

# Decolonising and Indigenising Home Economics Pedagogies to Advance Gender Roles in UAE

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## Abstract

*There is an increasing call for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the world at large to advance gender parity in gender roles as a way to improve the visibility of the female gender and ensure that human dignity, respect, and equality are withheld. In this literature review paper, I examine Home Economics as a conceivable curriculum-based approach to advancing gender roles. The study is aimed at recognising how Indigenous and decolonised Home Economics pedagogies can contribute to the realisation of gender parity in the UAE. Although there is scanty literature to directly address the topic, an extensive literature review on the subject shows a correlation between Home Economics and advanced gender roles and gender parity in both domestic and public spheres. However, the correlation is thwarted by colonised and universalised approaches to the curriculum. Various resources recommend that decolonising Home Economics and ensuring that it meets Indigenous needs can generate greater impact especially in advancing gender roles when compared to conventional pedagogies.*

**KEYWORDS:** HOME ECONOMICS, DECOLONISE, INDIGENISE, PEDAGOGIES, GENDER ROLES

## Introduction

### Scope of the Review

This paper entails detailed research on the application of Indigenous and decolonised Home Economics pedagogies in advancing gender roles in the UAE. It focuses on the narrow and broad history of gender roles while focusing on the position of women in the UAE. Moreover, the study discusses how Home Economics pedagogy is a possible solution to advancing gender roles in UAE. The study also includes research on the possible gender bias in the education system.

The study is structured into three sections; background of the study, literature review, and the conclusion. The background of the study focuses on the statement of the problem. It also shows the significance of the study and identifies the gaps in the education system concerning Indigenous and decolonised Home Economics. The second section is a review of literature pertaining to the area of study. The literature review includes analysis of the existing literature in various fields, such as the definition of Home Economics, Indigenous practices in Home Economics, colonised Home Economics, decolonising Home Economics, and the benefits of Home Economics for male and female learners. The literature review also entails the impacts of decolonised Home Economics and the impacts of declassifying Home Economics as a feminine subject in advancing gender roles in the UAE. Lastly, it includes a review of literature on the roles of educators, parents, and society in advancing the Home Economics curriculum. The last section is the conclusion, which summarises the important aspects of the existing body of

Buttigieg Fiteni, D. (2022). Decolonising and Indigenising Home Economics Pedagogies to Advance Gender Roles in UAE. *International Journal of Home Economics*, 15(1), 55-69.

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literature, identifies the significant gaps, evaluates the current state of the literature reviewed, outlines future areas of study, and links the research to the existing knowledge. The objectives for this research are to establish ways to decolonise and indigenise Home Economics and to identify ways in which Indigenous and decolonised Home Economics pedagogies can contribute to the emancipation of Emirati women.

## Background of the Study

A major premise of feminism/masculinism is that, throughout history, women have been defined as *the other*, with men being in the frontline of almost every aspect of society. Consequentially, they are still struggling to build their visibility and vocalisation. Since the 1920s, when the issue of gender roles arose, men have always been not only the primary breadwinners but also the pacesetters of purpose, achievements, and success. Traditionally, women are expected to limit their capabilities to domestic responsibilities, behave politely and softly, and be answerable and respectful to the male gender (Daleure, 2017). As part of their responsibilities, women have traditionally been expected to teach their girl children that the male child is always superlative and that they grow up to such an expectation (Dodson & Borders, 2006). Women have played a key role in teaching and transmitting knowledge and expectations around morals and running a household to future generations. The UAE is not exclusive to these sexism trends. Research on the history of gender roles shows that although gender equity was highly appreciated in domestic and economic spheres, specifically in the pre-oil era, gender parity has worsened within the past few decades (Al Fardan & Maroch, 2021). Since the 1950s, the role of women in the UAE and the Gulf region at large has mainly been relegated to domestic spheres. The advance in the economic system in the UAE has precipitated changes in gender roles (Giménez-Nadal et al., 2019).

Data retrieved from the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs (UNDESA) exhibit that the UAE's population stood at 9.89 million as of 2020, with 69% of the population being males and the remaining 31% being females (Dubai Online, 2021). Located along the south-eastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula of the Arabian Gulf region, UAE has the highest population rate among the Arab nations due to the high birth rate, low death rate, and better health due to good healthcare services (Khansaheb, 2021). Additionally, according to Raftery and Valiulis (2008), the ongoing migration of the expatriates to the UAE is significantly contributing to the high population growth in Arab countries. To be precise, a whopping 87.9% of UAE residents are expatriates, with the local Emiratis being the minority in their own country at 12.1% (Bindhulakshmi, 2020). This is due to the many job opportunities offered by Arabian countries. The country's population has increased by more than 35 folds since it was founded in 1971 when the population was 277,463 (Dubai Online, 2021). The small male-to-female ratio confirms that despite the exceptional increase in population size, the UAE is yet to attain gender parity, which is evident across all age brackets.

## Gender Disparity in Education System in UAE

The high gender parity in the UAE also extends to how gender roles are designated and structured. Gender bias in the UAE is evident even though they are ranked first in secondary and tertiary education. Gender parity is attributed to the tremendous strides Emirati women have made regarding education (Jones et al., 2021). Nonetheless, the first-place ranking gender parity in education in UAE is misleading as it does not consider the gender gap that exists where the males perform poorly compared to females (Dariel et al., 2017). Men in the UAE have not been making significant gains from education compared to Emirati women (Thasniya, 2022). Even though there seems to be gender parity in the enrolment of boys and girls in the UAE, there is a growing inequality between Emirati women and men. To exemplify this, Abdulla (2007) did research that uncovered incongruence between educational attainment and labour force participation for Emirati women. According to the study, Emirati women have greater

academic achievements and occupational aspirations compared to Emirati men. The study went further to establish that despite these, the role of women in Emirati society remains ambiguous, given the controversy between what young women believed they would attain after completing their education and what the society expected of them as daughters, wives, and mothers. Despite their education, women found it difficult to find spaces in the formal labour market. Besides, as the study showed, such spaces were primarily occupiable by women through social networks and rarely through educational milestones, which placed the women in a disadvantaged position. The findings of Abdulla (2007) are still traceable and intact in the UAE labour market. Statistics show that 77% of Emirati women enrol in various courses in higher education and constitute at least 70% of all university graduates in the country (Embassy of the UAE Washington DC, 2022). Nonetheless, females constitute only 17.71% of the UAE's total labour force, according to 2020 statistics (The World Bank, 2020). This is to signify that gender roles and gender parity in UAE still have a wide berth.

Similarly, gender bias in the UAE also manifests itself in stereotyped roles, actions, and characteristics attributed to males or females (Park & Jun, 2020). Gender bias can also display if prejudgments occur, leading to gender separation, which occurs in a way that favours one gender over the other (Baumvol, 2019). Such cases lead to discrimination and inhibit impartiality. Still, some subjects in the education sector are considered male or female-oriented, hence favouring one gender. For instance, Home Economics and related subjects such as Family Education, Culinary Science, and Home Science, are usually regarded as female-only subjects, while the technical subjects are considered male-oriented subjects (Pendergast, 2009).

Gender bias is evident in teachers' values and beliefs which affect their pedagogical choices and is also permeated throughout all levels of schooling (Herr et al., 2020). However, the National Minimum Curriculum in UAE has tried to promote gender parity and reduce gender bias in schools by ensuring that both girls and boys follow the same curriculum (Jones et al., 2021). The great gender bias and disparity experienced in UAE demands the need to increase women's visibility in private and public spheres. In this study, I review Indigenous and decolonised Homed Economics pedagogies as opportunities to redress bias against Emirati women.

### **Home Economics Pedagogy as a Possible Solution in Advancing Gender Roles**

Home Economics Pedagogy aims at fostering the well-being of families and individuals. Home Economics teaches about relationships, and it introduces and promotes gender parity. Students may realise that they can achieve what they want to achieve despite their gender, as Home Economics encourages equality between boys and girls (Khansaheb, 2021). While teaching gender roles and responsibilities in schools of individuals forming part of a family, using equal numbers of females and males involved in the family activities will encourage the learners, especially boys, to help and share housework and learn to share social and economic responsibilities as well. Although Home Economics has traditionally been considered a subject for females, current studies tend to affirm that including an equal share of boys and girls in the subject leads to extensive benefits as far as gender parity is concerned.

Decolonised Home Economics pedagogy eliminates the primary assumption that childcare is a woman's responsibility through images and pictures that portray men doing the women's assumed roles such as feeding a newborn and changing diapers and nappies (Schulz, 2013). Current Home Economics approaches discourage children's socialisation and gender identity formation in ways that previously were the norm, that girls should play with dolls and boys play with cars (Kim & Lee, 2017). By not reinforcing traditional gender roles and expectations, there is a possibility of shifting the way society and individuals define and make space for gender equity in all spaces, including at home, schools, and the workplace. Similarly, practical Home

Economics sessions help the boys, as well as girls, experience housekeeping roles. Home Economics instructors should guide the learners in performing those roles to learn how to cope with new situations independently. When teaching about diet-related diseases, images and photographs portraying those disorders should be used to show both male and female genders of various races (Park & Jun, 2020). Also, discussions concerning students' roles should be carried out during the lessons to enhance critical thinking on various social issues such as housekeeping, cooking, and childcaring to change the notions of these issues as female-oriented activities.

Home Economics Pedagogy is an important subject. It helps decrease gender stereotypes and bias in the learning institutions while at the same time building core skills that extends far beyond home management and home-related responsibilities as its syllabus has been broadened to cater to all genders' needs and myriad skillsets. Nevertheless, the subject matter only cannot eliminate gender bias. Still, the changes can be affected by changes in the teaching styles, curriculum, and educational resources, which will help reduce gender favouritism over time (Hanna, 2019).

## Literature Review

### Putting Decolonised Home Economics and Emancipation of Emirati Women into Perspective

Putting decolonised Home Economics into contexts demands an understanding of colonialism and its contexts. Colonialism is one of the widely researched topics in the study of history. Although there is no single universally accepted definition, there is a consensus that colonisation constitutes the imperialistic influence of one country over another country or territory (Fallace, 2012; Kim, 2015; Mangan, 2012; Sun & Roumell, 2017). The terms colonisation and imperialism have since been used in tandem to denote how colonisers imposed, and continue to impose their influence on the colonised. Writing on this topic, Said (1978) conveyed that the mindset of the coloniser always characterises the colonised as primitive, exotic, and inferior and that such a mindset continues to allow the coloniser to perpetuate imperial conquest.

The colonised, currently primarily expressed as the Indigenous population, continue to be faced with a world where the westernised perspectives and ideologies dwarf the eastern and oriental perspectives on almost all social, economic, and political fronts (Battiste, 2011; Said, 1978). Smith (2019a) reiterates the perspectives of Vaines (1997) in positing that the colonial educational system continues to normalise western epistemologies and, in the process, erases the Indigenous ways and contexts. An example is Griffiths' experience in Canada. Griffith (2018) writes "Education in Canada is riddled with ideologies and social constructions that extend the project of imperialism and white supremacy. As a consequence, Indigenous knowledge has been eliminated" (p. 29).

According to Griffith (2018), Canadian education continues to thrive on Eurocentric knowledge, which further encourages teachers and students to negate the values of Indigenous knowledge. Consistent with this example, numerous education systems across countries continue to thrive on eurocentrism. Hall and Tandon (2017) and Hall (2016) call this epistemicide referring to the killing of the Indigenous knowledge system in favour of neo-colonial imperialism. In the process, the epistemologies derived from the coloniser become normal while the Indigenous knowledge becomes the other and therefore becomes invisible.

The dominance of imperialised education systems has seen the emergence of efforts towards the decolonisation of different educational programmes as well as the holistic educational system (Mizzi, 2020; Mooney, 2021; Qin, 2021, Smith, 2019b; Torres, 2019). Battell Lowman and Barker (2016, p. 111) defined decolonisation as "an intensely political transformative

process with the goal of regenerating Indigenous nationhood and place-relationship while dismantling structures of settler colonialism". Researchers such as de Zwart (2005), Bermúdez et al. (2016), and McDowell and Hernández (2010) have called for the decolonisation of Home Economics and related fields such as Family Science and Family Therapy. Despite this, it is important to note that there is very little evidence that much if any decolonisation of Home Economics has concerned. Vaines (1990), one of the few researchers who have extensively explored the concept of Home Economics, denotes that Home Economists should be transforming actors concerned with improving social conditions. When revising Vaines' perspectives, Smith (2019a) is convinced that although Vaines did not directly write about decolonisation of Home Economics, she called for a form of deconstruction and reconstruction of the subject in a manner that eschews dominant ways of knowing and being.

The Indigenous approach to education holds that learning can only be complete if it starts from the beginning and then expands progressively (Battiste, 2009). In other words, Indigenous education aims at transmitting knowledge and worldviews using epistemologies and pedagogies that are respectful to the Indigenous traditions, skills, and cultures. Indigeneity allows learners to instil a sense of community, advance interracial acceptance, and advance practical solutions to local problems. Ahenakew (2017) contends that current educational spaces should interrupt modernity such that Indigenous knowledge should not be subsumed by westernised epistemologies but rather should establish the foundation on which any other form of knowledge is based. Consistent with this perspective, numerous other researchers have argued for positioning Indigenous and decolonised epistemologies at the core of education (Haig-Brown, 2018; Fleuri & Fleuri, 2017; Smith et al., 2019).

Indigenising teaching and learning practices demand a paradigm shift from a purely westernised view to a more inclusive approach where the classroom is perceived as a gathering place for learners to share their experiences and insights about local and global issues through an interactive and open dialogue (Shahjahan et al., 2021). Such dialogues should be undertaken in honour of Indigenous stories, histories, and worldviews and should be consistent with terminologies and behaviours perceived to be acceptable by the Indigenous populations.

Holding to the perspectives of decolonisation and indigeneity, the need to shift epistemologies and pedagogies from a Eurocentric orientation to an Indigenous orientation should be encouraged. As argued by Akena (2012), the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge over Indigenous perspectives undoubtedly precipitates inequalities that trigger the conflict and failure of the education system, especially due to the fact that the Indigenous ways of knowing are seen as primitive and uncivilised. Students should be in a position to gain new knowledge based on resources and experiences that they can easily identify and access.

One of the key topics in the deconstruction and reconstruction of colonialism to de-colonialism in the education system is gender. Almost every civilisation across the globe has registered disparities in the number of males and females both in learning spaces and working spaces, and the cases are much worse in developing countries (Maddrell et al., 2015; Tembon & Fort, 2008). UAE and Middle East at large are not exclusive to these trends (Evans et al., 2021; Schwab et al., 2017). Men and women have distinct social, economic, and cultural expectations and responsibilities in every Indigenous society. Being aware of such gender-specific roles and whether they would diminish or advance gender inequalities can never be undervalued. Decolonised and Indigenous education should be able to ascertain access to education on an equal footing, establish innovative educational approaches and instil gender-friendly socialisation (United Nations, 2010).

The high gender disparities in UAE schools and workplaces confirm that the goals of education with respect to gender inclusivity are either misunderstood or misplaced. UAE schools are dominated by the female gender (over 70%), yet females in workplaces are about 17% of the total workforce (Embassy of the UAE Washington DC, 2022; The World Bank, 2020). Fundamental questions are "where do educated females go?" and "where are males in the

mainstream education system?” There is no straightforward answer to these questions since there is no clear evidence to explore them. However, suggestions point to the dominating power of the male gender, which eventually see more men join workplaces as females, despite their education, remain at home to perform domestic chores since their education is considered less beneficial or productive than their domestic responsibilities as wives and mothers (Aikman & Robinson-Pant, 2019).

The overwhelming deviation between women in Emirati schools and Women in the UAE workplaces is what I perceive as a serious social problem that calls for the emancipation of Emirati women. European Institute for Gender Equality (n.d.) defines women’s emancipation as “The process, strategy, and myriad efforts by which women have been striving to liberate themselves from the authority and control of men and traditional power structures.” The Institute also mentions that the primary goal of emancipation is to secure equal rights for women, detach gender discrimination from laws, institutions, and behavioural patterns and replace them with regulations that promote the full participation of the female gender in a manner that guarantees equality to men. The realities of the experiences in the UAE are far from the goals of emancipated women. In this literature review, I attempt to answer a fundamental question: in which ways can decolonised and Indigenous Home Economics pedagogies contribute to the emancipation of Emirati Women? There is no clear response to this question as this is a research area not extensively explored.

### **The Current Position of Home Economics**

Home Economics is a branch of economics that deals with the study of household items such as food, clothing, shelter, and family. Home management is at the core of Home Economics, with concepts on human development, food science and preparation, family and personal finance, nutrition and wellness, housing and interior design, textile and apparel, and consumer issues taking precedence (McGregor et al., 2012). According to the International Federation of Home Economics (IFHE), Home Economics is the study that aims to achieve sustainable living for communities, individuals, and families (Dewhurst & Pendergast, 2008). In their position statement, IFHE (2008) proposes a Home Economics curriculum based on four pillars of practice. The first dimension views Home Economics as an academic discipline aimed at educating new scholars to conduct research and advance new knowledge on thinking about and developing the curriculum and society. The second dimension views Home Economics as an arena for everyday living within families and communities that provides space for human growth and for meeting daily human needs. The third area views the curriculum as an opportunity to develop their own resources and capabilities that they need for their own personal life.

The final area views the profession as an opportunity to influence and develop policies that would engender empowerment and well-being for sustainable futures (International Federation of Home Economics, 2008). Based on the environment, Home Economists enable families and individuals to understand that their actions, choices, and capacities impact society both locally and internationally (Renwick & Powell, 2019). For a long time, Home Economics has been perceived as a subject that surrounds cooking and sewing. Contrary to this public and infamous perception, Home Economics is and has always been more than just cooking and sewing. Instead, it is concerned with various matters of daily living and centres on how, when, and where people meet their basic needs (Nickols & Kay, 2015). Even though these concepts appear to be basic as they define daily aspects of human life, it is unfortunate that they have largely been taken for granted (Kuusisaari et al., 2021). Social aspects such as nourishment and nutrition, clothing, and shelter are some of the top concerns that the world struggles with despite how simple they seem to sound. Adopting a scientific approach to these social aspects is core in stimulating sustainability at individual, familial, and societal levels. Due to home and social-based problems that envelope the world today, Pendergast (2009) is convinced that Contemporary Home Economics is at a convergent moment as these problems offer an

opportunity to re-vision the profession. Pendergast et al., (2012) articulate that the convergent factors in the contemporary world act as catalysts towards increasing men's involvement in the development of the profession, which has historically been dominated by women, streamlining consumption and globalisation patterns, increasing the emergence of expert novices who are perfect at learning new things in the high paced environment, and advancing home management skills, especially among younger generations. Ensuring that Home Economics adjusts to social, economic, and environmental changes is imperative in guaranteeing that it is a future-proofed subject.

Since its inception, as Schulz (2013) emphasises, Home Economics has been mainly focused on the well-being and empowerment of society at the individual and family level through the development of important characteristics for sustainable living. According to Benn (2012), Home Economics is based on concepts that foster daily life experience and science, and it tends to be gendered, culturally dependent, featured individually, and determined by society. It is gendered because it is concerned with households and food.

According to Hara & Rodríguez-Planas (2019), the practicality was adopted in the teaching of Home Economics as kitchen laboratories were introduced where they were subdivided into small family kitchens, and learners were given guidance on how to work using textbooks and recipes. However, after the women's liberation, Home Economics was not considered essential anymore as women demanded to be enrolled informal learning institutions to be educated and earn their own money (Benn, 2012). It was later transformed by addressing gender equality and concepts in Home Economics. For example, it aimed to equip learners with experience and knowledge in planning and maintaining homework, understanding the proper composition of food, and understanding the need for hygiene and proper household organisation.

### **Indigenising and Decolonising Home Economics**

Pendergast et al. (2012) reiterate that the core objective of the Home Economics profession is to improve the world by advancing skills and knowledge critical to solving rising challenges. According to the authors, this goal is unattainable unless the profession is flexible to adjust to contemporariness and accommodate the differences within social structures. For Home Economists to be able to generate changes that are impactful to the world, Pendergast et al. posit that they must exhibit three critical attributes. First, they must be able to focus on the fundamental needs and practical concerns of individuals and families. The needs and practical concerns vary considerably across social groups, cultures, or races. This means that Home Economists can be impactful to the world only if they recognise that cultures differ considerably and that such differences are also reflected in the learning and education systems (Schulz, 2013). From this perspective, progressive Home Economics epistemologies and pedagogies should not be universalised in a one-size-fits-all manner but rather should reflect and be based on the rich Indigenous cultures and perspectives (Kuusisaari et al., 2021). Through this, upcoming Home Economists would be energised to use localised resources to solve local problems in a manner that befits the social, spiritual, and cultural expectations of the specific population.

Second, Pendergast et al. (2012) mention that Home Economists should have the ability to integrate knowledge, processes, and skills from various disciplines synthesised through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary inquiry. Home Economics is a multifaceted discipline and, as such, should encourage the understanding of the world from the inside to the beyond (Nickols & Kay, 2015). Learning in any discipline must begin in the local societal arena, where a person gets the first experience and develops human growth and potential (Nickols & Kay, 2015). It is only after understanding Home Economics is constructed from a localised and indigenised perspective that learners can easily assimilate cross-border and global perspectives.

The last attribute is that Home Economists must have the ability to take critical, transformative, and emancipatory action at all levels and sectors of society (Pendergast et al., 2012). They should be in a position to identify critical problems, relate them to local Indigenous views, and apply professionalism to address them. In the case of this study, gender disparity is a problem in UAE, and the implementation of a decolonised, and indigenised Home Economics pedagogy is hypothesised to be a potential solution.

According to Sprūdža et al. (2010), the 21st century has witnessed a drastic change in social, economic, and political aspects of life across the globe. The education system has been challenged to change from the traditional memorising ideas to educate the learner on ways the concept learned in class can be applied in the real world (Starkey, 2017). It is only through progressive change that the education system can remain relevant. The change in Home Economics has shifted focus from memorising content to understanding the content and applying the content appropriately. Wright (2017) posits a need for a paradigm shift from Home Economics pedagogies that are exam-oriented to pedagogies that are practice-oriented. Achieving this and ensuring that the profession remains pivotal in shaping preferred futures call for redesigning the colonised aspects of the conventional Home Economics pedagogies. Pendergast et al. (2012) made five recommendations for decolonising Home Economics, which include rebranding the name, stopping fragmentation of the profession, contesting curriculum contents at all levels, assuring academic revolution of the profession, and undertaking research to measure the efficacy of interventions.

### **Benefits of Home Economics**

Home Economics as a discipline is associated with a number of goals that include enhancing one's environment by adding value to the resources essential in a household setup. Another benefit is that it enables individuals to express themselves in an open manner that would ensure they understand what is expected of them. Self-expression is a result of the skills that the population possesses as well as the economic situation of the country (Deagon, 2021). Home Economics entails the social life of individuals, food, shelter, clothing, culture, and the environment of human life. In terms of technology, it entails the skills that are needed to utilise the available resources to make a living based on technology.

Pendergast et al. (2012) opine that the welfare of a society is achieved through the development of all members of society, equipping them with the necessary skills, each understanding the role that they have to play. The goal is improving individuals' quality of life through addressing the developmental needs at both personal and societal level. Ronto et al. (2017) posit that since the main focus of Home Economics is on improving the quality of life for society, it would be beneficial for the policies proposed in Home Economics to be implemented. As they reiterate, equitable resource allocation is important as it ensures that all members of society have equal access to resources, and this would be beneficial as nearly everyone would have equal access to vital resources. Another benefit is that people would understand the value of the available resources and take great care of them for current and future generations.

Social injustices such as racism, gender inequality, and tribalism are habits of mind that society needs to get rid of, and such actions would be beneficial to every individual as the society would have access to equal opportunities (Pendergast et al., 2012). This is beneficial to both genders as there has been an increase in witnessed discrimination as was in the past. Lastly is the concept of happiness and finding value in life. Happiness is an end to itself, and the purpose of life is to be happy. Therefore, society must find out the importance of life and its purpose as this would enable them to realise their need.



### **Indigenous and Decolonised Home Economics Pedagogies and Emancipation of Emirati Women**

Pedagogy is the how of teaching (Ma & Pendergast, 2010). It entails the methods and practices that a teacher uses to teach the curriculum contents. Teachers have the responsibility of selecting teaching methods, approaches, and styles that they deem most appropriate in guaranteeing that students realise their own capabilities and improve their self-confidence and motivation towards maximised academic achievements. Classroom teaching practices vary considerably and are based on teacher-centred knowledge transmission processes, student-centred processes, constructivism, and inquiry-based learning (Smith, 2017). Contemporary research continues to point to constructivism and critical pedagogy as the transformative pedagogies that teachers primarily draw from (Loughran, 2013; Ovens, 2017; Shapiro, 2011; Thiessen et al., 2013; Ukpokodu, 2009). The constructivism approach, primarily drawn from Piaget's cognitive development theory and Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of meaning-making, construes learning as creating a linkage between what the learner already knows and believes and the ideas and knowledge that the learner is intended to learn (Shapiro, 2011). In simple terms, it perceives students as active learners who can learn from their experiences and reflection.

On the other hand, a critical pedagogy (CP) preoccupies itself with establishing solutions to social injustices by seeking ways to transform inequitable, oppressive, and undemocratic institutions and constructions (Giroux, 2020). CP propagates the perspective that the mainstream education system has been Eurocentric and that it is the role of the teacher to reject the neutrality of knowledge and instead invite learners to challenge the intent of the mainstream education to promote unquestionable acceptance of the status quo (Thiessen et al., 2013). CP views teaching as a political act where the teacher invites students to examine power structures, language and experience, and ethics and authority, among other social constructs of their surroundings, to understand social, political, and economic contradictions and ignite actions for the benefits of the oppressed elements of reality (Ovens, 2017). CP proponents maintain that creating instances of deviation from mainstream education contributes to questioning the realities of social constructs, which promises a major milestone in abolishing structural violence of gender, race, and class discrimination (Giroux, 2020). CP has been called a transformative pedagogy because of its intention to make a difference in the world.

While reviewing the two pedagogical approaches, Smith (2017), in their attempt to establish the best pedagogical approach to teaching Home Economics, eventually condenses them together into transformative constructivism that not only places the learner at the centre of the learning process but also takes into account the socio-cultural messages presented within the environment of learning. According to Smith (2017), the ultimate goal of the transformative constructivism approach is not only to develop knowledge from what the learner already knows but to encourage critical awareness of inequalities and problems within their surroundings. The classroom teaching practices disrupt the perceived commonplaces, critique multiple viewpoints, examine socio-political issues, take actions towards promoting social justice and make systemic oppression visible (Ovens, 2017).

Smith's (2017) pedagogical perspectives on Home Economics seem to greatly boost women's struggles. According to Dupuis (2020), Home Economics fosters self-sufficiency in promoting the feminist agenda. Decolonised and indigenised Home Economics ensure that the education system is injected with a good dose of practical knowledge necessary in weeding out unhealthy behaviours and fostering inclusivity. In the words of Nickols and Kay (2015), for the goals of gender equality to be achieved, Home Economics must include men and must stop being seen as a female-only subject.

Home Economics has traditionally been regarded as a subject suited for the female gender (Beinert et al., 2021). This is because women were regarded as homemakers and were tasked with the role of making homes while their husbands set out to fend for their families (Smith, 2019a). The past decades have seen the role of women in society change as they are also out doing jobs to sustain their families, although the rates of their involvement still remain significantly low. Their roles are no longer homemakers as such roles are no longer gender-specific (Kim, 2018). Stereotypes around the fact that Home Economics is a female-only subject continue to be entrenched in the few schools where the subject is taught in. As a result, the male students face limitations as they are denied the immense lessons that, if acquired, would influence their daily lives (Hara & Rodríguez-Planas, 2021).

There is a need to have the gender stereotypes that accompany Home Economics eliminated to ensure all learners with interest in the subject can confidently undertake the subject in their studies and to increase the penetration in terms of numbers of learners that gain interest in the subject. Declassifying Home Economics as a feminine subject and promoting it as a gender-neutral subject also comes a long way in enabling the change in attitudes of the parents and guardians in offering the necessary support to the learners; which afford them the comfort to pursue and learn practical skills that aid them in living improved lifestyles (Muzaffar et al., 2018).

### **Students' Perception on the Study of Home Economics**

Home Economics is considered an applied field of study due to the fact that it borrows from several interrelated disciplines (Smith, 2019a). These concepts are then lumped together to offer a comprehensive guide that aids learners, individuals, and societies as a whole in improving their daily aspects of life. It then makes Home Economics a very practical learning subject. In recent times, Home Economics has been reduced and viewed as only cooking and homemaking, which has lowered it to an undesirable level for most learners who choose to pursue it (Baiden et al., 2022). However, Home Economics is a broad area and subject with more than just cooking and homemaking as components (Kim, 2018).

A common question has been on if the study of Home Economics is relevant and should be part of countries' school and national curricula. If it is relevant as a part of the curriculum, what are its positive contributions to a learner's life? A survey done by Kim and Lee (2018) elaborates that 96 percent of the learners who answered the survey feel that Home Economics is an important learning subject as it equips them with viable, practical skills. They cite the ability to observe healthy dietary practices hence avoiding risks of contracting sedentary life diseases such as obesity.

In a separate study by Hara and Rodríguez-Planas (2021), the researchers make an observation that students pursuing Home Economics have opined that they consider Home Economics to be very relevant to their career ambitions and passions in life. This group of learners held that Home Economics is deeply meaningful to learn and applies in several areas of their lives. The study also enquired about the most interesting parts of the Home Economics subject that the learners considered. Food and nutrition topped the list of their most interesting parts, with other students finding clothing and textile to be more interesting and a further group claiming home management as interesting. The perception of students on Home Economics is widely positive, with some finding it more aligned with their passion.

### **Conclusion**

The examined pieces of literature bring various issues into mind. First, gender parity, especially in UAE and the Gulf region, remains a matter of concern as far as gender roles are concerned. Despite the fact that females make up the greater majority in UAE schools, they still remain

the minority in the country's labour force, which raises concern about how gender parity and women's visibility can be advanced. In response to this concern, I hypothesised that developing Home Economics, but in an Indigenous and decolonised form, can help in attaining women's visibility in the country.

Although there are very scant pieces of literature on Home Economics in relation to women in UAE, various resources on a global scale allude to the significance of the subjects in advancing women's visibility and position in society. IFHE, in their position statement, have held that the development of Home Economics is core in facilitating students in discovering and further developing their own resources and capabilities that can help them live a more informed life by directing their professional decisions and actions or preparing them for life (International Federation of Home Economics, 2008). In Pendergast et al. (2012), students and graduates of Home Economics are empowered to act responsively in their daily contexts, including food, health and nutrition, textiles and clothing, housing and design, and consumer science among others. The capacity of Emirati women to draw from such a disciplinary diversity would be a strength for the profession, allowing interpretations to be made in the relevant contexts.

As emphasised by Wright (2017), the Home Economics curriculum should be made necessary in revitalising the art of homemaking and, importantly, in cultivating self-efficiency, especially in supporting the feminist agenda. Injecting the Emirati women with a sufficient dose of practical knowledge gained through Home Economics, coupled with their feminist ideals, place them in a better position to provide solutions to major societal issues. However, the literature point to a gap in how Home Economics pedagogies are developed and dispensed. From its inception until recently, the subject has been viewed as a female subject and has been based on some universalised pedagogies (Renwick, 2019).

The current decade has marked a period of major shifts in society, with gender parity within social contexts, globalisation, and information and communication technologies taking precedence (Pendergast et al., 2012). These societal paradigm shifts demand reconsideration of the contents taught through the Home Economics curriculum, to whom they are taught, who teaches them, and how they are taught. In fact, evidence from the available scanty resources shows that decolonised and Indigenous Home Economics pedagogies have greater benefits, especially when it comes to gender roles, than conventional pedagogies (Beinert et al., 2021; Hanna, 2019; Muzaffar et al., 2018; Smith, 2019b). However, more still needs to be done to place such findings in contemporary contexts. Although some studies have pointed to decolonisation and shifting from a more universalised approach to Home Economics towards approaches that are consistent with local Indigenous contexts so as to maximise the value of the curriculum to both genders, more work needs to be done to propel Home Economics pedagogies towards contemporariness to guarantee effective engagement of all stakeholders in the development of the curriculum.

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