



Finding Home Economics When It Has Never Been Lost: A Journey of Discovery for Pre-Service Teachers

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Abstract

The efforts to have home economics recognised as an area of study in tertiary education has been an ongoing struggle. Throughout the twentieth century there were concerted efforts to have departments of home economics in Western university settings. However, the closure of those departments has been a feature of university restructuring since the 1980s. At the same time, home economics education in schools continues but with a reduced capacity to graduate home economics teachers, schools are increasingly facing shortages of specialist teachers (see Smith & de Zwart, 2010).

This paper provides insight into the experiences of undergraduate students who are specialising in home economics education in British Columbia, Canada. It explores their ideas about how their undergraduate studies have prepared them for this specialisation, the insights that they gained from their experiences and then what retrospect they would have preferred to do differently. The insights offered by these pre-service teachers also highlight the importance of not just being focused on skill development around cooking and sewing but to also consider ways to induct these young professionals into the home economics field.

KEYWORDS: PRE-SERVICE EDUCATION, PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Context

Universities have been viewed as spaces where the educational experience focused on cultivating and disciplining the mind, and where an education was pursued as an end in and of itself (Côté & Allahar, 2011; Miller, 2007). However, since the 1980s there has been continual restructuring projects within universities enabling a shift from this classical liberal-humanist model towards managerialism. Ball (2012) describes how academics work under managerialism needs to attend to knowledge production where the knowledge worker is required to be flexible, malleable, and innovative while also paying attention to productivity. The production of knowledge in this way has a cost, a cost that Inglis argues “is divorced from people, their allegiance to value, their life commitments” (2011). While the change in model from the classic liberal towards managerialism, each with its own principles, both have at their core promulgation of privileged male interests (Ferree & Zippel, 2015; Mifsud, 2019) creating what is described as a “chilly” climate for academics who are women (Britton, 2017; Chilly Collective, 1995; Hall & Sandier, 1982;). An important point is that both models generate and sustain “gendered organizations nested within a gendered hierarchy” (Britton, 2017, p. 5). Interdisciplinarity teaching, learning and research is increasingly being spoken about within the neoliberal university as long as it generates knowledge that can be used as a commodity within

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competitive markets (Bergland, 2018). While interdisciplinarity is a key element of home economics professional practice, the knowledge that is generated has little to no value for senior management dominated by masculine culture (O'Connor et al., 2015)

The presence of home economics within university contexts has been the result of a difficult journey with a need to justify its presence (Rossiter, 1997) on a regular basis. Having worked to develop departments of home economics in Western universities through the twentieth century, there has been what seems to be endless engaging in re-labelling including consumer science or human ecology. Rossiter (1997) comments on the repeated forays by American university presidents in the 1960s and 1970s to get rid of home economics. During the 1980s and 1990s Canadian and Australian departments of home economics were an early victim in university restructuring projects to meet neoliberal posturing around corporate need for human capital (Bergland, Shobe & Trinidad, 2018; Côté & Allahar, 2011). They were cauterized and assets were redistributed. If lucky, faculty were relocated to surviving spaces such as family specialists moving into sociology, food studies into dietetics/food systems and textiles into theatre costuming or fashion. Such practice has led Elias to point out that home economics departments “have ceased to exist on American campuses” (2008, p. 172). The loss of dedicated home economics departments has created a vacuum, an absence of academics engaged in research and writing that contributes to a viable and evolving field that focuses on achieving “optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families and communities” (IFHE, 2008, p. 1).

Teacher education has been a long-standing location for home economics education. Stage (1997) notes American teacher education programs for home economics teachers as early as 1917. Across Europe the adoption of the Bologna Process in higher education offers a standardised approach that enables countries such as Portugal (Vieira et al., 2018) and Finland (Tirri, 2014) to offer a 3-year undergraduate program to be paired with a 2-year professional program for teachers including teacher education in home economics in Estonia (Paas, 2015). In Japan teacher accreditation follows either the completion of a dedicated home economics education undergraduate program or after completing a teacher education program at the master's level (Japan Association of Home Economics Education, 2012). Whatever the modelling of teacher education Kitchen and Petrarca (2016) note that there is a consistency through an interplay between theory, practice and reflection, and elements that McGregor (2020) sees as essential in preparing home economics teachers.

Response

There are consistent calls for the return of home economics (Renwick, 2016; Smith, 2015). These calls are not necessarily drawn from within the professions rather they are by those who are concerned for the loss of everyday skills mainly cooking and what this means for being vulnerable to corporate interests and diet-related illness. The concern for young people not engaging in home economics is in part due to a perception that it is only about cooking and sewing (Smith, 2015; Stitt, 1996) or that it is an area of study only to make “better” housewives (Renwick, 2015). Having said that, young people are interested in engaging in home economics education. There is an unmet demand for home economics teachers (McGregor, 2015; Renwick, 2018) in countries such as Ireland (Donnelly, 2019; Ní Aodha, 2019), Scotland (Seith, 2019), Greece (Stylianidou et al., 2004), Nigeria (Ode et al., 2013), Canada (Kitchenham & Chasteauneuf, 2010; Smith & de Zwart, 2010), United States (Cross, 2017) and Australia (Pendergast, 2001). Home Economics teachers within each local context actively work to support and advocate for home economics programs at the university (see for example Smith & de Zwart, 2010) however apparently immutable internal university restructuring and politics explicitly works against offering home economics programs (Elias, 2008) and therefore why there is a shortage of home economics professionals.

As already noted, teacher education programs remain as space in university contexts where home economics is still evident. Becoming a teacher requires a higher education qualification with a teaching practicum such as a Bachelor of Education or a Master's of Teaching that allows for accreditation to teach in the local context. A teaching qualification can be gained by undertaking curriculum and pedagogy courses alongside content focused courses. In Canada the expectation is that an aspirant teacher completes an undergraduate program focused on content knowledge followed by a teaching qualification that includes a practicum and the development of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (Berry et al., 2016). In the absence of faculty who are explicitly focused on home economics, it is necessary for teacher education programs to determine ways to identify underpinning knowledge and skills that authentically link to a home economics designation. The interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary nature of home economics (Haapaniemi et al., 2019; IFHE, 2008) has been both its strength and weakness in the university context. This feature has worked against the profession as university administrators were able to pick over and redistribute the pieces to be retained (Elias, 2008). The remainder discarded. As a strength, the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary features mean that the dispersed content can be identified and used as underpinning knowledge that can be rebuilt and reclaimed as home economics (McGregor, 2015, 2020).

Engaging with underpinning knowledge and skills is only one aspect of developing a home economics professional. To consider home economics as a profession, there is a need to engage in practice “that acknowledge[s] not only what is done but why and for what purpose” (Renwick, 2015, p. 30) and thus a claim for *extraordinary knowledge*. According to the IFHE (2008), the extraordinary knowledge emphasises on what occurs in families and households that is cognizant of the of social, economic and environmental context (Renwick, 2015). The challenge in cherry-picking from a range of undergraduate studies around food, family and textiles is that prospective teachers of home economics do not get the opportunity to develop an appreciation of the field, its history and philosophy, and therefore what can be claimed as extraordinary knowledge of the profession (Soljanto & Palojoiki, 2017). With this in mind, this study offers insights into the experience of pre-service teachers and what do they have to say about their preparation for and induction into the profession.

Method

Participants

This study was undertaken across 2 academic years in a Canadian university Bachelor of Education program. Participants were pre-service teachers who had obtained an undergraduate degree with a specialisation in family, food or textiles or who were chefs with a Red Seal designation¹. The participants ranged between 22 and 45 years of age, 20 identified as female and the remainder identified as male or other. During the program the 27 participants were engaging with pedagogical content knowledges courses, lesson planning, classroom management in addition to competencies around literacy, numeracy and First Nation studies and a 12-week practicum in secondary schools. All of the pre-service teachers participated in the sessions as they were facilitated within specific classes. However only the comments from those who completed the ethics documentation have been included in the research.

Data Collection

Each group met five times over the 11-month program during one of the courses to discuss their experience of the teacher preparation program. Every student participated in the discussions

¹ In Canada certified tradespeople may obtain a Red Seal on their trade or occupation certificates by successfully completing an Interprovincial standards examination. It is an official endorsement that the tradesperson has skills that meet the national industry standards enabling them work in any province or territory.

facilitated by the researchers, however only comments from those who had completed the ethics form have been used. No incentives were offered. The questions put to the teacher candidates were intended to explore and critique their experiences (see Table 1). The creation of a *safe space* for the discussions was established through shared understandings about speaking and listening to each other and a willingness to be open to different perspectives (Flensner & Von der Lippe, 2019). Focus questions were provided at the beginning of each session to guide the participants thinking about their experiences in the program and on practicum. The same focus questions were offered to each group however due to the conversational nature of the discussions there was opportunity to follow emerging ideas. Each session lasted for about an hour and was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researchers. The study was run with ethics approval: H15-02314.

Table 1 Indicative Questions

Meeting	Questions
Meeting 1 Exploring a priori knowledge about 'the teacher' role	<p>If it is reasonable to expect that every profession has specific skills, what do you think are the skills a teacher needs?</p> <p>Based on your current experience and views of teachers, what do you think would be the main aspects of their work?</p> <p>Given your response what might be the challenges that teachers, in general, contend with as part of their undertakings?</p> <p>What is important to you in joining the teaching profession?</p> <p>What are some of the 'characteristics' that you feel would be part of someone being viewed as a professional educator or a 'good' teacher?</p>
Meeting 2 Immediately prior to the two-week practicum	<p>What are the skills and knowledge that you will be taking into your classes?</p> <p>What are your concerns and perceived limitations about your role as 'teachers' on placement?</p>
Meeting 3 Debriefing the short practicum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How did you get our expert knowledge content across to students?" ▪ What were where your challenges and successes?" ▪ Propositional perception (experientially linked) based questions including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What do you consider are some of the learning moments for you as a result of your experience in the teaching and learning environment (school)? ▪ How would you describe how you are positioned as a teacher and a learner in the learning environment (school)? ▪ In what ways might you be developing a philosophical standpoint towards your teaching? ▪ What challenges and 'opportunities' are you engaging with in your role as an educator? ▪ How, if at all, do you feel this is providing you with further insights about learning and teaching?
Meeting 4 Immediately prior to the thirteen-week practicum	<p>What informs your:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pedagogical content knowledge? ▪ How you engage your teaching practice?
Meeting 5 Debriefing the long practicum	<p>What is your understanding of the following because of your practicum experience?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Achievements, Awareness, Authenticity B. Barriers, Breakthroughs, Building relationships C. Curriculum, Classroom Management, Context & Community.

Analysis of Data

Using a hermeneutic approach, the data underwent a discourse analysis to interpret meaning (Mercer, 2004) of participants' comments and through natural analogy exploring the relationships between the parts and the whole (Heywood & Stronach, 2005). This is done with

the intent to display coherence in the data and emphasising the social relationships and interactions between individuals and events. The sessions should be seen as conversations between the participants that also included the researcher. The conversational nature enabled the participants to build a common knowledge base in doing so they used “language to travel together from the past into the future, mutually transforming the current state of their understanding” (Mercer, 2004, p. 140) in this case about their evolving professional persona as teacher of home economics.

Once transcribed the verbatim texts of the sessions were reviewed through an inductive process where attention is directed towards identifying patterns in the data. Patterns were identified by each researcher and subsequently reviewed by the other through an iterative process. This inductive approach enabled the views of the participants to be analysed to identify three broad themes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Data

Theme 1: Do I Know Enough?

Having been accepted into a professional program on teacher education the participants were concerned that they had the necessary and sufficient content knowledge. There were aware that teaching a class required some understanding about what was being covered. Terminology used in the classroom emerged as a concern as participants recognised a potential gap between everyday vocabulary and use of the “right” term:

Are we supposed to be saying “ok you have to learn the right names for tools in home economics” for example? Do you have to call it a spatula or can you call it a flipper if that’s what you’re used to calling it at home? (Erin)

The concern for using the terminology did not just apply to equipment but also to technical terminology. This included underpinning knowledge:

...just knowing some terms, we might not have learned in food, nutrition and health. (Rani)

or methods and techniques:

There are a lot of home economics terms—like the muffin/creaming method and ... basic recipe demos ... then learning what is made this way. (Sam)

The discussion about what the participants know and did not know then progressed to thinking about whether or not the terminology was the important aspect.

... I have different names for everything ... getting someone to actually learn the skill of cooking is more important than them memorizing a name for something. (Erin)

That perhaps there were other aspects to being a teacher of home economics such as expertise in content:

You’re always learning things but how can someone expect in home economics to be a master in textiles, foods, and family studies? (Rani)

or ways to deliver that content:

And even if you are, isn’t it also more about how you can transfer the knowledge? (Jud)

Participants were prepared to concede that the students in the class have relevant skills and therefore might be either at the same level or actually exceed the skill set of the pre-service teacher. Thus, the participants could see how they did not have to be only teacher in the room.

But it’s always like just being one set ahead of the students. Like you don’t have to be a master, but and at the same time, should you be a master? Or should the students also be teaching you? (Chris)

As emerging home economics professionals, the participants recognised that they would need to engage not only to have enough capability to get into the immediate classroom and that this would need to be an ongoing disposition for lifelong learning.

I think you need to be willing to just put in the extra work on your own time like always pursuing ... um ... like whatever you need to know. Just make that become your passion project and like you know, work on it on your own time. You're always going to be developing skills. (Casper)

If you're presented with something you have to teach. You don't necessarily have the skills behind it. You have to be your own learner. (Erin)

This was acknowledged with some degree of humility in that the participants wondered if they would ever be across all areas within home economics.

It's impossible to know everything. You'll never be a master in that sense that you'll always know everything. (Casper)

The participants' beliefs about the importance of being *knowers* or *masters* appeared to shift as they moved from expert students to emerging teachers. Their understanding of *good teaching* seemed to deviate as they went through their program. Their comments suggest they came to understand that being a *good teacher* requires them to become comfortable in not knowing all the answers, to settle into "the liminal zones between our knowing and not knowing" (Berger, 2004, p. 338).

Theme 2: Learning Through the Practicum Experience

This second theme emerged from the participants' reflections on their practicum experience. The professional program on teacher education requires the participants to not only spend time observing practising teachers but to also begin to practice under the supervision of their mentor. In doing so, the pre-service teachers spoke about the need to balance off what they wanted to try to achieve and how they managed the classroom against knowing that they were "borrowing" their mentor teacher's class. Classroom practice was being built on the climate that the mentor teacher had already established.

... they've been in foods since September. If they, like don't know their knife skills now from the labs that I've seen them then something's clearly off. (Marcia)

The routine is a good point. They know what is expected through the day. They had like a time limit. (Alfred)

At times the style of the mentor teacher does not necessarily mesh with that of the pre-service teacher.

I try to keep an open mind through it, and I feel like I know they're coming from a good place. I'm going to try it out and see if it works. But if it doesn't I'm going to let it go. (Erin)

The pre-service teacher spoke about how they had to be respectful of the mentor teacher's approach, be willing to try it their way and then evaluating if it was something that worked for them.

Taking note of the mentor teacher was one aspect however the pre-service teachers also needed to cater for different student needs.

... with my grade 9s, I'm dem-ing everything. I'm teaching them how to cut onions. The onions aren't already cut. Like, I'm teaching them everything versus for the Grade 12s where I can have things pre-measured ready and I'm really just teaching them how to do a skill. And even some of the labs I'm not even doing demonstrations. (Marcia)

Another thing that they said to me is like they're grade 7s so make sure the activities you're doing and you can't do like long lessons with them. Their attention span is shorter. So, when I'm planning for

them ... we have this 10-minute activity, but you spend 5 minutes doing this 10, 15 minutes doing this. It's all the same material we're building on, but there's getting into groups, then you're getting out of groups. You are moving around and doing things so they're active. Whereas older groups you can kind of like give them information for a little bit longer period of time. (Erin)

Catering for student needs, their attention span and level of engagement was significant for planning both content and pedagogical approaches.

I find the younger grades you're setting the expectations for them and you're showing them and leading them in a direction, whereas my plans for the grades 11/12 I'm doing a lot of co-creating and facilitating. I'm not only trying to create the assessment and evaluation with them, but also the content. I guess putting more onus on the students and their own learning. (Jud)

The different expectations of students also had to be balanced against what time they actually had in the classroom.

I have my grade 7s for 14 classes. And that's it. You have to get everything in there. To introduce them and try to get them cooking so they have fun. (Erin)

There is constant rethinking about what the pre-service teachers want to achieve in their classrooms that is moderated against available time, being educative while also engaging students.

I had to figure out and read the textbook first, then I had to break it down, then I had to watch videos. I mean I spent so much time, but that's because I wanted to do well, and you have to take on the challenge if you're willing to take on a class. ... I find it interesting, the chemistry of it, my mentor teacher wants me to go over those things. I have to learn all these things (Erin)

Mentor teachers varied in how much latitude that pre-service teachers were able to have in selecting the focus and content of the classes. It ranged from being very prescriptive direction where the pre-service teacher was provided with a folder of program work that there were required to implement to the pre-service teachers coming up with the topic, content and learning activities. In every case the pre-service teacher required an understanding of the content and to be able to do particular tasks before they were in the classroom with students.

Mentor teachers often gave greater license to those pre-service teachers who had substantial expertise in a particular area. For instance, if the pre-service teacher had completed a degree on fashion studies, then they had the opportunity to be more innovative in textiles classes.

My inquiry question was how can I modernize textiles. And what I taught them was how to make chokers which is a really big trend right now. ... And it was awesome—they came into class like ready to work on it like every single day. They were really excited to make their own collections. They could kind of run with it. I let them have total creative freedom with it. And then the week after that we worked on patches. There is a trend right now, having patches on your denim jackets or whatever. (Sal)

The reflective discussions regarding the preservice teachers' teaching practicum demonstrated the intense learning opportunities they experienced. Their comments revealed the oscillation they experienced between being an expert student and emerging teacher. Not only did their practicum put them in front of their first groups of students; they were also confronted with the challenges of time constraints; collaborating with a mentor teacher—whether they appreciated their method of teaching or not; and the sometimes uncomfortable emergence of their own teaching philosophy and practice.

Theme 3: Reflections and Possibilities

This theme emerged in part during all sessions but was particularly evident in the last session. As the program was ending the opportunity to reflect on the experiences and learning meant that these emerging teachers were able to judge the value of their undergraduate studies against their experiences during the practicum and with practicing teachers.

As a collegiate group there was recognition of the variety of experiences that were brought. This expertise facilitated an advantage when teaching but also highlighted the extent of the learning needed.

... that would also be one of my criticisms of this program... The lack of the things we're expected to teach, especially content-wise that not everyone had necessarily had in their undergrad or in this program. ... Everyone came in with a different set... we didn't all have the training to do that. But at the same time, we talked about how you can learn it on the fly. (Jud)

Those with expertise provided support and advice to others. The Facebook page that each group established became a critical point of contact and communal knowledge dissemination.

Specific areas for improvement that the participants identified included content that was evident in schools.

you either have a focus on family studies, textiles, or foods in your undergrad ... the main thing people will be teaching ... I think what I would like is have those courses in this program (Jud)

The dilemma here is that the professional program focuses on teacher education not on content per se. As a result, the participants' concerns for being adequately prepared for the role of home economics teacher has a number of pragmatic features. The restructuring of universities and closing of departments of home economics has meant there is minimal opportunity for practical orientated course a lack that these participants felt.

but it's interesting that like through this home economics program they didn't teach us the basic things and okay we took this textiles course and we learned I felt like I learned a lot in that, but I probably could have used some basic skills. (Erin)

I think that like if you don't have a background in foods, maybe it's a little bit more of a struggle for you. I had to do textiles like it would be difficult, so looking at what's actually in the schools and what's more popular and then making those courses for everyone. (Chris)

The importance of developing core skills was evident.

So not a lot of hands on. ... Like it doesn't make sense (Unknown)

... you haven't done a foods demo before or like you know done some recipes or you don't know about the sustainability, so you don't have that many things to pull from and you have to do that research. (Sam)

I think having a class where you could do your first foods dem and get feedback on that would be so helpful. (Marcia)

Learning how to do recipe costing too. Like learning what a recipe actually costs. (Jud)

In addition to skill mastery the participants thought about what would be needed to keep the subject area current and relevant.

I think modernizing it a little bit is important. (Jud)

Modernising included concerns for what was taught in foods and textiles classes.

Having more recipes cater to the students. (Rani)

Catering to students included conversations about including culturally relevant foods and recipes, moving beyond a white European focus and recognition of popular culture that included cooking programs and use of social media such as Pinterest. There was also a concern for textiles.

To have students be interested in textiles... I feel like a field trip instead of going to the fabric store could be literally going to the thrift store and finding something you'd like to remake. (Marcia)

Required thinking about what is timely and relevant.

Textiles is now more about DIYing, upcycling, crafting kind of thing so it's changing the way you're teaching the class for sure. Like yes you should have some programs that are about pattern making for those who really want to go into fashion and fashion design but for the everyday student, it needs to be different. (Sal)

Thinking about contemporary concerns inevitably brought up ideas around sustainability.

Like I can think of some content things that are required around sustainability, around food systems and then likewise for textiles or family studies. (Jud)

This reflected not only their personal concerns and knowledges gained in their studies but also what they were seeing as opportunities within the curriculum.

Sustainability—I think that should be a large, part... actually that is also part of the curriculum. That should be a large crux of what home ec is. ... you don't have to do textiles classes making an apron. ... you could literally teach a class on sustainability. You could have discussions on where does this stuff come from? And not just related to textiles. You could broaden it as well. And I think that might just take a teacher with a different mindset and looking at the content and "how do I do this" rather than just going into the sewing room. (Jud)

The post-practicum dialogue between preservice teachers made it clear that they felt despondent about aspects of their nearly completed teacher education program. They voiced particular disappointment about the lack of content-based home economics specific courses. Their comments communicated a desire for more support in accessing relevant, ethical, and hands-on content to guide them in building their own cogent curriculum and pedagogy.

Discussion

Responding to the shortage of teachers who are home economics specialists requires an innovative response. The building of underpinning knowledge has to be facilitated by drawing from allied areas such as family studies in sociology, food and nutrition out of agriculture, land and food systems or public health, and textiles from fashion studies. The participants in this study have undertaken their undergraduate education in diverse areas, yet were explicitly focused on becoming home economics educators. This was possible because of the interdisciplinary nature of the field being able to cope with professionals who were specialising but who also had studied at least one of the other areas.

By using a variety of undergraduate courses to build content the teacher education program subsequently builds knowledge that teachers use to "transform particular subject matter for student learning" (Berry et al., 2016, p. 347). They argue that this knowledge is dynamic since it is the result of teachers synthesising and integrating knowledge including how to be an effective educator and what they understand about their students. The pre-service teachers in this study demonstrated a concern for their capacity to be effective teachers as they were going into their practicum and during it. Within the practicum there was both an affirmation of their subject knowledge and acknowledgement of the "gaps" while working with expert teachers to apply their largely theoretical knowledge to the experience. After the practicum the pre-service teachers reflected on not only their teaching but also what content from their undergraduate program was valuable, what was underdelivered and what was missing. This reflection on content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (see Figure 1) is both reciprocal and cyclical, contributing to an ongoing conversation that teachers engage with about their professional practice (Renwick, 2015).

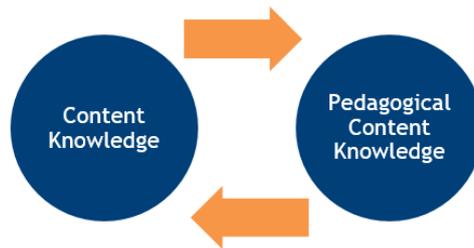


Figure 1 The interrelationship of teacher subject knowledge)

The building up of underpinning knowledge from a range of faculty or departments represents a pragmatic response to the dismantling of home economics departments within university restructuring projects (Côté & Allahar, 2011). This approach underscores how the content knowledge that is home economics is still as viable and relevant as it has always been given that it has not been eradicated from higher education in spite of neoliberal agendas (Elias, 2008). On the other hand, this approach has little to no opportunity for undergraduate students to consider what is professional practice within the home economics field (Renwick, 2015) or to understand how to be in a field that is not just cooking and sewing. Rather it “advocates for individuals, families and communities” (IFHE, 2008, p. 1) it is concerned for empowerment and agency that ensures wellbeing. The challenge for the profession in this approach is in the capacity for inducting emerging professionals into the field of home economics, and build their PCK (Berry et al., 2016). In the contexts where the neoliberal ideology prevails, opportunities to re-establish department or schools for home economics are unlikely. While universities call for interdisciplinary work that home economics exemplifies, challenges remain for the profession to position itself against favoured academic specialisations that perform well in competitive financial markets (Bergland, 2018; Elias, 2008).

Conclusion

From the beginning of the twentieth century, Home Economists worked to build a presence in universities to face aggressive moves by senior management to dismantle any visible artefacts of the profession through constant restructuring projects. The interdisciplinary nature of the profession allowed for relocation of dismembered components into other faculties enabling discipline in areas other than home economics to claim the content without interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary features (IFHE, 2008; McGregor, 2015, 2020). At the same time K-12 schools have continued to offer the subject but are doing so with a continuing shortage of home economics professionals. Teacher education programs remain a space that can accommodate home economics because it is a professional program that explicitly offers vocational outcomes.

This paper has described the experiences of participants in a teacher education program preparing to become for home economics educators as they develop their PCK and professional practices. The comments and reflections of the participants provide important insights for bridging differences in undergraduate content knowledge while ensuring that it supports the home economics educator role. It was evident that preservice teachers were engaging with Kitchen and Petrarca’s (2016) theory, practice, and reflection as they developed their PDK and professional persona. However, a missing element is an understanding of the field’s philosophy and focus beyond its visible practices. Making a legitimate professional claim for an area of the K-12 curriculum needed to be both identified and articulated is important otherwise:

...it seems like anyone can teach foods, you don’t have to be a home ec teacher to teach foods. It’s like well, then why am I here? (Marcia)

Biographies

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