and free markets, she argues for a conception of citizen-consumer in a mindful market. Citizen-consumers see themselves as a citizen first and a consumer second, and consume in a responsible manner contributing to the creation of a more just society (e.g., McGregor, 2001, 2003a, 2008).

Undermining Home Economics educational programs

One of the common topics in Home Economics curriculum is nutrition and healthy eating. Home economics educators encourage students to evaluate food products and make choices that support health and well-being. However, when school officials allow corporations exclusive control of beverages that when consumed in large amounts are a danger to health, or when they invade and displace educational and nutritional alternatives, as is the case of fast food outlets replacing teaching cafeterias, they are explicitly endorsing these products thus contradicting and undermining the efforts of Home Economics teachers.

Many Home Economics courses are skill based. For example, students learn basic food preparation techniques and sewing or craft processes. Depending on which discourse one is embracing, our idealised goal of empowerment and emancipation could be compromised if we are seen to be preparing low-wage workers instead of autonomous critical thinking citizens. Apple (1998) warns that when the economic discourse of the marketplace prevails, students are often regarded as future workers “who themselves can be bought and sold to the highest bidder” (p. 344) and education as an investment in “human capital” where the knowledge and skills obtained are measured in terms of their benefit to the labour force. Students then can become prey to the destructive effects of globalised competition, where action taken to maximise profits and minimise costs means searching the world for the cheapest labour. The credibility of Home Economics courses could be undermined if they are seen as training grounds for the low-wage food service industry and sweatshop conditions of clothing manufacturing. In addition, the goals of empowerment are not fostered if Home Economic courses are seen as preparing women only for the stereotypical role of unpaid homemaker.

Home economics educators should also be concerned with corporate interests outside the schools that have started private programs that may cover some of the same curriculum traditionally taught in Home Economics. Under a system embedded in the discourse of efficiency, it is not that far-fetched to think that franchised corporations such as “Kids Can Sew™,” cooking schools, or Baby Sitting certification courses become competition for Home Economics courses undermining the work that Home Economists do in schools and leading...
school administrators to think that Home Economics courses are not needed since the information and skills can be obtained elsewhere.

Courses developed by for-profit companies can be marketed to students all over the world via distributed learning that is delivered on-line. This can lead to the loss of local programs that respond to local contexts. "Magnet" schools, where only one school in the district offers certain courses, for example, textiles and fashion design, may be privileged because they appear efficient, leading to programs being dropped at other schools undermining the contribution that Home Economics makes to the broad liberal general education of students. Because the facilities for Home Economics classes are expensive to build and to maintain, and the courses are expensive, as they require additional supplies and equipment, if there are cheaper alternatives, school boards would be happy to divest themselves of these costs.

Also, if Home Economics educators, who believe in a critical science perspective, are put in the positions of competing with these privatised programs, they are put in the position of compromising their values. Teaching and learning to think critically is not always valued when marketplace values dominate. Technical modes of practice could override interpretive and critical modes as Home Economics teachers are pressured to ‘sell’ their programs.

The rise of standardised, ‘high stakes’ testing also has an impact on Home Economics programs. Teachers become forced to ‘teach to the test’ to be competitive with other schools, and to maintain imposed rankings. The tests often rely on memorization of facts (e.g., Popham, 2001) thus devaluing the critical thinking/practical reasoning approaches and the creative and innovative thinking advocated in fields like Home Economics. As well, as students are pressured to do well in core subjects (science, math, English, etc.), Home Economics and other ‘practical’ subjects are often pushed to the margins.

**Considering Action**

The dilemmas that arise for Home Economics educators who do not embrace the market ideology (thereby questioning sponsorship, contracts, and the consumer choice model of education that leads to privatization and corporate control) relate to: (a) our political/moral responsibility to our mission of contributing to the welfare, well being and empowerment of families locally and globally; and (b) to the ethical principles that are at the foundation of mission oriented professions: prevention from harm, and avoidance of coercion, bias, and indoctrination (Brown, 1993; 1980). Tenets of no harm, coercion, bias or indoctrination are powerful allies when confronting corporate intrusion into the education system, and Home Economics curricula. There are things we can do. Four suitable actions are presented as an invitation for others who feel compelled to take on the power of this pervasive discourse. These, and related actions, help shift power back to the profession, students, families, and communities. They help create an alternate discourse, one that favours social justice, peace, security, democratic participation—the antithesis of the neo-liberal free market and corporate-led globalization discourse.
Develop ethical screens

Regarding sponsorships or sponsored teaching materials, professional groups can develop guidelines for acceptance and/or use. As early as the 1950s, professional associations cautioned against the uncritical use of free or sponsored material (e.g., Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1953; 1955). These efforts continue today. Some groups are putting together educational packages to help teachers and students distinguish genuine philanthropy from corporate hype (Ainger, 2001). Teacher unions have developed ethical screens for fund-raising, corporate sponsorships, and partnerships (see for example, BCTF Policies on Privatization, n.d.). Some cities, universities, schools and school districts are declaring themselves "Sweat Free," committing to ensure that nothing that is purchased or sold on campus comes from a sweatshop or involves child labour (Maquila Solidarity Network, 2005). There are college student groups who are lobbying for codes of corporate social responsibility and ethical purchasing policies that include language such as "sweat free", "fairly traded", "organic" and "locally produced" (Maquila Solidarity Network, 2005).

Home Economics teachers, and educational institutions with Home Economics programs could also benefit from the development of ethical screens as they are often offered "free" sponsored educational materials, whether it be recipe pamphlets, posters, nutritional information, videos, CDs, sample products, sample textbooks, or ready made lesson plans or unit plans. Home economics teacher associations and professional associations also seek sponsors for conferences or other events. Sometimes, these sponsorships can cause ethical dilemmas if the values of the sponsor are at odds with the values and beliefs of the association as happened in Canada several years ago when a speaker initially declined an invitation to speak upon hearing that a major sponsor of the conference was a corporation with links to deaths from baby bottle disease. The key to determining whether to accept offers from organizations or corporations is to understand what notion of sponsorship is dominating, and whether that is aligned with our mission and its guiding principles.

Teach from a critical science perspective

To teach from a critical science perspective means providing students with opportunities to critique the prevailing ideologies and forces of exploitation in our society. Rather than accepting messages in teaching resources and materials provided free by corporations at face value, some Home Economics teachers, working from a background of critical pedagogy, could use them as an opportunity to expose "false consciousness" (Brown, 1980; Fay, 1987). Used in this subversive way, the materials become powerful tools for teaching critical thinking, information literacy, media literacy, critical thinking and practical reasoning where students learn to examine, critique and articulate ethically defensible actions.

Join advocacy groups

Groups of committed people working persistently on common concerns can have an impact if they agree on what is in the common good. Blake (1999) describes how the strength and collaboration of teachers, parents, organizations and concerned citizens helped to fight corporate intrusion in the form of Youth News Network (YNN). In my local school district, students, teachers and parents were able to stop a cell antenna from being placed on the top of a local high school (McMurtry, 2003). Various groups from around the world are now.
advocating for a ban on commercialism in schools (e.g., Commercial Alert; Campaign for Commercial Free Education). Lobby groups are making a difference, especially regarding the ubiquitous vending machine. In light of the increasing evidence of rising obesity in young people and considering possible litigation over breach of their responsibility, schools, school districts and even larger jurisdictions are reconsidering and renegotiating their contracts with beverage corporations and developing school food policies. Home economics educators have a central role to play here.

**Conduct and publish research**

Some contend that school choice and privatization are here to stay and that researchers should work toward developing sound school choice policies (Fowler, 2003). Others argue that the educational system will be unrecognizable if we continue to let marketplace values infiltrate the school system (Gariépy, 1999). The research on the consequences of choice discourse and action is light on empirical evidence (Goldhaber, 1999, 2000; Fowler, 2003), and reports are often contradictory. For example Brazier (1999) and McDonald (2002) claim that voucher systems do not raise student achievement and significantly disadvantage students from low-income families whereas Caire (2002) argues that voucher programs offer a positive alternative to inadequate public schools. Both Fowler (2003) and Lubienski (2003) suggest that the claim that charter schools are innovative and creative is unfounded. Gorard, Fitz and Taylor (2001) found that in the United Kingdom the introduction of school choice led to less socio-economic stratification in schools, but Howe, Eisenhart and Betebenner (2002) found the opposite occurred in Colorado.

At present, the economic/marketplace discourse is so pervasive that "year after year, professional education journals remain silent on the moral and pedagogical implications" of commercialism and schools (Molnar, 2003/4, p. 83). There are opportunities for scholars of Home Economics education to conduct research and report to the field and elsewhere (e.g., McGregor, 2003a). It is especially important that we engage in this research because of our mission, and because our programs are being particularly hard hit by the impact of this discourse. This paper also points out the need for research from Home Economists from other jurisdictions as the author and most of the references reflect a North American perspective.

In closing, as part of our professional responsibility in the critical struggle for social justice and human empowerment and well being, it is important to ensure that freedom and democracy as ethical, social, and political ideals are upheld and not subordinated by market ideology. This means challenging corporate power inside and outside the classroom.
Acknowledgments

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Biography

Dr. Smith is a retired high school Home Economics teacher currently working in the Teacher Education Program at the University of British Columbia in Canada. She is responsible for Home Economics education. She holds a PhD in Curriculum Studies in Home Economics. She teaches both pre-service and graduate students in face to face and on-line courses. Her research interests include global education, action research, teacher development, and Home Economics curriculum and instruction.

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Food or nutrition literacy?
What concept should guide Home Economics education

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Abstract

With the rise of health problems like obesity and Type 2 diabetes, the typical response by government bodies is to suggest people are suffering from nutrition illiteracy and therefore there is a need for nutrition education programs. This paper argues that a greater emphasis on food rather than nutrition may be a better route to take in effecting behaviour change. It advances food literacy as a concept that can rise above the transmission of information about nutrients and elaborates what this as an educational goal might mean for Home Economics programs in schools.

Introduction

Several years ago, I had a conversation with a colleague who was both a Home Economist and a dietitian. She made the comment that for her the difference between the two was food. In her words, Home Economists are food specialists. Dietitians are not. For her the strength of being a Home Economist was the knowledge of how to select, prepare and enjoy food whereas a dietitian’s approach was more therapeutic, analysing diets and making recommendations for improvement. At an international conference on health education and school health, held in Vancouver in May 2006, I found it interesting that the current “buzz words” were “ecological” and “systems” approaches. As a Home Economics educator it intrigued me that the health education community seemly has just become aware of concepts that have guiding Home Economics/family and consumer science for decades. The other concept that was frequently mentioned was “health literacy”. I became interested in the concept of “literacy” as it is being used in health education and what this meant in terms of nutrition. Interestingly, nutrition is often used as an example in the literature to explain health literacy (e.g., St. Leger, 2001). About the same time, I was approached by a Masters student who was interested in investigating how nutrition should be taught at the middle school level (Cimbaro, 2005). It had been suggested to her that having a conception of nutrition literacy might be a place to start.

These events, the conversation, the health conference and the meeting with the Masters student, led me to wonder whether the focus in Home Economics should be nutrition or food. My inquiries led me to see that increasingly those involved in nutrition who were not Home Economists (e.g., dietitians, nutritionists, nutritional scientists) were expanding the concept of nutrition moving beyond traditional biological definitions and concerns to including more food-related content. Home economics has typically included a study of food and nutrition, placing food first. The concept of food studies in Home Economics education has also been expanded to include global issues (e.g., Smith, 1990; Smith, 1996). Would elaborating a
conception of food literacy assist in the formulation of defensible educational curriculum and instruction?

I am a recently retired high school Home Economics teacher who is currently working as a Home Economics teacher educator, so I am locating this inquiry in the context of public school education (although some may find that the concept elaborated has usefulness in other areas). My intent is to elaborate a concept that may be useful for teachers of Home Economics.

Method of inquiry

In questioning the key concepts of a field of study, I am really pursuing a conceptual question (Brown, 1980). The theoretical framework then is analytic inquiry (Portelli, 1987) that aims to identify, examine, understand, develop or improve the attributes of a concept or set of concepts. Analysis of concepts is essentially a dialectical business and such analyses are in constant need of re-examination and clarification (Wilson, 1969). Frequently new concepts are developed because the old ones are inadequate in allowing educators to perform the task for which the concept was created in the first place (Coombs & Daniel, 1991). Walker and Soltis (1986) state conceptualizing means, “developing ways of thinking and talking about something, including making distinctions, defining names and noting significant features” (p. 29). This form of inquiry is important in curriculum studies because conceptual clarity is required to build conceptual frameworks. It includes defining attributes (what the concept is ‘like’ or ‘not like’). If our concepts are incoherent, poorly understood, or have blurred attributes, educators will have difficulty translating them into adequate curriculum and instructional practices policy (Coombs & Daniels, 1991; Lynch, 1995; Thomas & Arcus, 1992; Walker & Avant, 1995). Therefore the task is to tease out the theoretical foundations behind the choice of particular forms of practice (Caplan & Holland, 1990). This paper builds on other inquiries in health education (e.g., Smith & Peterat, 2000), in Home Economics (Brown, 1979, 1996; Thompson, 1992; Reynolds, 2002, 2003; Smith, Peterat & deZwart, 2000; Vaines, 1994, 1997, 1999), and in determining the relationship between health and Home Economics (e.g., Arcus & Thomas 1992). I propose to articulate the beginnings of a conception of food literacy and elaborate what it means for Home Economics curriculum and instruction.

Locating the study - Home Economics education and health education - parallel journeys?

There has always been a close connection between Home Economics and health. Some of the early “crusaders” for Home Economics in Canada came to advocate Home Economics from health concerns (e.g., Adelaide Hoodless; Alice Ravenhill). Health education and Home Economics education share some of the same roots. Both were advocated as school subjects to ameliorate conditions in society and both have been part of the public school curriculum in Canada and internationally since the late 1800s when children became the focus of efforts to improve society and amend social ills such as improper sanitation, inadequate housing, poor diets, high mortality rates among children, the spread of communicable diseases, criminal activity, and child labour (Peterat & deZwart, 1995; Smith & Peterat, 2000). With compulsory education, children became a captive audience, and schooling was seen as the logical place to protect and improve their health and the social condition. Hygiene was the initial concern
especially of those who lobbied for the teaching of domestic science or Home Economics in the belief that healthy homes, with better food, cleanliness, water, ventilation and clothing, would contribute to productivity (Peterat & deZwart, 1995).

As the years progressed, health education evolved into single-issue approaches, for example, sexuality education, AIDS education, drug education, and even driver education. Cries for more holistic approaches have given rise initiatives such as Comprehensive School Health (Canadian Association for School Health, 2006), Health Promoting Schools (Stewart-Brown, 2006), The World Health Organization’s Global School Health Initiative, and Healthy School Initiatives (Kolbe, 2006). While all of these are whole school programs, they do include a curriculum and instruction component.

Home economics evolved in schools as separate topic areas. It is not uncommon to find courses in Food Studies, Family Studies, Textile Studies, Housing and Interior Design, and so on. Within the specialty areas, there have been concerns about the dominance of technocratic rationality that gave rise to the “cooking and sewing”, “stitching and stirring” stereotype.

The amelioration of social ills is still seen as a function of schooling. Public policy, especially in education, tends to be reactive and subject to the whims of powerful stakeholders. During the past decade, the public school system in my home province of British Columbia (and I am sure elsewhere) has been pressured to address the health status of students, particularly obesity. Our Provincial Health Officer (Kendall, 2003) specifically recommended the inclusion of healthy nutrition in curriculum but he did not explain how this nutrition component might be addressed. The Ministry of Education responded by adding nutrition content into an already existing mandatory health and careers course. When nutrition education is mandated as part of health related course, Home Economics teachers become concerned about the duplication of the goals, objectives and content of Home Economics education (Thomas & Arcus, 1992). The question then arises, in what ways is the teaching and content of nutrition similar or different in health and Home Economics courses and is nutrition the right concept to address the problem of obesity.

Re-thinking Home Economics

Historically, Home Economics, sometimes called domestic science, grew out of a movement which sought to improve living conditions in a society wrote with many changes brought on by industrialization. It was during the Lake Placid Conferences which took place over a ten-year period from 1899 to 1908 that Home Economics was conceptualised as: the study of the laws, condition, principles and ideals concerned with man’s immediate physical environment and this nature as a social being and especially the relationship between the two for the purpose of improving the quality of his daily life Thus, since its inception, Home Economics has been concerned with improving the well-being and quality of life of families. Brown (1985), and others have pointed out, the improvement in quality of life tended to concentrate more on the material quality of life. As a result the profession developed as one that give emphasis to disseminating scientific knowledge and practical know-how. Food and nutrition courses therefore included information giving related to the nutrients but also information on how to prepare food to retain nutrients, how to plan meals that would provide balanced nutrients,
and so on. For many (e.g., Brown, 1985; Vaines, 1997), including myself (Smith, 1992, 1995) the concept of quality of life adds a political/ethical dimension to Home Economics which has commonly been overlooked. In 1979, a report Home Economics: A Definition authored by Brown and Paolucci was released that contained the following mission statement:

The mission of Home Economics is to enable family, both as individuals units and generally as a social institution, to build and maintain systems of action, which lead 1) to maturing in individual self-formation and 2) to enlightened cooperative participation in the critique and formulation of social goals and means for accomplishing them. (p. 23)

Systems of action:
The mission or general goal(s) of the profession must take into account the systems of action which the family has historically had within it and which contributed to personal and family well-being as well as to the ideas and ideals of society:

1. Purposive, rational action (means-end action) or work to secure the animal necessities of life, physical and social, and to secure the goals of civilised living.

2. Symbolic interaction, that is, language and social norms and values with underlying meaning involved.

In light of the loss of freedom for the family to act, families need to institute a third system of action:

3. Emancipative action which provides critical consciousness of social forces and which them formulates social goals and values and judges critically the means by which to accomplish those goals and values (p. 22)

A mission statement is an outline of the ultimate goal of a particular field of study that guides the practice of its members. Brown (1980) went on to outline what this mission would mean for Home Economics education. Some states in the US used the systems of action approach as a way to reframe curriculum and instructional practices making sure that each lesson included technical/instrumental “how to” information, an opportunity to explore the meaning of the topic especially as it relates to the student’s everyday life (communicative action), and a critical examination of the topic exposing underlying values and beliefs, issues related to power, and concerns related to social justice (emancipative action). Some even went so far as to frame their curriculum and instructional practices around critical science/practical reasoning inquiries where each unit and/or lesson was guided by a practical reasoning value question such as: Am I ethically obligated to nourish myself? What should be done about food security in my community? Should child labour be allowed? What values should guide my consumer choices? and so on.

Other authors have contributed to extending the conception of Home Economics education. For example, Thompson (1992) who encourages systems thinking and in particular the ability to negotiate in both the Hermean (patriarchal, male dominated, public sphere, political
economy) and the Hestian (private sphere, household and everyday life, family perspective) system; Vaines (1994) who encourages ecology as a unifying theme; my own work in elaborating a global perspective as an educational goal in Home Economics (Smith 1992; 1995); and MacGregor (2001) who extends this by including what it would take to create cultures of peace. Vaines (1995) in particular highlights many ways of knowing. She classifies the three systems of action as scientific/analytic ways of knowing and reminds us that lifeworld and narrative knowledge are also part of Home Economics epistemology.

These were all efforts to move the profession of Home Economics and Home Economics education beyond the technical, instrumental orientation that had come to include critical thinking and making reasonable judgments taking into consideration social justice, contributing to the common good, and the implications for the planet as our home, grounded in the particularity and concreteness of everyday life and the ability to take action.

The rise of health literacy

Changing health behaviour is a common purpose in health education but there is significant variation in the assumptions about knowledge, learning, people and society, and in the purposes/goals of education (Thomas & Arcus, 1992; Timmreck et al., 1988). Typically it is the information-giving mode that prevails despite the lack of evidence to substantiate the claim that knowledge will effect behaviour change (Mace, 1981; Reynolds, 2002). The term “health literacy” was first used in health education about thirty years ago to refer to the ability of patients to read and comprehend things like prescriptions, appointments, and other health related materials but has only been elaborated and taken seriously recently (Rootman & Ronson, 2005). In 2000, Nutbeam elaborated the concept of health literacy as follows:

Level 1, ‘functional health literacy’ reflects the outcome of traditional health education based on the communication of factual information on health risks, and on how to use the health system. Such action has limited goals directed towards improved knowledge of health risks and health services, and compliance with prescribed actions.

Level 2, ‘interactive health literacy’ reflects the outcomes to the approach to health education which have evolved during the past 20 years. This is focused on the development of personal skills in a supportive environment. This approach to education is directed towards improving personal capacity to act independently on knowledge, specifically to improving motivation and self-confidence to act on advice received.

Level 3, ‘critical health literacy’ reflects the cognitive and skills development outcomes which are oriented towards supporting effective social and political action, as well as individual action. Within this paradigm, health education may involve the communication of information, and development of skills which investigate the political feasibility and organizational possibilities of various forms of action to address social, economic and environmental determinants of health. (p. 265)
St. Leger (2001) elaborated what this notion of health literacy would mean for schools (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1: levels of health literacy in a school setting (St. Leger, 2001, p. 201)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health literacy level and educational goal</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Examples of educational activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional health literacy (level 1)</td>
<td>Transmission of basic information about: hygiene, nutrition, safety, drugs, relationships, sexuality, parenthood</td>
<td>Increased knowledge of the factors that inhibit and enhance health</td>
<td>Classroom-based lessons, reading books and leaflets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive health literacy (level 2)</td>
<td>Opportunities to develop specific skills, for example: problem solving, food preparation, hygiene, communication</td>
<td>Improved capacity to be independent and take care of own health through health-related behaviours (e.g., physical activity, no tobacco use) and to access health information and services</td>
<td>Small group work in schools, individual tasks with the outside community involving the curriculum, tasks analysing current health issues and discussing at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Literacy (level 3)</td>
<td>Classroom and community learning opportunities which address social inequities, determinants of health, policy development and ways of affecting change</td>
<td>Capacity to participate in community and societal action to bring about health improvement for disadvantaged groups</td>
<td>Involvement in school-community issues which students have chosen and which confront current policies and practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the health conference I mentioned in the opening of this paper, this version of health literacy appeared to be widely accepted by the international audience.

The similarities between the levels of health literacy and the three systems of action in the Brown and Paolucci mission of Home Economics are unmistakable. The mention of food preparation in St Leger’s elaboration of health literacy level 2 represents an overlap with, or encroachment on, typical Home Economics curriculum.

It appears then that health and Home Economics have been travelling a similar path. Each trying to move out of a technical rational positivist paradigm to include more interpretive and critical understandings of the content covered in each program. Both subject areas are informed by nutrition science research so I will take a little diversion to determine what is going on in that area.
Nutrition science

Within the field of nutritional sciences, a typical definition has been “the science of foods and the nutrients and other substances they contain, and of their actions within the body (including ingestions, digestion, absorption, transport, metabolism, and excretion)” (Whitney & Rolfes, 2002, p. 2). However, there are also broader definitions that include the social, economics cultural, and physiological implications of food and eating (Whitney & Rolfes, 2002, p. 2). Participants at a meeting held at the University of Giessen that included representatives from the International Union of Nutritional Sciences and the World Health Organization endorsed The Giessen Declaration, a revised definition and purpose of nutrition science “to meet the challenges and opportunities faced by humankind in the twenty-first century” (Beauman, et al., 2005, p. 783). The declaration (p. 784) stated that

...originally conceived and as now usually studied and practised, nutrition is principally a biological science. This classic biological dimension of nutrition science is and will remain central. Descriptively it is concerned with the interactions of food and nutrition with physiologic, metabolic and now also genomic systems, and the effects of these interactions with health and disease. Prescriptively it deals with the nutritional control and prevention of disease and the improvement of health in humans, at all levels from individuals to populations; and also with animals and plants usually as human resources.

But, in light of global priorities such as protection of the environment, poverty and enabling “the long-term sustenance of life on Earth and the happiness of humankind” (p. 784), they recommended expanding the science to include two more dimensions, social and environmental. The new definition became:

Nutrition science is defined as the study of food systems, foods and drinks, and their nutrients and other constituents; and of their interactions within and between all relevant biological, social and environmental systems. (p. 784, emphasis mine)

Within nutrition science then, food is being given greater priority. This may be a response to what Pollan (2007) calls nutritionism, when nutrition moves beyond a scientific subject to become ideology. He borrows this term from Scrinis (2006, p. 97) who says:

The reductive focus on nutrients and biomarkers (whether these be protein, the glycemic index or body mass index) removed from all other contexts and frameworks of understanding food and the body ... I call nutritionism... still dominates most nutrition research, dietary advice and policy formulation, and much lay thinking. Nutritionism provides scientific legitimacy for, and drives the development and marketing of, nutritionally-modified processed foods, functionally-marketed foods, fad weight-loss diets, and nutritionally-modified GM crops.

Food has become an abstract idea and over time the general public has lost consciousness of the connection between food and the land and nature. The ideologies of individualism,
industrialization and corporate capitalism prevail with food as a commodity that is taken for
granted.

**Why literacy?**

The term literacy has appeared more frequently in the literature to describe the goals of
education. The field of literacy studies is alive with debate about different ‘types’ of literacy
and their practical application in everyday life. It is apparent that literacy is being used in a
wider sense that its original meaning (the ability to read and write). General literacy has
broadened to include negotiating, critical thinking and decision-making skills. Specific
literacies often refer to competences that belong to an area, such as eco-literacy (Capra,
1999), domestic literacy (Thompson, 2004), and financial literacy (Franklin, 2007). The trend
is to speak of literacy not as a measure of achievement in reading and writing, but more in
terms of what it is that literacy enables us to do. Many refer to Friere (1992) who describes
literacy as an active phenomenon, deeply linked to personal and cultural identity and who
transformed literacy from a received ability to read and write to an individual’s capacity to
put those skills to work in shaping the course of his or her life. For example, this
understanding is quite evident in Capra’s (n.p.) eco-literacy:

*Being ecologically literate, or eco-literate, means, in our view, understanding the basic
principles of ecology and being able to embody them in the daily life of human communities.*

Since Nutbeam (2000) was providing a conception that would move health education beyond
information giving it is not surprising that he should choose the term literacy.

**Food literacy**

Up to this point I have demonstrated that both Home Economics and Health have been re-
conceptualised to move beyond transmission of knowledge and technical/instrumental
approaches to educational topics. Both fields are informed by nutrition science. Nutrition
science has broadened to include a greater emphasis on food, in particular the environmental
and social dimensions of food. Thomas and Arcus’ (1992) analysis of Home Economics and
health education, determined that food was the domain of Home Economics. Most courses in
Home Economics are labelled Food and Nutrition, placing food first. An analysis of the
Canadian Home Economics Journal showed that over half of the articles were related to food
and nutrition with the most frequent concept being food preparation (Young, 1989). With
nutrition science expanding to include more than just biological considerations of food, food
is moving into an area of overlap between health and Home Economics. Thus it is important
for both subject areas to clearly articulate what food as an area of study means and what
food literacy as an educational goal would entail.

**Food literacy - current uses of the term**

Currently the term food literacy is not widely used but I will highlight a few examples in
school programs and out of school programs. I will also bold face some of the key terms
related to food literacy as an educational goal.
A Guide to Food and Fiber Systems Literacy Food (Leising, 1998) is available from Agriculture in the Classroom in the United States. It is a curriculum designed to infuse agriculture into all grades. In it literacy is defined as “possessing knowledge and understanding of the food and fiber system” and the ability to “synthesize, analyze, and communicate basic information about agriculture” (p. 4).

An elementary school project in Hawaii is described as food literacy (Irwin, 2006). “By ‘food literacy’ curricula we are referring to food-based lessons that teach key healthy eating concepts through hands- and minds- on student activities in which student acceptance of healthier foods is fostered through student preparation and consumption of healthy foods” (n.p.). They based their program on Food is Elementary© (Demas, n.d.) a curriculum that teaches children about food and nutrition through dynamic multi-cultural lessons that engage all the senses.

A European project uses food literacy as a horizontal theme in adult education and counselling (Schnogl, et al., 2006). Food Literacy is defined as “the ability to organise one’s everyday nutrition in a self-determined, responsible and enjoyable way” (n.p.). The objective is to develop food literacy as a “personal core competence”.

East Carolina University has a Food Literacy program, for adults, that focuses on food and nutritional well-being of people in eastern North Carolina. Topics include weight management, dietary supplements and information about diseases often associated with obesity, such as heart disease and Type 2 diabetes.

Harvard University Dining Service has The Food Literacy Project that claims to cultivate an understanding of food from the ground up. Education focuses on four integrated areas of food and society: agriculture, nutrition, food preparation and community. Ultimately, the project goal is to promote enduring knowledge, enabling consumers to make informed food choices.

This is not extensive but it shows that the current outlines of food literacy are not necessarily consistent. They tend to be descriptive or programmatic with underlining values and ideologies not always apparent. For example, “synthesis and analysis” and “making informed choices” are mentioned but the basis of critical thinking is not elaborated so the decisions could be either “selfish” or “fair-minded” (Paul & Scriven, n.d.). When just content listed, the possibility exists that transmission approaches will prevail seeking compliance, for example, to food guides or diet plans. When learners are referred to as consumers it could mean that the program is based on ideologies of individualism and corporate capitalism encouraging values that see food as a commodity.

**Teasing out some of the attributes of food literacy as an educational goal**

To focus on food literacy and the ability to act on knowledge and principles about food rather than nutrition, requires a conception that will move us beyond being “industrial eaters” (Vaines, 1995). Berry (1990), for example, contends
The industrial eater is, in fact, one who does not know that eating is an agricultural act, who no longer knows or imagines the connections between eating and the land, and who is therefore necessarily passive and uncritical — in short, a victim. When food, in the minds of eaters, is no longer associated with farming and with the land, then the eaters are suffering a kind of cultural amnesia that is misleading and dangerous (n.p.).

For Vaines (1995) and Peterat et al., (2004), eating is an ecological act thus we need a conception that reconnects us with food and the environment. We need a conception where food is not seen as a thing or commodity to be manipulated but something to be revered. We need a conception that restores what Berry (1990) calls the pleasures of eating. What he is referring to is the cultivation of an appreciation for the intimate connection between our human lives and the natural world and for the gardens, fields and pastures from which our food comes and understanding that healthy soil and environment is essential for healthy food. We need a conception that embraces connectedness and the understanding that all things including food are interconnected with one another. The food system interacts with the family system, with the ecological system, with the economic system, with the political system, and so on. We need a conception that explores the socio-cultural-spiritual significance and enjoyment of sharing food and eating together.

Since we are talking about education, not training, nor indoctrination or coercion, food literacy must enable students to debate, evaluate, and judge for themselves the relative merits of contesting positions (Jickling, 1992). For example, the difference between an ego-centric and eco-centric worldview (Vaines, 1994), and the various actions that could be taken to create a better world for all ensuring the welfare and fair treatment of all living things (Smith, 1996). Food literacy also requires offering rich experiences (Barab & Roth, 2006) and in depth coverage of topics that allow for knowledgeable participation in a particular ecosystem (in this case the food system) and increased possibilities for action in the world.

Whether implicit or explicit, all educational programs have particular point of view regarding: educational aims; conception of the learner; conception of the learning process and environment; and a conception of the teacher’s role (Miller & Seller, 1990). I will briefly sketch what a food literacy educational program would need to consider under each of these headings.

Educational aims

Most education programs are guided by some vision of that it means to be educated. To speak of food literacy as an educational goal means adding that component to our ideal of an educated person (Thomas & Smith, 1994). We want students to know that their food choice matters (Riley, 2005) and how they eat determines how the world is used. Usually educational aims include specifying what knowledge is of most worth. A food literate student would understand that there are what Vaines (1999) calls Many Ways of Knowing. She articulates at least three ways of knowing: Lifeworld (the world of lived experience); Scientific (analytical/empirical; interpretive; critical science); and Narrative (stories, yours, mine, ours). She claims (p. 17) that:
Appropriate use of all these ways of knowing can help us to see what we have been unable to perceive before, help us to know rationally what we had heretofore missed and to become people who care deeply for all living systems. When these many ways of knowing are brought together, knowing, seeing, becoming and doing become ways in which we can actively participate in shaping our new stories.

Considering the many ways of knowing means including students’ life experience (e.g., growing, preparing, experiencing food with others), and the life experience of others who are close to food (e.g., food producers, food transformers, etc.). It means exploring stories and creating new stories of growing, acquiring, preparing, using, and celebrating food across generations, within and between cultures, and in the various places we live. The food system and determining what to eat is so complex, that students need the opportunity to study the topics in much greater depth. Superficial treatments of topics, as in memorizing the major nutrients to regurgitate on an exam, is not sufficient and runs the risk of diminishing the pleasure of eating good, nutritious, real food. Food studies would include the relationship between eaters and food, not eaters and nutrients.

Conception of the learner

For food literacy, it is appropriate to consider other descriptors than “consumer” (as in students will learn to make “better” or “wiser” consumer decisions). Pollan (2005) suggests “co-creaters”. Learners can co-create food knowledge and experiences. Also, in food literacy, learners are conceived as ones who can make reasoned decisions and take defensible action given a depth of knowledge and the opportunity to experience various perspectives on food. They have the ability to anticipate complexity, to understand systems (the food system and how it is part of the ecological system), to identify ideological oppression (e.g., the power of corporate capitalism), to distinguish fact from opinion (e.g., related to GMOs, fish farms, factory farming, etc.); recognise stereotypes and clichés (as in the obesity myth); recognise bias, emotional factors, propaganda and semantic slanting; recognise different value orientations; determine which information is relevant; recognise the adequacy of data; check consistency; formulate appropriate questions; predict probable consequences; and identify unstated assumptions. So many of the issues and questions related to food are moral questions so students need some way to test the adequacy of their decisions or choice. They would need to be initiated in moral reasoning since their food decisions often have consequences for other people.

Conception of the learning process

The ‘banking’ concept of education is not appropriate. Instead learners are encouraged to explore ‘generative themes’ (Freire, 1972). Food literacy education can also be informed by ecological theories of learning (Barab, & Roth, 2006; Sterling, 2004) that suggest that rich experiences ‘in’ and ‘with’ the topic rather than ‘about’ are central for students to develop affordance networks and effectivity sets. Affordance networks are nested components that designate the possibility for action and may encompass information, material or people that can be activated in reaching a particular goal. Effectivity set refers to behaviours an individual can take in creating and activating an affordance network. Knowing is conceptualised as an activity, achieved in a context or setting by engaging in meaningful
actions or practices in that environment. Frequently constructivist pedagogy (e.g., Gabler & Schroeder, 2003), active learning and problem-based learning are cited as possibilities for ecological knowing.

Conception of the teachers’ role

Educative programs aiming to develop food literacy require teachers to move from instrumental modes to reflective, transformative modes of practice (Vaines, 1997). In considering sustainable food futures Caraher and Reynolds (2005) outline a series of principles for education that include: developing critical thinking skills; addressing multiple problems at the same time; re-skilling to counteract the deskilling that has taken place with the rise of the global industrial food market; emphasizing re-investing in community and public spaces as sources of locally grown foods; and providing a critical framework for decision-making including questioning the role of food companies in marking in the educational environment (summarized from p. 14). What is not explicit in this list in no particular order: using storytelling and narratives to explore the meanings (e.g., cultural, social, geographical) of food; examining the elements of traditional and local food patterns for those elements that may be helpful for health (of ourselves and the environment) and ecological sustainability; exploring and strengthening our connections to food (including food preparation); and exploring and strengthening our connections to those who produce our food.

Summing up

Teasing out the foundational beliefs about a concept using analytic inquiry is useful but has its limitations and to use Vaines’ (1999) terminology is only one way of knowing. Continuing to expand the concept of food literacy with knowledge gained from narrative and lifeworld studies would further elaborate the conception. There is much hope for the future when we re-connect with food and adopt a stance of food literacy. Vaines (1994) asks us to “imagine ourselves in harmony with air, water, people, plants and events” and to see that “our actions come to reflect our connectedness, our symbiotic relationship with everything and everyone” (p. 10). In doing so, the ordinary, the mundane task of everyday life such as food provision become meaningful and sacred. In relation to food, Vaines (1999, p. 23) made the following statement:

Everyday life activities such as eating, drinking, and sharing together become the rituals and ceremonies of celebration that give us a sense of deep meaning and purpose. This sacred nature of food and everyday life cannot be taken for granted. As we live we are also choosing. If we are unable or unwilling to move out of our old stories where food is seen as a thing, a commodity to be manipulated, and eating is an industrial act, then we will experience life that has lost its savor.

Vandana Shiva (2005, n.p.) recently wrote:

If we relocate ourselves again in the sacred trust of ecology, and recognise our debt to all human and non-human beings, then the protection of the rights of all species simply becomes part of our ethical norm and our ethical duty. And as a result of that, those who depend on others for feeding them and for bringing
them food will get the right kind of food and the right kind of nourishment. So, if we begin with the nourishment of the web of life, we actually solve the agricultural crisis of small farms, the health crisis of consumers, and the economic crisis of Third World poverty.

Articulating a conception of food literacy is just a beginning. For Home Economics, we need to fit this into a larger conception of domestic/family literacy but that is beyond the scope of this paper. I began this inquiry because I was puzzled by the emphasis on nutrition (nutrients and food guides) and wondering whether what people really need in this day and age is food literacy. I have begun the process of elaborating what that might mean for Home Economics educators. I view this as just a beginning and as an invitation for others to continue to question, explore and extend this concept.

Biography
Dr. Smith is a retired high school home economics teacher currently working in the Teacher Education Program at the University of British Columbia in Canada. She is responsible for home economics education. She holds a PhD in Curriculum Studies in Home Economics. She teaches both pre-service and graduate students in face to face and on-line courses. Her research interests include global education, action research, teacher development, and home economics curriculum and instruction.

References


IFHE Congress Keynote and Plenary Papers
Considering the pillars of sustainability as a theoretical paradigm

Martin Caraher

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Abstract

The need for a common theoretical framework and underpinning with regards to the use of the term ‘sustainability’ in connection with food is important. Its current use covers a number of different meanings, ranging through economics and food supply systems to agri-food systems. This paper explores the issue of sustainability using a model developed for WHO. Using this as a tool, the impacts of food security and the global food system can be analysed and audited. Key to this are a critique of the global food system and its emphasis on free trade and consumers, the argument is put forward that global trade needs to be regulated to ensure human and environmental health.

Conclusions are drawn for Home Economic teachers in terms of the role they play in food advocacy. This moves beyond teaching about the food system ‘as-it-is’, to education concerning the background to the food system and how we, as both consumers and citizens, can act and exercise power. The model can be used to both inform teaching practice about sustainability and to frame a response at a school/community level to wider influences in the food system. Education on its own is judged not to be sufficient.

Introduction background

The issues of food and sustainability have received much public attention in the last couple of years, this has been driven by the world oil crises (peak oil); changes in climate and natural disasters and related economic global dilemmas (see Lang and Heasman, 2004). It is important to remember that the food system is driven by oil, oil to produce fertilizers, oil to transport food around the globe. This led to an interest in local and regional food, with some cities and areas looking to supplying regional and seasonal food (e.g., transition cities see www.transitiontowns.org/ and some countries through the formation of national food policies). Of less concern and less of a driver for action have the achievement of the millennium goals concerned with addressing inequality.

Despite some examples of positive movement in terms of sustainability there has been little overall change. In fact many would say that the concerns with food have only become an issue as the developed world sees its own standards of living threatened. As many developing
countries face food challenges the price of food on the world market is increasing and agencies such as the World Food Programme (WFP) are having to cut back on supplies to those in need. Even countries in the developed world are seeing increases of the numbers living in food poverty, with food/fuel prices rising and consumers cutting back on healthy options.

One of the key problems is the application of classic economic models of growth to food growing and production based on the assumption that unparalleled growth with economies of scale is the only way to feed the world. In the developing world readjustment programmes have resulted in moves away from growing traditional subsistence crops to growing food for sale and the development of larger units of food production so small farms become less viable within this approach, especially as support systems explicitly support this move. All this is based on a classic economic model of surplus, cash exchange and wealth trickling down the system. Such an approach does not address issues of public health or national food security. At the time of writing this there is sufficient food to feed the world’s population. The problems are not the amount of food per se but those of:

- The uses to which crops are put, for example, for animal feed instead of feeding humans.
- Lack of entitlement to food, even in times of crises, such as famine, there is food but not everyone can access that food (Sen, 1981; Caraher and Carr-Hill, 2007).
- The growing economies of China and India are diverting food for human consumption into food for animal feed.
- A food system which is based on price and profit as opposed to fairness and equity.

Also the underpinning model of operation of many policy developments and actions is a focus on the individual as a ‘consumer’ making sustainable choices. The policy developments more often eschew regulation in favour of agreements with the food industry to do the right thing. Alternative approaches are based on a model where the individual is a citizen and has rights (and duties) and regulation of the food industry.

The ‘real’ costs of food have not traditionally been factored in with the hidden costs absorbed elsewhere as in transport costs, the loss of valuable bio-diversity and damage to the environment. These costs are picked up elsewhere and probably more disproportionately by those in the developing world. Just as new (sustainable) thinking was being applied to the area of food a new series of crises have hit, rising fuel prices, a series of global crop failures, a reduction in planting of some basics and the general distressed state of global economic markets. Recent climatic events have resulted in less food crops being grown and the oil crisis has led to land being used for the growing of bio-fuels. All this leading to a situation where there is less food available and thus higher prices; the law of supply and demand. These changes have also been accompanied by changes in welfare systems and taxation in countries. We are seeing a new class of food poor, emerging (Caraher and Carr-Hill, 2007). These are the working poor who are food compromised and nutritionally insecure. These are groups who may have enough and often surplus to eat (calorie wise) but may have lack key nutrients in
their diet. This leads to the growth in so-called diseases of lifestyle such as diabetes and CHD. While working in Australia recently the increase in the work of food banks and their work was starkly evident with schools setting up breakfast clubs as more and more pupils come to school hungry. In Germany changes in welfare provision have led to more and more of the population seeking food relief through food banks a situation repeated in Canada (Riches, 1997).

Globalisation of food systems is premised on the principle of free trade and liberalisation of trade barriers, the underlying belief is of benefits to all (See Sachs, 2005). The neo-liberal economic approach also assumes that approaches such as subsidies and taxation on food imports are barriers to trade are not encouraged. Yet Malawi has recently introduced support for farmers to grow foods for home consumption and cut down on imports by imposing taxes and this has resulted in increases in health status and more food being available for the local population. These processes were introduced in the face of great opposition from major aid agencies and financial institutions.

It is important to remember that there are potential winners in the increase in food prices, for example wheat growers who have in recent years sold their crop at barely subsistence levels are now commanding prices of up to three times last year’s prices on the world market. But in reality the big winners are not the farmers but the produces and manufacturers of food products. But bread prices have risen, rice is in short supply, and key groups are feeling the pressure, look at the number of food riots and social unrest that has arisen because of increases in food prices.

This paper starts with an examination of globalisation and power in the food system, then moves onto food miles and sourcing (foodsheds) as an examples of hidden costs and briefly looks at packing as an additional cost. ‘Who wins and loses’ in all of this is their explored using coffee as an example, before moving on to discuss these issues and the implications for home economics.

**Globalisation and concentrations of power in the food system**

There are clearly benefits from a globalised world, for example Castells (1996) in his work on Network Society sets out the benefits of global communications which are partially responsible for making the world smaller and introducing the benefits of technology to developing and transition countries, for example it is clear that the mobile phone has social and economic benefits in Africa unlike the countries of the developed world where its are functions are social. In this respect I want to make one crucial point, the association of free market liberalisation and economies based on this principle with liberal societies is at one level misleading as it is not with a straight forward relationship (Hertz, 2001). Many development reports identify the Scandinavian countries among the best places to live and many of these have barriers to food trade based on public health principles (e.g., Norway and its use of VAT, Sweden and its banning of advertising to children). Other countries such as the UK and Australia advocate protection systems based on voluntary agreements with the food industry. The problem becomes one where public health concerns are subservient to those of business and trade. Key impacts of globalisation of the food system include:
- Development of huge multi-national companies who control what is grown, where it is grown and prices.
- Loss of biodiversity.
- Homogenisation of culture.
- Less emphasis on public health.

Figure 1 highlights the concentration of power for the majority of foods grown in Europe. The power and control are located at the bottle neck with the 110 buying desks who determine the type and price of goods that eventually appear on the supermarket shelves. This has implications for growers and the consumer with what is called the funnel effect, with this process of concentrating power being repeated globally with respect to most commodities. It results in a concentration of buying power, with fewer buying desks and fewer outlets and less power in the hands of the grower. The buying desks of the large trans-national corporations, whether retail or fast food, do not want to be dealing with a large number of small producers. This leads to concentrations in the growing and production of food. There have been changes over time in who controlled the food system in the early 1900s farming was dominant with the manufacturing sector assuming dominance in the middle of the century, this changed in the 1960/70s to manufacturers and wholesales with the retailers emerging as dominant in the last 20 years of the 20th century and in the this century. This dominance by the retailers has been challenged by the food service sector (fast food, take-away and restaurants) but is currently slowing down, with the global economic crises, as more and more households are economising and eating at home.

The concentration of power is further represented by a north/south divide with the major international companies being based or originating in the rich north.

**Figure 1. The supply chain funnel in Europe from farmers/producers to consumer**
An example of the power of the food industry comes from Idaho in the United States, the premier potato growing state and shows what can happen with retail or restaurant power over the food system:

- In Idaho the average potato farm is 400 acres. Before selling anything the grower is half a million dollars down.
- Profit is premised on potatoes selling for $5/hundred-weight.
- Growing to specification for the fast food and major retailers leads to factory farming. Growers are reliant on one or two buyers for their produce (due to contract specification), thus leaving them vulnerable to price re-negotiations.
- In 1996 prices fell to $1.50, influenced by cheap imports from Canada (Schlosser, 2001).

In Idaho in the past 25 years, the number of potato growers has halved while in the same period land devoted to potato growing has grown. The results are pretty obvious—the demise of small growers and local communities with the growth of corporate farms. In North America, russet, one variety of potato accounts for 75 percent all potatoes grown with the vast majority going to supply the food service sector to produce frozen French fries (Steel, 2008, Reader, 2008). Potato growers one year in every four end up selling their produce at a cost below what it takes them to produce it.

There is a very big and real question over the long and short-term sustainability of the current global food system, with aspects of the new local/regional food security and supply being examined. The current system is based on ‘false’ accounting, where the global food supply system is not held to account for the impacts that the system has on the environment or human or social health (Lang & Heasman, 2004). The World Health Organisation has challenged the global food industry over its role in promoting certain types of fats and processed foods and the impact on human health (Fleck, 2003; WHO, 2003). The sugar lobby in the United States responded with threats to ‘scupper WHO’ by lobbying for an end to Government funding (Boseley, 2003). More recent examples come from the area of advertising where the food and advertising industries are engaged in heavy lobbying to limit the restrictions on advertising to children. This has resulted in many governments entering into voluntary agreements with the industry, essentially allowing them to regulate themselves (Caraher, Landon and Dalmeny, 2006)

These market forces act in tandem with the social changes that are occurring to give large corporations power to dictate the agenda to growers the demands of the global food economy and the pressure to grow crops for cash have implications for local communities. The economic reality is that small farms cannot survive in this global economy and must either amalgamate or sell out to bigger outlets or corporations, This has an impact on local communities in terms of their sustainability. In addition, as the Prevention Institute (2004) in the US points out, the links between agriculture and health can be seen in the areas of:

- Over production of a range of unhealthy food products
- Use of and exposure to toxins
Dangers to farmer and worker health and safety
- Antibiotic resistance
- Food-borne illness
- Respiratory illness and poor air quality.

The establishment of intensive agriculture in areas of the world where it is harder to measure or control the effects of such intensification can have an impact on local economies and cultures such as future degradation to the environment, as well as costs to the health care system as diet-related non-communicable diseases take a toll. So while we as consumers may not directly pay for this our fellow human beings do.

**Food miles, foodsheds and packaging - an example of more hidden costs**

One of the fallouts of the global food chain is the movement of food between and within countries. The distance food travels in the United Kingdom between producer and consumer rose by 30 percent in 15 years at the end of the twentieth century (Paxton, 1994; Steel, 2008). This has been called the ‘food miles’ effect. The increase in food miles results in pollution, use of pesticides and packaging and a rise in hidden costs when effects are passed on to other areas. It is now recognised that food miles is too simple a metaphor and more recent developments have moved to carbon costs and life cycle analysis but for the moment let us work with the idea of food miles accepting its limitations. This ‘externalisation’ of costs in travel results in damage to the environment and human health. The costs are paid through other budgets such as indirect health costs by a contribution to cardiovascular disease and food poisoning treatment or environment costs such as pesticide and nitrate pollution. In the European Union it is said that consumers pay three times for their food: firstly, across the counter as they buy it; secondly, as part of their contribution to subsidies of agriculture through the Common Agricultural Policy; and thirdly, in the form of cleaning up environmental pollution caused by intensive agriculture (Pretty et al., 2000).

Many initiatives have started focussing on the provision of local food. Toronto has one of the longest and best documented initiatives where it looks to sourcing food from within its natural foodshed (akin to a watershed, a foodshed is the area around an urban area that ‘captures’ food products through its transport networks.) (Lister, 2007). Despite Toronto’s many successes it struggles in the wake of a global system that transports food many miles and processes it. Key factors, concerning Toronto, according to Lister include:

- There are more food banks offering assistance to the poor than McDonald’s outlets.
- The disappearance of rural communities from the city fringe as the city expands.
- Fewer farms and farmers.
- More than 60 percent of the City’s fresh produce is imported from the United States (compared to almost all of the city’s food coming from within 350 kilometres in 1960).
In the city there are ‘gaps in the urban fabric’ with some communities and areas not having a supermarket within walking distance and there is a dominance of fast food outlets.

Toronto is not unusual in these respects but it has a history of activism and of documenting these concerns. In some recent work in London and Preston (a northern English city) we found:

- More take-aways than shops in some areas.
- Complete meals from take-aways were sometimes cheaper than the cost of the raw ingredients from local shops.
- Healthy food options were not always available locally.
- Food prices varied from area to area often in small distances.
- Members of ethnic groups could not always buy a culturally appropriate food locally.
- Cars were necessary to access healthy options in supermarkets, which were not located in local areas. (Bower et al., 2008; Lloyd et al., 2008)

Many of the above problems are a consequence of the ‘free market’ being left to its devices. There is a case for regulation and directing the food industry to provide services and food to those in need. Instead food policy seems to focus on self-help and education, certainly necessary but on their own insufficient to address the problems of inequality. This raises the question of what a food system might look like to which we now turn to offer some answers.

Another aspect of the existing system is that the more miles food travels the greater the packaging and storage costs. Figure 2 shows the ultimate in ‘meaningless’ packaging where the banana with its own natural packaging is further packaged, clearly unnecessary and unsustainable.

Such approaches to packaging are part of the marketing of food and have little to do with the quality or nutritional status of food.

**Figure 2: Packaging of a banana by UK retailer**
Analysis of the food system

With respect to the food system Figure 3 shows what a healthy food system might look like, conceptually, with the concerns of nutrition, food safety and environment (sustainable food supply) being the pillars on which the system is built (WHO, 2002). In reality the systems are much more complex and can include issues such as concentration of power in a small number of companies, cultural dominance of food with appropriation of cuisines from the south as marketing devices and the McDonaldization of cuisine (Ritzer, 2000).

Figure 3: The Three Pillars supporting healthy food and nutrition policies

The three pillars of nutrition, food safety and environment (sustainable food supply) were developed by WHO as guides for national governments for the achievement of national health and nutrition plans in line with the provisions of the International Conference on Nutrition (WHO/FAO, 1992). Figure 4 tries to capture some of this complexity and recognises there are many issues hidden in each of the pillars. All this is taken a step further in Table 1, where the three pillars of the system are developed in relation to key elements of the food system ranging from production (agriculture) to consumption.

The actions in Table 1 are summarised from a workshop held with participants in a WHO workshop.
Figure 4: A complex system of pillars necessary to support a healthy food system

Table 1 Linkages between the three pillars of the WHO-E Food and Nutrition Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Nutrition</th>
<th>Food safety</th>
<th>Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agriculture</strong></td>
<td>Local production</td>
<td>Use of pesticides</td>
<td>Reduction of pollution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Livestock, etc</td>
<td>Fertilisation</td>
<td>Appropriate technology and mechanisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>Urban planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seasonal variation</td>
<td>Breeding practices</td>
<td>Sustainable local development</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Animal health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food processing</strong></td>
<td>Healthy processing</td>
<td>Hygiene; Storage</td>
<td>Waste disposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Production of food</td>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>Water contamination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labelling</td>
<td>GAP (good agricultural practice)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low fat, sugar</td>
<td>HACCP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fortification</td>
<td>Quality assurance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dietary style</td>
<td>Food standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retail and</strong></td>
<td>Quantitative &amp; qualitative redistribution</td>
<td>Hygiene</td>
<td>Waster disposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>distribution</strong></td>
<td>Nutrient preservation</td>
<td>Packaging</td>
<td>Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Availability; Freshness</td>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>Freons from cooling facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Smooth border crossing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catering</strong></td>
<td>Healthy preparation</td>
<td>Hygiene</td>
<td>Waste disposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food variety</td>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>Anti smoking policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meal planning</td>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>Organic waste</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Winners and losers

The key point is that cheap food is an illusion. The costs are absorbed by someone, somewhere in the food chain whether the coffee grower in Africa who receives 9p per kilo for a product that eventually sells for £17.11 per kilo in the UK high street (see Table 2), or the loss of local diversity, or the increase in food miles and pollution that the consumer eventually picks up in other areas. Policy makers tend to approach the three pillars in silos rather than as aspects of a total food economy which meet and intersect at different points. Below coffee is presented as an example of this process of winners and losers.

**Table 2: Who makes money from coffee? Winners and losers**

- Grower in Africa gets 9p per kilo for green coffee beans
- Exporter buys it for 17p
- Transport to port for grading etc for 29p
- Importer in UK pays 34p per kilo
- Roaster in Oxfordshire pays 41p (new price is £1.06, with moisture loss)
Supermarket, having paid for processing, packaging, distribution and marketing now charge £17.11 per kilo—that is, between farm gate and shopping trolley, price goes up by 7,000%
(Source: Based on data in Pendergrast, 2001).

Source: Adapted from Pendergrast (2001) and Oxfam (ND).

Globally five major global roasters (Procter and Gamble, Nestlé, Sara Lee and Philip Morris with 40 percent of world trade) the key driver is price for the major roasters. So they go where the coffee is cheapest, in recent years this has been the far-east (Vietnam) where World Bank policies have resulted in a glut of coffee with lower prices for growers globally. So the basic grade coffee bean, for instant coffee (which accounts for about 80 percent of the total coffee market), can travel across the globe for processing. In 1990 the world coffee trade was worth US$30billion, of which producing countries received US$12billion by 2004 global revenues were in the order of US$55billion but only US$7billion went or stayed in exporting nations. The cost for consumers stays the same or increases slightly the main beneficiaries are the roasters and retailers.

This situation is repeated within countries where growers and producers lose out in relation to the retailers. Cuts in the cost of food result in these cuts being passed down the line to producers and growers. Fair trade has made inroads into people’s consciousness and many buy goods on this basis but it accounts for a small proportion of overall sales. The current global economic difficulties have resulted in consumers in the developed world cutting back on fair trade and organic produce as prices increase, as such goods are more expensive. In times of affluence consumers may be prepared to pay more but in times of recession they become price sensitive. So we know in the UK that the sale of organic produce has reduced. In the UK in the last year the cost of the household food basket has increased by 20 percent with:

- Basmati rice increasing by 60 percent.
- Beef by 5 percent.
- A dozen free range eggs by 47 percent.

This has made most people more price conscious and undermined some of the gains made on sustainability and fair trade concerns with the consumer becoming more price conscious as opposed to ethically driven. The decrease in sales of organic produce and the shift by consumers to cheaper retailers (the ‘hard discounters’) are some immediate indicators of this. This has resulted in a new price war with the four major retailers in the UK beginning a price war on key items. The consequences of this price war may be good in terms of outcomes for the consumer but bad for producers as they are the ones who absorb the lowering costs. While such increases (20 percent overall for a food basket) are worrying and will undoubtedly impinge more on low income and price sensitive groups, the reality is that food spending as percentage of total spending is low and can be absorbed (11 percent is the average UK spend on food). Such increases across the globe have potentially catastrophic consequences, in developing countries there is an over reliance on basics (such as rice or wheat) as the mainstay of the diet and increases in food prices result in food insecurity and up to 80 percent of daily income having to be spent on food.
Discussion

The economic arguments over who benefits from trade are rife, the advocates of globalisation claim that free-trade benefits all while those who view the issue with a public health lens are more sceptical. There is a battle going on with the tensions being those of profit and health.

The flows of capital, ideas and health benefits or favours the developed over the developing world. For public health nutrition the consequences of globalisation of the food system means:

- Older and fatter populations.
- While there is some narrowing of disease patterns between the developed and developing worlds, although the greater burden lies with the developing world alongside this are degradation of natural environments and pollution and ecological costs to the developing world.
- Increases in relative poverty in countries and between countries -food security.
- More uniform cultural behaviour with respect to food.
- Power moves from national or government agencies to trans-national corporations (TNCs).
- Capital in the form of money flows out of the country and within countries from rural to urban areas.
- Local food systems and small holdings developed over centuries are replaced with larger units, fewer working the land and implications for fall back (food security) in times of scarcity.
- There is a food war going on represented by two dimensions which can be seen in figure 5 below.

The productionist paradigm sees human health best served by an efficient and productive food chain built on a model of more and greater efficiency. The ecological paradigm works from a different set of values where the drivers are human and environmental health and the system works to deliver on these values.

What this means for home economics is that there is a need to move beyond teaching about the food system ‘as-it-is’, to education concerning the background to the food system and how we, as both consumers and citizens, can act and exercise power. The models above can be used to both inform teaching practice about sustainability and to frame a response at a school/community level to wider influences in the food system. Education on its own is judged not to be sufficient for food advocacy or food citizenship.
Figure 5. The models of the productionist paradigm of food production (left hand side) and the ecological paradigm (right hand side) (Lang and Heasman, 2004).
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Consumers and future consumption:  
Patterns, advocacy, traits, projections and sustainability of home economics

Francis Nwonwu

Reprinted from:  

Abstract

This year marks the hundredth year of Home Economics existence as a profession. Founded in 1908, it has grown from a mere domestic science course to position girls firmly in the home to a global colossus in the study and practice of the arts and science of consumerism. This paper examines the challenges facing Home Economics in meeting growing and varying consumer demands and the steps taken to mitigate them. There is growing apprehension and subdued pessimism on the ability of Home Economics to meet future consumer demands. Uncertainty of the future and institutional failures are blamed for threatening the sustainability of the profession and its supporting systems. The paper prescribes the wheel structure principle as the solution to the perennial identity and legitimacy problem facing Home Economics. The philosophy of the wheel postulates that with education and available technology and capital, an optimum and stable structure would be developed for Home Economics within limits of acceptable social, economic, and ecological sustainability standards. The functional structure should be simple, flexible, vary between nations and regions, and must be guided by proven competitive advantage attributes such as sufficient resource availability and socio-economic stability.

Introduction

In hundred years of its existence, Home Economics since its inception in 1908 has grappled with the challenges of satisfying the diverse and divergent needs and demands of an ever-increasing population of consumers. Some consumers at the fringes of poverty are seeking to satisfy the basic necessity of life—food, clothes and shelter. Others are so sophisticated in their demands that they upstage the level of available knowledge and technology for providing the goods and services that will satisfy their wants. Home Economics is juxtaposed in this extreme demand continuum and saddled with the task of providing solutions to the multiplicity of consumption demands. Consumer demands are heterogeneous because of variations in wealth status, culture, traditions, geographic locations, and natural resource endowments within and between groups, states and regions. Human errors such as destructive use and bad leadership on the one hand and natural disasters namely earthquakes, famine, droughts, and disease outbreaks add to the complexity of consumer demands and the
difficulty in meeting them. Differences in consumer tastes and preference and the liberty to exercise consumer sovereignty over the choice of goods and services and the price to pay place additional burdens on Home Economics as a service provider in the food and hospitality industry. Education and technology are projected as viable tools for arresting the gamut of challenges posed by various and varying food demands as a result of population increase, cultural differences, rising urbanization, and declining resource availability.

Home Economics has consistently taken ambitious steps to accommodate these vagaries in human consumption demands within the ambit of human capability and resource availability. The profession has tried name change, increased its scope of coverage, and has stretched into virtually every field of learning in search of identity and legitimacy. The scope widens into thematic and geographic boundaries to include food and feeding habits, healthcare and healthy living, clothing and interior designs, family and household welfare, and housing and human security. Many proponents and practitioners express subtle pessimism over the future of the profession. They fear the ability of Home Economics to satisfy consumer demands in a progressively and predominantly patriarchal society (Pendergast and McGregor, 2007)). The trends, patterns and nature of future consumers and their consumption demand and how sustainable the resources and systems could be are of grave concern to the present professionals. This paper examines some of these challenges that face Home Economics and attempts to make prescriptions to mitigate them. The paper is structured in three parts. The fist part looks at the nature of consumers and their consumption and attempts some prognosis about future consumption patterns. The second part analyses the structure of Home Economics and its role and potentials in providing goods and services for consumers. The third part attempts to prescribe how Home Economics would be structured to achieve stability and the much desired identity, legitimacy and sustainability.

**Nature of consumers and their consumption patterns**

**Typology of consumers**

Consumers are varying in nature and quantity of goods they consume just as there are diversity and variability in the quantity of goods and services available. These issues must be considered in structuring consumer education, in food services planning, and food supply chain implementation with a view to obtain clarity on trends and patterns of consumption for easy predictions. Population is a major determinant of the volume of consumption goods demand. While total population informs the quantity, population composition has direct relationship with the type and quality of products demanded. Transport and communication infrastructure as well as the administrative arrangement in place determine the extent and efficiency of distribution. The composition of the population, the amount of resource available and the efficiency of resource use together determine the quantity and quality of products consumed and the sustainability of the consumption.

Historical accounts reveal that young adults in their teens are more voracious and impulsive in their consumption habits than the much younger and older generations. Nowadays, new consumer items such as mobile phones, computer and video games, iPods, t-shirts, jeans and fast foods have become young people’s passion and obsession (Benn, 2004). This group of consumers fall under the category that Benn (2004) regard as egocentric. The egocentric
consumers aim at fulfilling their own needs without any consideration for the consequences or for the interest of the other groups.

The younger generations are more egocentric and would want to satisfy their needs first before those of the older generation. In other words parents or older relations can control their consumption. The older ones mainly parents are constrained by the limiting nature and finiteness of resources. They are therefore consumers of the last resort who only take the leftovers after children and the vulnerable groups would have consumed. Benn (2004; Page 114) calls this latter group of consumers the eco-centric that is those who show care for themselves, the family and others plus the environment. Irrespective of the nature of the consumption item, whether food, clothing or amenity services, this dual consumption pattern seems to persist. It is also documented that women are more consumption frenzy than men both in traditional rural societies and in modern urban society. Urban women are notorious for habitual shopping for clothes, cosmetics, and ornamentals, cars and electronics. Women control shopping for family grocery, family feeding, and feeding the children.

In traditional African societies, women are more associated with consumption than men. Their traditional role of home management, food preparation, and taking care of children places them at vantage position to satisfy their consumption appetites while the men are at work away from home. The stay-home role gives women more eating opportunity than men. This voracious eating habit of women is depicted in the story told of a newly married woman in an African community. On her first arrival in her husband’s home she was shown the yam and cocoyam barns from where she should fetch yams tubers and cocoyams for food. She was however advised always to examine the food items and choose from those on the verge of going bad and leave the healthy ones that stand better chances of going farther into the year. The young lady is reported to have accepted with nostalgia and retorted, “All of them were going to be eaten anyway, so there was no point bothering with the selection”. This remark did not go well with the parents-in-law who immediately sent her packing. The story portrays the young lady as not being mindful of sustainable use.

**Consumption patterns**

In the past, people ate food in their natural forms, with minimal processing and change in form. People ate food purely for growth, bodybuilding, and for good health. With increasing urbanization and modernization and desire to increase the shelf life of food items and other household consumer goods, consumers began to discriminate in their choices, tastes and preferences and the forms they desire in food and product consumption. This led to increased food processing, form changes, and value adding. With much processing and flavouring came the fear possible introduction of cancerous agents. Modern medicine started detecting cancer in patients and began to associate it with their eating habits. The fear of picking cancer and other deadly diseases from food and drinks crept in and started gripping consumers. Consumers became apprehensive of what choice of food they make, what they eat, and the quantity of it to consume. This growing concern over possible contracting of deadly disease from eating increased the burden on Home Economics concerning food preparation, and menu planning with a view to reducing the chances of food intended for human consumption becoming a disease vector.
Increasing chances of picking up diseases from food consumption habits inform and guide peoples eating habits. Many consumers cut down on the quantity and variety of food they eat in order to stay healthy. They eat special food or skip food entirely to reduce their chances of obesity. Consumers are conscious of the fat, cholesterol, sugar, and caffeine contents in their food. These compounds are causative agents of some of the most deadly diseases such as high blood pressure and diabetes. Home Economics is expected to provide food in the right quantity and composition to avert the occurrence of these deadly diseases. This it can do by identifying the right kinds of food and their methods of preparation. Responses to the impending threat to health from feeding habits have been extensively studied and documented. In response to the correlation between eating habits and some debilitating diseases British secondary schools have introduced compulsory cooking classes as a step towards fighting childhood obesity. In pursuing this objective, 800 cookery teachers are to be trained over a three-year period (IFHE, Undated). According to a new government policy as part of the obesity strategy, all schools will be teaching cookery by 2011. The aim is to prepare people for the future so that they can teach the younger generation to be healthier adults in future. A spokesperson for the government reported that if they had undertaken the cookery programme 30 years previously, they might not have the obesity crisis they have presently (IFHE, Undated). The interrelationship between consumption and the health status of the consumer and the importance of using their mutual relationship to optimal benefits cannot be overstressed. Consumption patterns have significant impacts on human and environmental health and raise serious dilemma on how consumer education can help to unravel the physiological mystique. Unfortunately, the interpretation of consumption as reasoned behaviour or action is being rendered irrelevant in a modern society where consumerism is overly governed by globalization, cultural change, and the liberation of the individual (Benn, Jensen and Jepson, 2004).

Today, revelations are emerging to the effect that too much food, too much processing of food, and too much food flavouring could be injurious to health. In the past, when food was scarce and processing was minimal, the food was more organic and healthier. People lived longer and life expectancy was high. Recently, the eating habits have changed as modern technology has contributed to increasing availability and palatability of food but with increased chances of falling prey to food-induced diseases such as obesity. Excessive weights are breeding grounds for chronic diseases such as Type II Diabetes, Heart Disease and High Blood Pressure (Pendergast, 2006). She reported that rates of obesity in children rose in many countries of the world in the past couple of decades. In Australia, obesity in children is reported to have almost doubled between 1985 and 1995 to the degree that one in every four children born fall outside the healthy weight range. Obesity in children stems from increasing consumption habits of children who presently consume more kilojoules than they did 10 years ago and spending their leisure time on less vigorous activities such as watching television, playing video games, and surfing and searching the Internet (Pendergast, 2006: Page 10). Young people advocate for increased consumption now on the ground that technology would take care of future consumption problems. They believe that with availability of finances consumption would proceed without restrictions (Benn, 2004). In the final analysis, success or failure of the Home Economics profession will depend on how well it can plan and deliver the right quantity and quality of food in time. It also includes the ability of the profession to reduce or eliminate these food-related diseases in the society.
Trends and traits

Home Economics is both an art and science bringing the artistic aspects of food, clothing and homes into the science of domestic and industrial food preparation and preservation technology. Within the science discipline, it embraces both social, biological and physical sciences in its education and training, research, and food service practices. These diversities add to the complexity of defining the limits and shape of Home Economics as both an educational discipline and a profession. Questions of whether it is art or science and where it can find a home within any of the disciplines contained in its structure remain a nagging dilemma for practitioners and clienteles. By embracing virtually every field of study and every aspect of life and human existence in it study and practice, the profession faces problems of focus and identity.

Attempts at positioning and repositioning Home Economics and giving it legitimacy in the domain of education, skills development and professional practice have met with the same derogatory and discriminatory treatments. In spite of the efforts to give it recognition, it is still regarded as “a subject designed exclusively for girls, and taught exclusively by women” (Pendergast and McGregor, 2007: Page 8). Even now that student and staff composition has significantly changed with a lot of male students and staff injected into its teaching and practice, it still carries the original ill-conceived stigma. For the past couple of years, the International Federation of Home Economists (IFHE) has been obsessed with the charting a future for the profession. The focus and identity of the profession have also been on the cards and in the shopping list of the organization. These concerns are relevant and help stimulate critical thinking but we must acknowledge that there is a limit to which one profession can go in solving world and human problems. There must be a cut-off point and a limit to the extent it can go before it loses focus and identity. Home Economics cannot teach everything from arts to science to applied science and technology. Given that it is multidisciplinary in design but it should not strive to replace or displace other disciplines in its programmes - education, training and practice. On the contrary, it should cooperate and collaborate with other disciplines mainly from an interdisciplinary perspective. Projecting the multidisciplinary image could be misleading and would have the tendency to exceed boundaries and limits. It will be tantamount to “Jack of all trade and master of none”. For example, in North America, McGregor (2006) reports that home economists are grappling with homelessness, gentrification, and problems associated with excessive urbanization, and isolated rural communities. These are problems mostly handled by the housing departments elsewhere. The ideology of keeping it simple but efficient, where ‘simple’ in this context does not necessarily mean small. Rather, it means reduction of complexity to allow for flexibility in the subjects taught at school and the goods and services provided for consumers.

Family traits and genotypic characteristics should form part of the study in family science. A study of disorders of genetic origin and family life cycle are vital to the understanding and control of deadly diseases that cause infantile and maternal mortality. In this regard, Home Economics should collaborate with medical sciences in the control and eradication of such diseases to build healthier families and prevent premature deaths in children and young mother and prevent mother-daughter diseases.
Gender inequality and the future of home economics

The future of Home Economics depends largely on the continued struggle for especially in Africa. As long as gender discrimination and insensitivity remain and patriarchy rules the social system, especially in traditional societies, women and girls will continue to be burdened with household chores including child care and food preparation. They view these domestic responsibilities not from the light of their relative ability to perform better than men. Rather, they see them from the disadvantaged and low status ascribed to them by the society. The old mentality that “the place of the woman is in the kitchen” continues to govern the patriarchal attitude of men in many traditional cultures. Even the recent challenges posed by women in delving into areas of learning and professions that were previously regarded as the prerogative of men and boys has not changed this mindset. Subjects and disciplines such as Mathematical, Physics and Engineering, where women never dared and where males had dominated are no more the exclusive domain of men. Agriculture as a subject and as a profession suffered the same fate, which Home Economics currently suffers. It was derogatorily consigned to males as the group with the physical ability to handle the drudgery inherent in farming. The study of agriculture was not the domain or in the shopping list of women seeking university education. Women could not associate with a profession and practice that would soil their hands or their beautifully painted long nails. They stayed home to take care of the house, the children, and to prepare food for the men at work. Men took up the challenge and transformed agriculture into a lucrative, life saving, wealth creating and money-spinning profession. Today, women have rushed into agriculture and farming and are even trying to outdo men in the practice of the profession.

Advocates of face-lift for the profession have prescribed deconstructing the terminology and have promoted name change as a strategy for erasing the male - female dichotomy, which creates the impression that it is a feminist organization. This will facilitate the pooling together of production resources, which are currently segregated along gender lines and are held in the two opposing camps. While the physical land and capital and the authority to allocate them are held by men, women and girls constitute the bulk of the farm labour force. We once again draw a parallel between the challenge Home Economics is currently facing and that which the Nursing profession faced in the recent past. The nursing profession was previously regarded as exclusively women profession. Nursing education and training was consigned to girls who could not pursue formal secondary education. These ‘dropouts’ were relegated to the less academic and more practical nursing training and profession. It is supposedly in this less rigorous discipline that they can cope with their debased competency. The nursing profession was later mainstreamed into the formal system of education up to tertiary level. Its complimentary role in the medical profession significantly elevated its status such that it has become a gender-neutral profession. The stakeholders in Home Economics - professionals, practitioners, students and clientele should make the profession sufficiently attractive though enhancing its employment creation prowess, improve on its wealth creation ability, and make its services aesthetically appealing to entice men and boys.

Home Economics should break away from running as a charitable and social service that attracts no financial reward. It should be as financially competitive as other professions such as law, medicine and engineering. Its education and training programme should build-in this competitiveness in the curriculum. Efforts should be geared towards disabusing the minds or
removing the stigma that associates Home Economics with only child bearing, childcare, domestic chores, washing and ironing of clothes etc. Even now that the society associates Home Economics with women, the same society acknowledges that the best chefs worldwide are men. What a paradox and irony of history that in spite of this attribute, men do not join this leader in the hospitality industry where the great potentials exist for them to excel.

Home economics practitioners and professionals should be more creative, more innovative, and more competitive. They should be dynamic and sensitive to changes and take advantage of advances in technology to keep their profession on a dynamic and not static or conservative path.

Pendergast and McGregor (2007) largely blame patriarchy as responsible for the stifling and stunting the growth and development of Home Economics. This view inadvertently assumes a defeatist stance and ascribes the practice and involvement in the activities of Home Economics solely to women. In the new social and economic order in which we have witnessed women priests, female astronauts, female agriculturists, female heads of state, women taxi drivers and motor mechanics coexisting with male nurses, this patriarchal theory should be downplayed. We should try to distinguish between cultural and traditional imperatives that are embedded in the society in which we live. Although some of these cultures are draconian and retrogressive we should devise strategies and neo-liberal ideologies to eradicate such repressive cultural and traditional practices. Some of these gender insensitive cultures existed when women stayed home as full-time housewives and naturally they took care of the home and children when men were away at work. In modern day societies, families should choose between the wife taking up a wage-paying job outside the home against the unpaid social responsibility of taking care of the home and children. There are tradeoffs in which family members (husband and wife) could both work and hire and pay a worker to take care of the home and children. Alternatively, one of them could stay home and take care of the home. Any one of them can play this role; it does not have to be the woman. It seems to be an accident in nature that women are more endeared to children and in working at home than men. Could it be the natural phenomenon that bonded mother and child together for nine months during pregnancy that makes children closer to their mothers than their fathers, especially during early childhood?

We can draw parallels between women’s affinity with Home Economics practice with the picking of green tea leaves in a tea farm. Tea picking is predominantly done by women and girls on the understanding that they have the tender hands and touch, which the juvenile leaves desire and deserve. This has not made picking tealeaves a ludicrous operation and has not left it an exclusively female affair. The deciding factors in the entry and exist into every economic activity are mainly the financial rewards. As long as the financial rewards are sufficiently attractive there will be no gender segregation. Pendergast and McGregor (2007) submit that, Home Economics still remains in a compliant and marginalized position and that many of the strategies and decisions about name changes for the profession are manifestations of attempts by the profession to seek recognition from those in power.
Advocacy and the future of home economics

As Home Economics attains the mature age of 100 years, the anxieties and fears of many beneficiaries and benefactors centre on the future of the profession. Questions on how to brand the profession, the roles it will play, how it will be positioned to effectively address individual and family problems within its mandate in the world continue to resonate (Pendergast, 2006). Home Economics has been blamed for failing to reconstruct its own field beyond the confines of modern and patriarchal society and has suffered untoward consequences as a result. It demise and waning influence at certain levels of education and training and in practice are attributed to its failure to make impressive and identity defining impacts.

Over the years the profession has changed its name about three times. It started with Domestic Science at inception in 1908 and changed to Home Economics and now to Consumer Sciences. Other local names and clichés have also been given to the profession in many countries. An attempt to name it “Human Ecology” at some point, which would have downplayed its feminist portrayal failed for what Pendergast (2006; Page 6) called “dominance of patriarchy”. In consonance with its name changes there have been challenges in its placement in the scheme of things in government and industry. Many governments have grappled with its placement in their administrative structure. In some of these governments it has found home in Ministries of Agriculture, Home Affairs, Industry and Tourism (hospitality industry), and in Economic Affairs. This dribbling about stems from the its seeming lack of finiteness and identity. In education and training institutions it grapples with positioning itself in the Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Consumer Sciences and Hospitality Industry, Faculty of Social Sciences, and lately in the Faculty of Gender and Women Affairs. The same non-deterministic stance faces the profession in the subjects taught and the services provided. Home Economics Education includes virtually all the subjects in the principal fields of arts as well as social, physical and biological sciences. When and where shall the limits be applied and defined to carve out an identity for the profession? This identity crisis facing Home Economics stems from the failure to delimit its boundary of operation. There is a limit to everything: the length of time to search for identity; decision on a befitting name; definition of limits and scope, and consolidation of the optimum size. The multidisciplinary nature of the profession lends itself to an erroneous tendency to accommodate virtually all disciplines of learning in one single profession. I am inclined to proffer the towing of an interdisciplinary rather than the multidisciplinary or multipurpose approach as a solution to the identity and legitimacy challenges. Let the latent competency possessed by the profession from its comparative advantage direct and shape its future form and delivery of goods and services.

The moral of the story of the wise tortoise should educate the advocates of name and form change for Home Economics. Folklores in African traditional societies associate the tortoise with extreme wisdom in the animal kingdom. Its excessive wisdom however put the male tortoise in trouble with its father in-law who slammed him with a fine of a goat as penalty. The poor but wise tortoise could not afford a goat but had just enough money for a cock. It then invoked its wisdom to solve the problem of providing a goat for the father in-law. It put a cock in a stuffed goatskin and tied a rope around the neck of the stuffed animal and was dragged it along en-route to its father in-law’s home. Along the road, the cock crowed to the astonishment of onlookers who could not comprehend the mystery of a cock-sounding goat.
Although the tortoise ignored the unsavoury remarks of the passersby, the truth remained that what they saw outside is not what was inside. A different picture was being presented externally, but the true picture was hidden inside. The morale of this story is that no matter how Home Economics tries name changes, its identity remains with what it can achieve and not what name it bears. No matter how much it camouflage, its true identity remains. The cock acted naturally in spite of the efforts to hide and misrepresent its identity. The many names of domestic science, home science, human sciences, human ecology, human development, and nutritional sciences (Pendergast and McGregor, 2007), which the Home Economics has assumed, have still not given it a definitive identity. These names have been fashioned to neutralize the famine gender bias that the name Home Economics portrays to no avail and the blame game against patriarchy continues.

**Education and training**

The gender connotation of Home Economics has serious implication about its future roles and form. The ingrained feminism in the name and the pronounced aim of the founders make it a prerogative if not an exclusive preserve of women and girls. According to Pendergast (2006) quoting Manders (1987:3), the subject as a field of study aims at unifying the then home oriented courses to assist in giving girls a sense of responsibility from a scientific basis in the house. New paradigm shifts make this stance currently irrelevant now and in the future. With more working class than fulltime housewives nowadays this name connotation is no more valid. Through education and training necessary changes and new ideas borne out of societal dynamics, research and innovation breakthroughs, cultural practices, and technological changes can be disseminated to new breed of professionals, practitioners and consumers. In recent times Home Economics education is responding to cultural imperatives and is structuring courses to accommodate and respect the cultural underpinnings in their domain. At the University of Pretoria in the Republic of South Africa people’s interaction with the environment is studied from a cultural and existential approach. Courses are developed to investigate the interrelationship between beliefs, values and attitudes within and between social groups. The interaction between food and culture as well as factors influencing food habits and choice of food for different cultural and ethnic groups in the country are included in the curriculum. Consumer behaviour, demographic characteristics of consumers, marketing strategies, and the role of market leaders in the food markets are all included in the curriculum of the University. There are also studies in socio-cultural, technological, psychological, physiological, nutritional, and public health requirements that influence food choices and acceptability. These factors are interrelated and they mutually reinforce each other to bring about clarity to guide decision making on food choices.

Home Economics education in developed countries such as the United States include at high school level courses that start that early to investigate how new technology and research findings affect human nutrition, biotechnology, food processing and human diets. They also include for study the nature of international cultures and cuisines, family values and traditions, and parental care. The utility of this holistic approach to educational cannot be overstressed in this era of globalization, liberalized economies that promote tourism, ecotourism and international cooperation. Yet in spite of all these, broken homes and marriages, crimes and juvenile delinquencies, child abuse, and the population of street kids are increasing assuming alarming proportions. The phenomenon points to institutional failures.
and cultural erosions and the failure of early childhood education to inculcate these values into the receptive and accommodative juvenile child.

The practical nature of the profession compels it to produce job-creating and not job-seeking graduates. Home Economics education and training programmes should therefore factor in this self-employment attribute in the development of curriculum and in the training of students. This is the comparative and competitive advantage the profession has over the finite and single subjects such as, mathematics, chemistry biology, art etc. The future of the profession therefore rests on the ability of its teaching, research and development programmes to explore the attributes of the profession and use them to promote the quality of its service delivery. Home Economics activities education should be geared towards developing employability skills and entrepreneurship in students. This should be guided by astute knowledge of trends in technological and managerial skills.

**The Role of Technology**

Modern technology has contributed significantly to the pace and depth of revolutionary changes in the Home Economics profession now and in the future.

Computers, the Internet, electronic and digital systems of communication have increased the speed of information flows and knowledge generation. Thus distal separation and geographic boundaries are no more barriers to sharing ideas and knowledge between institutions. Inter-institutional collaboration in teaching, research and exchange of services have been made easy by modern technology especially information and communication technology (ICT).

Technology has bridged the gap in waiting time in the delivery of services in the food service industry. Microwaves combine the attributes of speed with precision. Robots have increased the speed and accuracy in producing products and packaging them for the market. Cell phones, electronic and digital systems (cameras, televisions and videos) have increased the coverage and presentability of products and services in the hospitality industry and Home Economics in particular. These modern devices have changed the lifestyle of women who still remain major players in the profession.

**Future Projections and Limitations**

Predicting the future of Home Economics regionally and globally is an onerous task for many reasons. First, there is the uncertainty and therefore the unpredictability of the future. Second, the inter-twining and interconnectivity of Home Economics with many other disciplines increase the influence of exogenous factors in any attempt to predict its future with any measure of exactitude. Third, the rapid rate of population growth coupled with racial and cultural diversity in world population increase the complexity and difficulty in future predictions. Lastly, the rapid rate of technological, change is constantly shifting baseline data, and making future consumption demands not easily predictable. While various tools of prediction have been developed, their effectiveness is symptomatic of the amount and quality of data or available information. However, McGregor (2006) prescribes the injection of new and younger professionals to support the older ones in reshaping the future of the profession. According to her “there must be a cohort of leaders perched on the edge of
the profession (feeder roots) who are continually seeking new ideas and paradigms to shape the practice” (McGregor, 2006: Page 4). Using the root system metaphor for Home Economics McGregor (2006: Page 6) she warns that “Those advocating for philosophical change should ensure that the new approach contains parts of the old ways of practice that are still working (transport roots) as well as new ways to think about practice (feeder root with soil attached)”.

The sustainability challenges facing home economics

Much concern has been expressed over the sustainability of the Home Economics profession in the past and apprehensions are being expressed over the prospects of achieving it in future. It is not clearly whether the fear being expressed over sustainability is hinged on the present structure or on a different structure in future. Given that a finite scope of converge, an acceptable name, and acceptable identity are still being debated, the sustainability goal remains indeterministic. Pendergast and McGregor (2007) insinuate that the alliance of the profession with fields such as medicine, science, agriculture, architecture, and business has accorded it pseudo-legitimization. They brand the alliance a ploy intended to lure the profession into the patriarchy that has systematically encumbered its independence.

This perceived patriarchal and feminist divide inherent in Home Economics generates ill feelings that seriously mar the future and sustainability of the profession. Introduced as a feminist agenda to remove the gender inequality in the society the profession has faced prohibitions in its growth and expansion in a predominantly patriarchal society. While the factors - land and capital are controlled by men; women are the active producers and constitute the bulk of the labour force. Women are known to be more prudent with sustainable consumption while men are known for ostentatious and conspicuous consumption. Attributes of thrift in managing resources and saving for the rainy day are linked to women than to men. Children in traditional societies are reported to echo these opposing attributes of the male and female when they chant “Mothers give at the nick of time but fathers give after it has become too late”. It is also believed that when mothers give they do so in pinches with a view to saving for the future whereas fathers give big to satisfy the immediate wants without much precaution taken against possible lack in future. The two scenarios point to the fact that women are more prone to integrating sustainable consumption in their habits than men. With Home Economics education and practice currently dominated by women, they stand better chances of bringing about sustainability for the profession. According to Moore (1994) quoted by Grover, Hemmati and Flenley (1999) in the Northern Province of Zambia, children under the age of five in female-headed households exhibit less likelihood of being malnourished than in families that are relatively better off but where both parents are resident. Several schools of thought submit that women are more conscious of the environment in their consumption than men. It is further alleged that in many developing countries, women constitute the larger population of the inhabitants afflicted with poverty. They have the highest proportion of the unemployed; and the least access to food. This skewed access to resources necessary for human livelihoods has connotation for the sustainability of the profession in the future. With women known for their competency and efficiency in resource use it follows that a society with more female population is likely to achieve better sustainability than the one with less women as resource managers. Dowd (1996) reported that in Africa, women are responsible for 95 per cent of the work related to
serving food for their families and directly produce 80 per cent of the food. Women are generally saddled with the responsibility of preparing food for the family, taking care, and in feeding the children. It is therefore no surprise that Home Economics deals primarily with food, children, and families given that more women are enrolled and engaged in the profession and its activities.

The wheel ideology illustration for home economics

Home Economics as an area of learning and a profession should be viewed as a wheel. One of the attributes of a wheel is that it is not cost-effective to reinvent it. Thus, Home Economics having been established a century ago in 1908, like the wheel should not be recreated. Instead, it should be modified, improved and adjusted to fit the dynamics in consumer demands within the socio-economic and biophysical environment within which it operates. The wheel has many sizes, which are determined by the purpose, the weight it should carry, and the speed of its rotation or travel. The wheel has working parts that give it stability and identity. The hub is the core or epicentre of the wheel around which all other working parts gravitate. In Home Economics the consumer serves as the hub and determines the size and shape of the profession. The spokes link the hub with the rim to provide shape and strength to the wheel. Tools such as education and technology represent the spokes of the wheel in Home Economics.

Figure 1 depicts Home Economics in the light of three concentric wheels - the smallest inner, a bigger middle, and the largest outer wheel. The shape of the wheel is determined by the ability of professionals and practitioners to harness resources to establish a Home Economics structure. A smooth and complete circle for the wheel is indicative that a stable state has been attained within limits of the available resources and expertise. The operational structure of the institution is determined by capital, education and technology. The two-directional arrows imply that there is a link between the consumers and the size of the profession (rim). The arrows also show the flexibility and dynamism that exists in the structure in which the scale can be upgraded to a bigger size or downgraded to a smaller one without compromising the stability of any chosen level of operation. The triangular link connotes the inter-connectedness and symbiosis that exist between the three pillars in their simultaneous contribution to stability and sustainability. The size of the wheel is a representation of identity and legitimacy for the profession. At any level of operation, the identity of the profession is defined at that level with respect to what the operation offers in education training and practice. Trimming the size of the profession implies it should focus only on disciplines and areas where it has the most comparative and competitive advantage. McGregor (2006) admonishes that Home Economics should not just align with other departments or use the language of accepted male dominated disciplines. Instead, the professionals in this field should be assertive and stand up for the profession without stepping on the rights of others.
Figure 1: The wheel structure model for home economics sustainability

The level of technology available or affordable will delimit the size and degree of complexity and operation of the profession. New equipment and machinery, which enhance productivity and quality of products and services all contribute to shaping the future and image of the profession. The varying degrees of technological advancement in different counties and differences in the capacity to import the state of the earth but costly technology should compel practitioners to look inwards for techniques. Traditional and local knowledge could be harnessed to develop appropriate technology for surmounting local challenges in food, medicine and clothing development to embellish the Home Economics profession.

The state of the economy represented by the amount of capital as well as the level of technology also defines the scope of operation of the profession. The two factors work in tandem to determine the diameter of the wheel and therefore the scope and coverage of the profession. The quality, integrity and stability of Home Economics is controlled through education and training which represent the spokes in the wheel. Education and the literacy level of consumers have direct bearing on marketing information on what is available, where they exist, how to procure them, and the price to pay. The level of education also affects the
consumers’ knowledge and ability to exercise their rights in making right choices based on sound judgments.

Sustainability of the profession is achievable if the profession is practised within the ambience of the three pillars of sustainability - social, economic and ecological sustainability. In the figure, the rim of the wheel represents the limit of attainable level of efficiency given the amount of capital and level of technology available. The rim rests and rotates on the three pillars, which simultaneously monitor and control the extremities of the revolutions of the wheel. The pillars act as spools or rollers that determine the consistency, conformity and continuity in the practice of the profession. It implies that the three pillars must be properly and stably positioned before sustainability can be achieved. The absence or neglect of any one of the three creates a skewed condition and a state of instability that would produce detrimental consequences on sustainability.

Social sustainability

Social sustainability considerations must be an integral part of all Home Economics education and practice. Unless a programme is socially acceptable no matter how economically viable or intellectually opulent it might be it is bound to fail. Success of the profession for example will depend on how well it respects the culture and traditions of the people for example feeding and clothing habits, the leadership structure and hierarchy, social stratifications, and cultural ramifications. There are numerous cases of technological breakthroughs that otherwise would have transformed the social architecture of consumers and their societies but they failed social acceptability tests. Practitioners that are worth their training should not promote the consumption of pork in a predominantly Muslim society. In Kenya the Luo tribe by virtue of their proximity to Lake Victoria relish in eating fresh water fish. Historically, the Luos have remained in government opposition since the county’s independence in 1963. The tribes that dominate the ruling party in government automatically hate fish eating because the opposition relishes in it. The zenith of this social divide and political imbroglio was reached when a top government official was visiting to officiate during a convocation ceremony in one of the national universities in the country. An uninformed housekeeper who had prepared the guestroom of the official put a beautiful but fish-shaped ceramic soap dish in the official’s bathroom. It took a timely intervention of somebody with good knowledge of the social and political divide to replace the obnoxious fish effigy to avert a disaster. If that mistake had stayed uncorrected heads would have rolled in the Catering and Hostels Department of the University. It would have also caused the University drastic cuts in its budget allocations. This experience demonstrates how social discord could be elevated to acrimonious political bitterness.

The Yellow maize Experience in Nigeria

The case of the yellow maize technological breakthrough in Nigeria is a further demonstration of planning without social considerations. In the 1960s, a green revolution was achieved in the Western Nigeria when a high-yielding but yellow maize variety was developed to replace the low yielding, indigenous but white coloured maize variety. Unfortunately this did not take into consideration consumer taste and preference into consideration in a rigid society that has been used to white maize meal eko from the local variety. The women totally rejected
the yellow maize in spite of the high yields. The technological achievement failed social acceptability and the people reverted to their old white maize meal. It is not often that these social tensions are known to Home Economics programme planners and practitioners in their many ramifications. Research should therefore be an integral part of the planning and practice of Home Economics to reveal these pertinent contributors to the sustainability of the profession.

Economic sustainability

Economic sustainability should consider whether the capital requirement for setting up the profession is available in sufficient quantity. It should further evaluate whether the future capital requirements will be available timely and in the right quantity. The sources of capital and the quantity should be known and guaranteed with some measure of certainty. There are many cases of projects, which were started but could not muster enough capital to see it to completion and became abandoned midstream. Other cases of education projects that were set up but could not generate enough income to sustain itself and therefore stalled abound. The technology to be utilized is also a cost item and is dependent on whether it will be available locally or needs to be imported. Either way, procurement of technology could be costly and its upgrading could be capital intensive. The input and output markets at all levels—domestic, regional and global must be assessed to ascertain their feasibility. Possible inter regional or international barriers and tariffs that would guarantee uninterrupted supply of inputs must be carefully assessed.

The human capital assessment requires that adequate number of personnel that would help develop and transfer knowledge be provided for all teaching, research and development programmes in Home Economics. It takes having the full compliment of the teaching and training staff and sufficient physical infrastructural facilities to transfer knowledge to learners. Their sources of procurement and replacement should also be identified and necessary provisions made for continued supply. Economic viability and sustainability involves designing programmes that are cost effective and financially self-sustaining. A grandiose and bogus programme that fails to generate sufficient income and revenue to keep it profitable over time is not sustainable. Ability to structure all production and consumption programmes within the tenets and ambit of the three pillars of sustainability remain the secret for the success and sustainability of an investment.

Home Economics does not need to reinvent the wheel. Rather, it should respond to the economic, social and technological changes as they inform and shape the tastes and preferences of consumers and plan programmes and activities that conform to demand dynamics. Where conditions allow for expansion in response to changing demand, the profession should respond accordingly. On the other hand if the situation calls for reduction as the imperative, it will be foolhardy on the part of the practitioners to remain rigid and refuse to downsize. In other words, the secret of success, which will see Home Economics through another century of existence is to be responsive to the dynamic changes and paradigm shifts that inform consumer demands. McGregor (2006) used the root system metaphor to illustrate the functions and factors that influence the practice of Home Economics as a profession. The philosophy of the metaphoric illustration is that the profession should be kept alive by constantly responding to the dynamics and paradigm shifts in the
society and matching the changes with robust responses. She advocates coexistence of both old and young professionals to play mutual and supportive roles with one another while individually playing their specialized roles to shape the future of the profession.

It is this principle of responsiveness that Lee Iacocca applied in his bailout mystery for Chrysler Motor Company from the brink of bankruptcy between 1978 and 1983. He did not advocate for or undertake the formation of a new company (reinventing the wheel). Rather he reorganized the need for the company to produce more demand or market-driven products. His venture into the production of more aerodynamic and more fuel-efficient cars saw the birth of the K-Car and the minivan. Within two years of assuming office as the Chief Executive Officer of Chrysler, Lee Iacocca turned out a profit of $11.6 million from the status ante quo position of over $3 billion loss for a company that was tottering on the brink of bankruptcy. This feat enrolled Iacocca in the annals of auto company icons alongside Ford, Sloan Durant or Chrysler (Anastakis, 2007). His accolades on this score are innumerable and include “the most widely recognized business executive of all time”; “a cultural icon instantly recognized by millions”; and “An American Western Mythical Hero” (Anastakis, 2007). Home Economics should take a cue from this remarkable innovation in Chrysler, curtesy of Lee Iacocca’s creativity to deal with its problem of identity, legitimacy and sustainability. It is noted that it was not Iacocca’s engineering training that catapulted him to this historic height. It was his managerial, communication and marketing abilities that collectively contributed to this remarkable entrepreneurial feat.

Today the Home Economics profession is yearning for the like of Lee Iacocca to turn the centenarian organization around to meet the challenges of improving human welfare under the aegis of emerging social and economic challenges in a globalised world. McGregor (2006) postulates that sustainability within Home Economics practice requires that people must be more future-oriented, and critical thinkers to influence and shape changes that would benefit and not harm humanity.

Shifts in resource use, increasing financial cost, and rising ecological damage create distortions that jeopardize sustainability. The recent hikes in the petroleum price to over $100 a barrel, the Middle East and the Gulf crises, and events in the United States (the presidential elections and the economic downturn) would combine to produce external shocks to economic systems worldwide and send ripples that impact on the buying powers of consumers at all levels. The consumer services are expected to begin to these external shocks by making adjustments that will help place consumers at the same level of satisfaction at the new socio-economic environment.

**Ecological sustainability**

Ecological or environmental protection is vital to systems sustainability. The environment plays the multiple role of providing amenities for recreation in the hospitality industry. The environment is also the receptacle and reservoir for wastes from production and consumption activities. Its multiple role is jeopardized if consumption and production of goods and services fail to acknowledge the limited capacity of the environment.
Home Economics as a profession and women as the principal service providers in the household would suffer from water pollution and clean water shortages. Similarly, deforestation and forest degradation will affect the collection of fuel wood for cooking and heating; housing construction materials; availability of fruits and medicinal materials. Increasing demands for these amenity resources from rising populations and increasing misuse are increasingly reducing the chances of future generations to have enough for their future use. With over 80 per cent of sub-Saharan African (SSA) households still relying on solid fuel for cooking and heating (UNDESA, 2005) the threat to the sustainability of the resources is substantial. The SSA sub-region remains a laggard in global ecological protection standards with 41 of the 53 countries or 77 per cent of African states that lie in the sub-region exceeding the world average percentage of people using solid fuel for cooking and heating (Nwonwu, 2007).

Home Economics research and development is expected to find solutions that will minimize the rate of depletion of these vital resources to ensure sustained supply for the present and future generations. A women group in Kenya has come up with an improved homemade stove that uses minimum quantity of firewood or charcoal for cooking. The technology of the Improved Jiko Project in Kenya is built on two principles. There is the: reduction of heat loss on the one hand and the provision of mud block to absorb, store and slowly release heat to add to the direct heat from the firewood or charcoal. The improved jiko is an improvement on the old technology that stands on a tripod with three openings for feeding charcoal or firewood into the fire. The improved jiko has only one opening through which charcoal or wood is fed into the fire thereby reducing heat loss from air flows that blow the fire or flame away target to be heated.

Recycling is also an aspect of ecological sustainability. As waste is converted into useful products output per unit of resource is increased and damage to the environment by waste products is minimized. Recycling also contributes to the reduction of toxic materials that could destroy not only the physical environment but also human and animal lives. Toxic wastes could bring about ecosystem damage and destruction of biodiversity. Serious cases of toxicity have caused massive loss of human, plant and animal lives causing drastic reduction in the number of productive human and material resources and consumption items. Human and animal wastes have been turned into manure that serve as inputs into food production. Bio-diesel and biogas are becoming increasingly popular as cleaner and alternatives forms of fuel than fossil fuel.

Conclusion
This year marks the centenary anniversary of Home Economics as a discipline and a profession. Founded in 1908 the profession has passed through many stages of identity and legitimacy crises leading to restructuring and transformations and name changes. Many professionals and practitioners in the field have made tremendous contribution towards shoring up its existence and competitiveness in the annals of professional history. However, many advocates of change believe that the profession has not yet reached its state of stability and deserving recognition. This group considers that the profession is still engulfed by the identity and legitimacy crisis. Much pessimism has been expressed over the future of the profession and its ability to effectively contribute to humanity especially families and
children. With Home Economics formed with women and girls’ empowerment in mind, the continued retention of patriarchal dominance over tenure rights and control of production resources is remains a threat to the future and sustainability of Home Economics.

The enormity of responsibility and gamut of expectations heaped on Home Economics seem to exert a crushing weight on the profession. Efforts at meeting these challenges through education, training and research have not yielded the desired results especially from the perspective of Home Economics professionals and practitioners. There are growing concerns over the ability of the profession to meet future consumer demands and satisfy their wants, needs and welfare. There is even a greater danger of threats to the existence and sustainability of the profession. This paper has attempted to allay these fears by prescribing the wheel mechanism as the panacea to both the perennial and future problems of Home Economics existence locally, regionally and globally. This wheel philosophy postulates that the scope of coverage and the activities undertaken by the profession must be guided by the ruling indicators and principles of social, economic and ecological sustainability. The principle recognizes the consumer as the hub or epicentre of the Home Economics wheel. Education, technology and capital are used as tools that mimic the spokes of the wheel to define the identity and stability of Home Economics. The tools will position Home Economics firmly within limits of established stable state and constantly allow it make necessary adjustments that will keep the defined size stable. The defined scope (rim) represents the frontier and boundaries of influence of Home Economics practice should remain firm by conforming to the social, economic and ecological sustainability standards. All three conditions work in tandem to maintain the stability of the structure. Any attempt to ignore any of them would tip off the balance of the wheel and its state of equilibrium.

The implication of the wheel metaphor for Home Economics is that there is a limit within which the profession will operate given the quantum and level of available resources - human and material. The level of technology available or achievable should be used in partnership with the available resources to develop a stable structure for the profession. This means that the size and contents of Home Economics could vary within and between nations and cannot be the same globally. The quantum and nature of available resources, the socio-economic conditions, the level of education, and the state of technology of states should guide the structuring of the Home Economics profession.
References


The Global Food Supply
The Malaysian Home Economist’s Response.

Tan Suri Napsiah Omar

Reprinted from:

Women’s Institute of Management, Malaysia

On 4th June 2008, Malaysians were shocked when petrol prices went up by 40%. Not less than one month earlier, the cost of rice spiralled by equal proportions. However this is not a Malaysian problem only. Shortage of food supply is a global problem. Whilst producers of oil keep hiking up their prices, would not the world consumers, want to think up of some solutions and wait for the day when we can tell the oil producers to eat up their own oil? Whilst countries compete in the bio-diesel industry, do consumers realise that this industry is fed by wheat, rice, etc.? Feedstock represents the principal share of total biofuel production costs. For ethanol and biodiesel, feedstock accounts for 50-70% of overall costs. When a man’s stomach is hungry, ask him whether he wants his wheat or rice or sacrifice to the bio-diesel development. You know what his answer is going to be!

Analysing and interpreting recent trends and emerging challenges in the world food situation is critical in order to provide policymakers with the necessary information to mobilise adequate responses at the local, national, regional and international levels. The lobbying must be continuous until solutions are provided for by governments. It should not be confined only to one or two high profile world consultation or dialogue. The consciousness and urgency must be drummed into the minds of all strata of society. Governments must be answerable as to how they spend taxpayers’ monies. Corruption must be eradicated at all levels of authority. At consumer level, correct eating habits and the curb on food wastage must be a priority in the education regime of all citizens, of all ages.

The Plight of the Poor

At the microeconomic level, whether a household will benefit or lose from high food prices depends on whether the household is a net seller or buyer of food. Since food accounts for a large share of the poor’s total expenditures, a staple-crop price increase would translate into lower quantity and quality of food consumption. Household surveys provide insights into the potential impact of higher food prices on the poor. Surveys show that poor net buyers in Bolivia, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, and Zambia purchase more staple foods than net sellers sell. The impact of a price increase is country and crop specific. For instance, two-thirds of rural
households in Java own between 0 and 0.25 hectares of land, and only 10 percent of households would benefit from an increase in rice prices.

In sum, in view of the changed farm-production and market situation that the poor face today, there is not much supporting evidence for the idea that higher farm prices would generally cause poor households to gain more on the income side than they would lose on the consumption-expenditure side. Adjustments in the farm and rural economy that might indirectly create new income opportunities due to the changed incentives will take time to reach the poor.

Many of those who are the poorest and hungriest today will still be poor and hungry in 2015, the target year of the Millennium Development Goals. Research has shown that 160 million people live in ultra poverty on less than 50 cents a day. The fact that large numbers of people continue to live in intransigent poverty and hunger in an increasingly wealthy global economy is the major ethical, economic, and public health challenge of our time.

Five Actions for Immediate Changes

Whilst maintaining a focus on long term changes is vital, seven researchers from IFPRI have come up with five actions that should be taken immediately:

1. Developed countries should facilitate flexible responses to drastic price changes by eliminating trade barriers and programs that set aside agriculture resources, except in well-defined conservation areas. A world confronted with more scarcity of food needs to trade more — not less — to spread opportunities fairly.

2. Developing countries should rapidly increase investment in rural infrastructure and market institutions in order to reduce agricultural-input access constraints, since these are hindering a stronger production response.

3. Investment in agricultural science and technology by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and national research systems could play a key role in facilitating a stronger global production response to the rise in prices.

4. The acute risks facing the poor — reduced food availability and limited access to income-generating opportunities—require expanded social-protection measures. Productive social safety nets should be tailored to country circumstances and should focus on early childhood nutrition.

5. Placing agricultural and food issues onto the national and international climate-change policy agendas is critical for ensuring an efficient and pro-poor response to the emerging risks.

The World Food Situation

In December 2007, Joachim von Braun wrote:
The world food situation is currently being rapidly redefined by new driving forces. Income growth, climate change, high energy prices, globalization, and urbanization are transforming food consumption, production, and markets. The influence of the private sector in the world food system, especially the leverage of food retailers, is also rapidly increasing. Changes in food availability, rising commodity prices, and new producer-consumer linkages have crucial implications for the livelihoods of poor and food-insecure people.

Many parts of the developing world have experienced high economic growth in recent years. Developing Asia, especially China and India, continues to show strong sustained growth. Real GDP in the region increased by 9 percent per annum between 2004 and 2006. Sub-Saharan Africa also experienced rapid economic growth of about 6 percent in the same period. Even countries with high incidences and prevalences of hunger reported strong growth rates. Of the world's 34 most food-insecure countries, 22 had average annual growth rates ranging from 5 to 16 percent between 2004 and 2006. Global economic growth, however, is projected to slow down from 5.2 percent in 2007 to 4.8 percent in 2008 (IMF 2007a). Beyond 2008, world growth is expected to remain in the 4 percent range while developing-country growth is expected to average 6 percent (Mussa 2007). This growth is a central force of change on the demand side of the world food equation. High income growth in low-income countries readily translates into increased consumption of food, as will be further discussed below. Another major force altering the food equation is shifting rural-urban populations and the resulting impact on spending and consumer preferences. The world’s urban population has grown more than the rural population; within the next three decades, 61 percent of the world’s populace is expected to live in urban areas (Cohen 2006). However, three-quarters of the poor remain in rural areas, and rural poverty will continue to be more prevalent than urban poverty during the next several decades (Ravallion, Chen, and Sangraula 2007).

A Made-in-Malaysia System

I wish to now share with you a dramatic animal production breakthrough developed by a Malaysian, Mr. N. Yogendran:

In light of the global food crisis, the FAO is being urged to restructure world agriculture and food production. This Made-in-Malaysia system may be just the answer in the areas of livestock farming.

As the world food crisis threatens billions with hunger and starvation, an international call has been made for the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) emergency conference in Rome (June 3 to June 5 2008) to completely restructure world agriculture and double world food production. Malaysia is beginning to answer this call with the Deep Tropical animal production system, which is based on the tremendous all year round biomass production from grass farms in rainforest climates.

Developed from basic research by Mr. Mohd Peter Davis, an agricultural scientist from the Institute of Advance Technology, Universiti Putra Malaysia, and pioneered by livestock entrepreneur N. Yogendran, the system can help make Malaysia self sufficient in milk, beef,
goat and lamb meat and has the potential to turn the whole of Borneo and the peninsula into a major world supplier.

**Protein Requirement**

Human beings have a biological requirement for carbohydrates (usually supplied by rice, bread and potatoes), fruits and vegetables (for fibre and vitamins) and protein (best supplied by fish, milk, eggs and meat). The protein requirement is the most difficult and expensive to supply. To enjoy a good productive life, every person needs one gram of protein per kg body weight per day. A 60kg person therefore needs 60g of protein per day, which can be supplied for example with 300g meat (chicken, beef or lamb) or two litres of milk. For a world population of 6.6 billion, that is a tall daily order.

Malaysian’s Deep Tropical animal production system, which took 20 years to develop from basic research right up to successful commercial farms, is designed to help meet this challenge and supplement the milk and meat now produced mainly in temperate climates by grazing animals on pastures. European-type grazing of animals in the humid tropics has a sorry history due to four basic biological problems that have proven extremely difficult to overcome by conventional farming:

1. Poor productivity of temperate animals and crosses with tropical animals in the humid tropics;
2. Heat stress;
3. High tropical disease and parasite burden; and
4. Poor nutrition from native grasses and high maintenance of improved pastures to keep out the jungle plant species.

These problems have prevented Malaysia from becoming self-sufficient in milk, beef and mutton. Despite the country’s historically tiny population, now only 27 million, Malaysia has never been more than 50% self-sufficient food.

**Deep Tropical System**

The Deep Tropical System simultaneously solves all these biological limitations by housing productive temperate breeds in cool climate barns and hand feeding with young cut grass from grass farms. This stunningly simple solution improves the health, nutrition and welfare of what we term happy domestic animals. Successful models of small-scale commercial Malaysian sheep and goat farms already exist around Malaysia. The intensive farming system is now going large-scale.

A RM50 mil ($15.4 mil) dairy farm in the Malaysian state of Pahang has just been established with pregnant Jersey cows air freighted from Australia and housed in cool, hygienic climate barns. These are being fed highly nutritious 35-day-old, fresh-cut grass from a nearby grass farm. Grass greatly reduces feed costs, is the natural food of ruminant animals, and is useless as human food or for anything else. Malaysia’s all-year-round perfect rainforest climate supports the highest rate of biomass production in the world and with our management
techniques, grass grows 91cm in 35 days and can be harvested 10 times per year for up to three years before ploughing and re-seeding.

The first calves and marketable milk from the new dairy farm are scheduled in June. Scaling up, a RM1 bil ($300 mil) investment with farms totalling 60,000 cows would lift Malaysian self-sufficiency in milk from the present 5% to 25%. The same dairy farms will produce cattle for the prime beef market and replace 75% of live cattle presently imported for fattening in Malaysia.

Pilot studies on smaller commercial farms demonstrate that the Deep Tropical farming system can produce three times more milk and beef per hectare of land compared to the best New Zealand grazing farms. Sheep farming based on the same system is even easier and can be established more rapidly than dairy farms and with less investment to meet the urgent food demand. The minimum commercial scale is a 100-sheep farm.

**Call for Emergency Action!**

Looking to the future, Malaysia can become self-sufficient in milk and ruminant meat in a remarkably short time with the Deep Tropical system. The future also looks bright for Malaysia and Indonesian Borneo with vast lands for Deep Tropical farming to supply top quality milk and halal meat for world markets.

In the face of food riots in 40 countries and mass starvation threatening developing countries on a scale never before seen in history, an urgent call to double world food production is receiving tremendous support from governments and institutions around the world. Leading the call for the FAO Rome Conference is Helga Zeppa-LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institute and chairperson of the Civil Rights Solidarity Movement (BuSo) in Germany, “Food is something you eat; food is what you offer your neighbour. Don’t speculate: double food production, eliminate both the World Trade Organisation and the diversion of food to biofuels!”

At the request of 82 countries, the United Nations Human Rights Council held a Special Session in Geneva on May 22 to discuss the world food crisis. The initiating countries come from the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Group, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the Group of Arab States and at least 15 other countries, including China and Italy. Their pre-meeting statement is inspiring: “The world can produce enough food to feed twice the entire global population. Therefore, in a world overflowing with riches, hunger is not inevitable. It is a violation of human rights”.

In an unusually bold statement on April 25, Nina Fedoroff, editor of the prestigious journal Science wrote: “There is an acute need for another jump in global agricultural productivity, a second Green Revolution. Can it happen? Will it happen?”

However, these growing humanitarian calls to defend the welfare of the world’s population are not universally shared. Ever since the false theory of Thomas Malthus 200 years ago- that the earth is overpopulated and (population) must be reduced to protect the food supply-evil
people have used this flimsy excuse to hold back development and decrease population in poor countries.

Throughout history, mankind’s creative discoveries and inventions have enabled the human populations to expand by leaps and bounds above the population of wild animals. The graph of world population since the invention of agriculture 10,000 years ago is really the chart of wave upon wave of scientific, technological and social breakthroughs to the present day. With only a few million people on earth before agriculture, the world population grew to 300 million from B.C and leapt magnificently following the European Renaissance and the rise of modern science and technology to the 6.6 billion people we have today. It had predicted to rise to nine billion by 2050. In the post-World War 2 recovery, world food production doubled in 17 years up to 1970. The Green Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s involving hybrid super seeds enables China and India to become self-sufficient and major exporters of rice.

**Scientific Food Production.**

The developing green agricultural revolution with genetically improved crops and domestic animals, combined with the rapid development of nuclear power with its cheap and abundant electricity and desalinated water, was well on target to eliminate world hunger. But then everything began to grind to a halt! Scientific progress from the 1970s was systematically sabotaged by the international coordinated anti-nuclear, anti-pesticide, anti-technology campaign of the green environment movement. This was followed in 1995 by the World Trade Organisation’s insistence, against all humanitarian arguments, that free trade is more important than food.

Now, with our agriculture shattered and biofuels destroying anywhere between 10% and 20% of world food, we have ended up with today’s completely unnecessary man-made humanitarian catastrophe with millions facing hunger and starvation. Malaysia only produces half of its food and is also directly threatened with starvation, as during the Occupation when the food ships were stopped by war-time naval blockade. History must not be allowed to repeat itself. (Source: The Star June 1, 2008)

As we do not have sufficient answers to all these questions,

- research is needed to qualify and quantify environmental effects coming from the use of technical devices in households,
- research is needed to identify sustainable technologies for sustainable housekeeping worldwide,
- research is needed to identify ‘best practices’ of doing good housekeeping.

But research alone will not improve sustainability. We also need a dissemination of the learning.

All this seems to be a major field of work, in which you and your fellows are kindly invited to participate. This afternoon we will form a new programme committee on ‘Household Technology and Sustainability’, a working platform on which we will discuss our activities. According to my ideas this will start from building a network of people engaged with household appliances and technologies in order to identify ‘best practices’ and work on their dissemination. I’m looking forward discussing further details with you.
In Volume 1 Issue 2 of the International Journal of Home Economics, the first book in a series being developed by James McIntosh titled *mix.* was reviewed by Dr Suzanne Piscopo. The author has won the prestigious Gourmand Award for the ‘Best in the World’ Cookbook in a Series for this, his first book. In her review, Dr Piscopo stated that ‘I look forward to reading the next three, especially if they follow the same stated principles of “No fiddle, no fuss, just food.”’. It seems that this is what impressed the judges. Edouard Cointreau, president of the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards, says that *mix.* is the Best Series Cookbook in the World because it stands out from other entries: “We selected *mix.* because of its innovative concept that really helps the readers with practical, easy recipes. Series of books like the James McIntosh series are important: they package useful information in clearly defined groups corresponding to the various needs of the diversity of readers.”
DVD Review: What’s past is prologue
A review of the IFHE 100 years DVD
Reflecting the past - creating the future

Katrina Toronyi


Summary
The International Federation for Home Economics 100 Years 1908-2008 (DVD) is a 60 minute document, which highlights selected events, activities, and leaders in IFHE’s history. The DVD is a pictorial view and a narrative of our history with International music. It addresses our: work, governance structure, accomplishments, and partnerships, including UN NGO work and some educational outreach in countries (IFHE, 2007).

Contents include an Introduction to The International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) 100 Years 1908-2008 DVD (by Mary Ann Perry) and highlights from Congresses.

Introduction
The mission of the International Federation for Home Economics is to provide an international forum for home economists to develop and express the Home Economics concerns for individuals, families and households at the United Nations and among other international non-governmental organizations whose interests parallel those of Home Economics (IFHE, n.d.). As the only global organization representing the field of Home Economics, the International
Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) has taken an important role in the development of social policy surrounding the wellbeing of the family. For the last 100 years, IFHE members spanning 49 different countries have come together to extend their commitment to individuals and families by advocating for and strengthening these ties through education.

Reflecting the Past - The Last 100 Years

The creation and purpose of the DVD, as developed by the IFHE History Committee, was to not only visually chronicle the work of IFHE, but to also instil pride in its past and current members in what they were and are a part of - the bigger overall picture of accomplishments. (IFHE, 2007) The DVD is very effective in outlining the history and rationale behind the congress themes which are based on issues affecting families of the world during that particular place in time. Each topic has a lasting relevance today and information even from 1908 is still very much relevant to families in 2008. As outlined in The 100-Year History of the International Federation of Home Economics document (IFHE, 2007) the IFHE History Committee hoped to accomplish the following four goals in relation to the making of the DVD.

- To update our members and to celebrate our 100 years and its future anniversaries in our country organizations

The DVD succeeds in updating IFHE members with a brief glance at its extensive history of accomplishments. The DVD does not and can not, for obvious reasons, go into great detail about each IFHE Congress held from its inception in 1908 to 2008. However it does a good job of relating the themes chosen to the relevant world issues for the time.

- To introduce potential members to IFHE’s mission

As someone from the Millennial generation, I found the DVD to be useful in terms of summary of the brains of the profession, but I felt that it lacked a demonstration of the heart of the profession. This truly resides in the members and families we help educate. The core of IFHE remains that people will turn to each other for information; thus reaffirming the human experience. With all of the historical changes in the last 100 years, IFHE was still able to target the needs of individuals and families relevant to the times, which shows that as an organization IFHE is able to adapt and change while never compromising its true purpose.

- To inform faculty at and in universities - Home Economics, family and consumer sciences classes and in collaboration with other classes addressing international social and environmental issues, and in college orientation programs of high school students to bring new students into our profession

Faculty involved with Home Economics and human ecology at the high school and university levels will be able to use this DVD as a good foundation for teaching and will be able to have a solid platform from which to build the future of the profession.

- To inform potential collaborators or co-operators in other professional organizations, country governments, and private sectors about our international professional work on global issues and expertise in conducting educational programs
This is something that definitely is addressed in the DVD. It showcases the work of the IFHE which at times can be overshadowed by more prominent issues. Each and every one of these more prominent issues has a profound effect on the family and family systems.

Creating the Future - The Next 100 Years As we look back on all the work done in the last 100 years - who are we now? Today in the twenty first century, the situation of everyday life and Home Economics has been challenged and changing, with globalization, global warming, food crises, food safety, global networking (Kuramoto, 2008). This however, should not be perceived as a negative outlook; there are a great many positive aspects that challenge and shape our profession. The statements made by Dr Thelma B. Thompson regarding The New Millennium Statement reflect the commitment IFHE has to maintaining its advocacy for families and especially those living in poverty and rural communities. The IFHE Historical Committee effectively utilizes this visual medium to convey its purpose. Through initiatives like this, IFHE can successfully hope to preserve its past while moving forward with its present. Although this is but one medium of communication in reaching generations across the globe, this is truly a case of “what’s past is prologue” (Shakespeare, 1604).

References


Biography

Katrina Toronyi, BSc, PHEc is a Work Experience Coordinator for the Faculty of Arts for Mount Royal College, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. She is a member of the Institute of Public Administration, Professional Development Director for the Provincial Executive of the Alberta Home Economics/Human Ecology Association and a member of the leadership team for the Southern Alberta Branch of the Alberta Home Economics/Human Ecology Association. Email: katrina.tt@gmail.com
**Notes for Contributors**

**Frequency of publication**
Twice a year. Papers for review will be accepted throughout the year to e-mail: editor@IFHEJournal.org.

**Focus**
The International Federation for Home Economics is the only worldwide organisation concerned with Home Economics and Consumer Studies. It was founded in 1908 to serve as a platform for international exchange within the field of Home Economics. IFHE is an International Non Governmental Organisation (INGO), having consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC, FAO, UNESCO, UNICEF) and with the Council of Europe.

This refereed journal brings together emergent and breaking work on all aspects of Home Economics, and most importantly, how we might improve and renew the everyday work of Home Economists. It features quantitative and qualitative, disciplinary and trans-disciplinary, empirical and theoretical work and will include special editions on key developments. It aims to push the boundaries of theory and research—to seek out new paradigms, models and ways of framing Home Economics.

**Contributors**
The International Journal of Home Economics welcomes contributions from members and non-members, from a variety of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives.

**Author’s biography**
Please provide a brief (less than 100 words) paragraph for each author, including current role or memberships and an E-mail address for correspondence. For example:

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**Manuscripts**
Manuscripts should be sent electronically to Associate Professor Donna Pendergast, School of Education by E-mail as d.pendergast@uq.edu.au. Please send files as a Microsoft Word document (doc) or in Rich Text Format (rtf). Paper length should not exceed 6000 words. Each document should be double-spaced, with generous margins.
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