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## Towards practical mastery of food-preparation skills and reflective learning

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### Abstract

*Research on Home Economics teachers' practical skills development is scarce. Mastery of practical food preparation skills form the cornerstone of being a qualified Home Economics teacher. Data were collected from Finnish Home Economics student-teachers. At the beginning and at the end of the spring and autumn terms, learning assignments on personal study aims and achievements were collected from each student (n = 27). This provided a written data-set of 108 A4-pages. Qualitative content analysis (Silverman, 2006) was used to explore students' perceptions on a reflective approach to learning and their ideas for the development of food-related practical courses. The findings revealed a change in study aims from the beginning of the spring course, which were focused on basic levels of knowledge, towards a more holistic view on what students should understand when they become teachers. Developments in the students' critical thinking skills and meta-skills of planning and evaluating learning activities were observed alongside with their practical skills. Future Home Economics teachers should have strong pedagogical, cooperative, and practical food preparation skills. Without the latter, they will be unable to support the development of their students and act reasonably within the quickly changing environment of the Home Economics classroom.*

**KEYWORDS:** FOOD PREPARATION SKILLS, FOOD EDUCATION, HOME ECONOMICS TEACHER EDUCATION, REFLECTIVITY, HIGHER EDUCATION

### Introduction

The main objective of the Home Economics teacher education program at the University of Helsinki is to provide students with qualifications for teaching and consulting within the domain of Home Economics, including skills for a range of educational settings and sectors of society. Mastery of food, food culture, and practical food preparation skills form the cornerstone of being a qualified Home Economics teacher. All studies in these areas integrate scientific inquiry and practical mastery of the subject. A strong emphasis is placed on studies that support the integration of pedagogical theory and practice, as well as studies on research methodology. All students earn a master's level degree and broad teaching qualifications.

The aim of this article is to discuss the experiences that students of Home Economics teacher education have during a single one-year food-related course focused on the practical mastery of food

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preparation skills and deepening the understanding of food choice and food culture. The course places an active emphasis on reflective learning, since both research-based and reflective practices are essential features of university-level food studies in Finland.

We collected data from students at the beginning and end of their course, contributing to the analysis of university students' perceptions on the usefulness of reflective practices and the difficulties they encounter when incorporating these practices into their learning. As a conclusion to this article, we discuss ideas for the development of food-related practical courses in master's programs on Home Economics teacher education.

### Food discussion and critical thinking

Regarding contemporary everyday food choices, factors such as the desire to make enjoyable and tasteful food, or the taste preferences and habits of household members, can have a stronger impact on food choices than factual knowledge (Palojoki, 1997; Fjellström, 2009). The personal, context-dependent way that we make sense of the world around us encourages us to create different meanings for the same issues, thus increasing the variety of food choices among households (Murcott, 1997). Making food choices and using factual knowledge are intertwined in the everyday life of a household (Palojoki, 1997).

From a physiological perspective, food is important for human survival and needs to be prepared every day (Lupton, 1996); however, its many meanings indicate that it is more than just nutrition and fuel, as previous research has shown (e.g., DeVault, 1991; Douglas, 1997; Murcott, 1982;). Fjellström (2009) suggested that the term *food preparation* must be extended, stating "It is a very complex activity, consisting of a series of decisions and actions, resulting in different dishes or different types of meals as well as various nutrients" (p. 20). Food preparation also implies social activity, providing a social structure and organising the people who are eating together (Murcott, 1982). Cooking today means having the competence to choose what is most adequate at that moment, according to time, taste, money, nutritional quality, and, in recent years, environmental friendliness (Fjellström, 2009).

These aspects should be better understood in order to develop food-related education and research in Home Economics teacher education programs. The aim of the University of Helsinki program is to help students obtain the relevant skills and understanding, enabling them to have critical views on food media and develop their own critical thinking skills. This program also provides students with the tools to identify whole structures instead of bits and pieces, a regular feature of the narrow views found in media.

Based on our experiences within schools, the traditional method of teaching nutrition-related facts in Home Economics education begins with developing a knowledge of the nutrients and their roles in the human body. Food preparation skills are learned for the purpose of preparing meals, but in the worst cases, food-based knowledge remains detached from nutrient-based knowledge, resulting in a fragmented view of food preparation skills (Palojoki, 2009). Nutrient-based facts are taught in such cases, but are they learned?

Teaching and learning about food-related facts is one aspect of food education, but how well do modern school systems support the analysis of social and cultural aspects of food and eating? Food does have implications beyond merely providing the nutrients and energy needed to sustain life. Food plays a role in identity expression, communication, social interactions, and also in delineating status and gender roles (Fjellström, 2009). These aspects should be better integrated, especially in higher education, since good teaching and learning practices in Home Economics teacher education programs result in a tighter coordination of skills, understanding, theoretical knowledge, and the skilful use of contextual cues (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2008).

There have been some concerned voices (e.g., Stitt, 1996; Lyon, Colquhoun, & Alexander, 2003; Höijer, 2009) that the acquisition of food preparation skills has failed in Western countries, when compared with times past. This is partially true, since food preparation requires less time and is now easier than before, and there are many new food products that demand less work at home (Lyon et al., 2003). Yet the reason for this perceived decline in food preparation skills remains unclear. There may be a lack of government interest in teaching cooking skills in schools, or the economic interests of food manufacturers who market products that require fewer cooking skills may be affecting the situation (Höijer, 2009; Höijer, 2013). On the other hand, there is a growing public interest in food

preparation and gastronomy. This is a sign of the times, indicating that students and their homes are more heterogeneous than ever in terms of their relation to food and food preparation (Höijer, 2013). In this social climate of food-related discussion, we see that there is a societal need for providing all comprehensive school students with an education in Home Economics, and the role of qualified Home Economics teachers has become more important than ever. Our claim is that if a Home Economics teacher has strong practical and theoretical skills in the subject matter, then they have more pedagogical resources available for supporting the learning processes of their students.

## Changing conceptions of pedagogical expertise

During the past decades, the conception of learning and pedagogical expertise has changed (Wenger, 1999). The qualitative changes that also affect Home Economics teacher education include an increased emphasis on problem-solving skills, recognising that teaching and learning occur within multiple contexts, assisting students to become self-regulated learners, a stronger connection between teaching and the diverse contexts of students' lives, encouraging students to learn from each other, and employing authentic assessment methods (Palojoki, 2009).

Postareff (2007) claims that students' learning can be enhanced through research-based teaching (see also Marton & Säljö, 1984; Marton, Beaty, & Dall'Alba, 1993). She also suggested that pedagogical training should offer opportunities for reflection and conceptual change (Postareff, 2007). Learning new teaching "tricks" is of limited usefulness if there is a lack of pedagogical knowledge or if the teachers' intention is not to improve the quality of students' learning outcomes (Postareff, 2007). This need for reflective learning can be applied to Home Economics teacher education as well. Teaching should be based on the latest research for food and nutrition, and students should be guided on how to search for relevant research (Lonka & Ahola, 1995; Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2008). Deep-level learning and research-based learning improve the transfer of knowledge and skills (Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2003).

Reflective practice has numerous definitions within the research literature, but in broad terms, it includes two key elements

1. making sense of an experience in relation to oneself (e.g., the ability to learn new food-related and practical skills), to others, and to contextual conditions (e.g., the ability to understand various factors affecting food choice); and
2. reimagining and/or planning future experiences for personal and social benefit (e.g., becoming a Home Economics teacher in various educational and counselling settings).

These kinds of reflection are not easy and students need much support in cultivating their reflection skills (Oosterheert & Vermunt, 2001; Oosterheert, Vermunt, & Denessen, 2002; Lindblom-Ylänne, Trigwell, Nevgi, & Ashwin, 2006; Fullana, Pallisera, Colomer, Fernández Peña, & Pérez-Burriel, 2014).

Research-based teaching applied to courses on practical food preparation skills should aim to develop a deep level of learning (Marton et al., 1993; Marton & Säljö, 1984). During these courses, the students should gain a broader picture of teaching and learning in the context of Home Economics education. Central tools for achieving this goal include discussions with other students and peer-reflections on one's own practical skills. The students are active participants in the course and can also make suggestions on what is being learned. This kind of open and supportive learning climate encourages students to learn from their mistakes. They are able to provide constructive feedback and learn from each other, using the techniques of authentic assessment during their reflections. The development of metacognitive skills is supported through constantly monitoring one's own skills and practices (Reid & Johnston, 1999; Richardson, 2005). New techniques are first learned together, and as students' skills grow, they move into the phases of application and then transfer.

## Data collection and analysis

### Description of the course and the participants

The course studied here, *Theory and Applications of Food Preparation*, is equivalent to 11 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) study points, and was divided into two parts: spring term (34 hours of lectures and 60 hours of practical assignments) and autumn term (36 hours of lectures and 58 hours

of practical assignments). Most students complete the course during the first two years of their studies. The students ( $n = 26$  females,  $n = 1$  male) had various backgrounds; some ( $n = 11$ ) had previous vocational education (e.g., cook, patissier, and restaurant server), but the majority did not have any previous food-related education at all. Two thirds of the participants belonged to age group 20 to 26 years. In addition to practical cooking skills, the course focused on, for example, how traditions and constructed artefacts, such as cookbooks or kitchen appliances, affect modern food preparation. Practical learning assignments always included reflections on how to apply skills and knowledge to future work as a Home Economics teacher. National health perspectives and nutrition recommendations were essential, such as how to apply and teach aspects of health education and nutritionally varied diets. The focus of all learning tasks was always pedagogical; the students should understand how to teach practical skills to people of varying age groups and how to support those with learning difficulties.

### Data collection

We have previously published an article on data collected during an earlier course held in 2014 (Soljanto & Palojoki, 2015). The data analysed in the present article was collected during the spring and autumn terms of 2015. At the beginning of the spring and autumn terms, written data on personal study aims (hereafter “AIMS”) was collected from each student ( $n = 27$ ). They all provided their individual written consent to release their study assignment for research purposes. The research had no influence on their assessment. The instructions for AIMS were as follows:

PART 1. Reflect now on your personal study goals during this course, as well as your means to achieve them. Focus your reflections on practical food preparation skills from the viewpoint of your own development. At the end of this term, you will reflect on your achievements and how they compare to your goals.

At the end of both terms, written data on personal study achievements (hereafter “ACHIEVEMENTS”) was collected from the same students ( $n = 27$ ). The instructions were as follows:

PART 2. At the beginning of this course, you reflected on your personal study goals, as well as your means to achieve them. Now you should reflect on your achievements and how they compare to the goals you set earlier, as well as how you will further develop your skills (following the end of the autumn term). Focus your reflections again on practical food preparation skills from the viewpoint of your own development.

This data collection process resulted in four separate data sets (i.e., AIMS, spring and autumn; ACHIEVEMENTS, spring and autumn), which are analysed in the present article. The lengths of the collected responses varied from several sentences to more than one A4 sheet, providing us a written data-set of 108 A4-pages. The data was analysed using a qualitative content analysis technique (Silverman, 2006). The unit of analysis was written material carrying the same meaning. The original writings were in Finnish and selected quotations were translated to English by the authors. This analysis process resulted in three main themes, which were visible in all four data sets: a) activities in the classroom, b) thinking skills, and c) interest and courage (see Table 1).

## Results

### AIMS, spring term

Table 1 summarises the three main themes, as well as the subthemes, found in the data set from the beginning of the spring course. Frequencies are also mentioned in the table (i.e., how many students mentioned the theme/subtheme in their writings).

Learning activities that focused on basic food preparation skills were important, according to the students. They had a strong understanding of the importance of being an active learner:

I aim to be active during lectures and practical classes. I think I do not have to be afraid of making mistakes—the main goal is to learn. Focusing on my own activities and following what the others do will teach me a lot. (11518 [these numerical codes refer to individual students])

Table 1 Study aims set by students (n = 27) at the beginning of spring term

Main themes	Subtheme	Description
Activities in the classroom	Food items (23)	To learn new food items and their use(s) in food preparation.
	High-level food preparation skills (12)	To learn how to apply basic food preparation skills, to organise, and to work systematically and sequentially.
	Planning and deepening an understanding of food culture (11)	To learn how to plan menus in the context of food culture and traditions, to deepen knowledge of food items and food choice, and/or to deepen practical skills.
	General food preparation skills (8)	To learn new food preparation skills and to apply them in practice.
	Food recipes (7)	To learn to read, apply, and develop recipes.
	Food preparation tools and machinery (5)	To learn new tools and their safe and ergonomic use.
	Table setting and serving (3)	To strengthen skills in table setting and serving and other skills related to evaluating and eating prepared food.
Thinking skills	Knowledge (14)	To learn more about the chemical and physical changes of food items during food preparation, and/or to understand why and how each food item is used.
	Developing and arguing teacher behavior (9)	To learn how to act in Home Economics classrooms, how to teach practical food preparation skills, and how to understand students' perspectives.
Interest and courage	Feeling safe and secure about own skills (8)	To have more courage on own skills and knowledge related to food preparation.

This student's mention of "what the others do" refers to learning activities, called *demonstrations*, where the students teach their peers new skills and techniques. These activities are short (5 to 6 minutes) but their aim is to strengthen students' pedagogical skills in teaching practical food preparation. Another student stated:

During the practical classes, I will strongly focus on demonstrations and, if possible, exercise new skills at home. (11521)

Learning with other students in the practical classes is cooperative:

I will develop my cooperation skills ... by acknowledging my peers better. I could ask if anybody needed help more often, after I had completed my assignments. (11520)

A better understanding of the learner's perspective was also mentioned in many responses. For example:

I would like to learn more about the teacher's perspective. How do I teach skills to others? Which skills are more important than others? (11522)

At this stage of their studies (first year), the students had not yet taken any indepth courses on pedagogy, but through the practical assignments they began to see and understand the need for pedagogical principles in teaching work. They also understood the need for practice outside of class. For example:

I searched afterwards for information regarding the issues that I started wondering about during class. (1158)

### ACHIEVEMENTS, spring term

The students learned a great deal about new food items and food preparation techniques:

It is great that we have learned basic skills but also alternative techniques, and we have learned about the latest food products on the market. (1152)

The students had very versatile abilities at the beginning of their studies, according to their previous experiences and skills. Their responses revealed that there must be more challenging tasks to motivate those who already have basic skills. For such students, it is important to provide alternative techniques. For example:

Actually, I have learned more than I thought I would in the beginning. There are many alternative ways to do things and there are hardly any tasks that have only one right and wrong technique. (11517)

The continuum of food-related learning starts from the basics and continues rapidly into practical applications. Basic skills are primarily concerned with reading recipes, as one student noted:

My ability to read recipes critically has developed. (11520)

The next stage is application, as cited by one student:

I have learned to apply the recipes in many ways. (11519)

After this stage, the students can start being creative, as mentioned by one student:

I have learned a lot about the 'background' of different foods. What I mean is that I now see more clearly how every recipe has this basic core, and by changing that, you can create a large variety of dishes. (1151)

The students were able to reflect on their thinking skills and cooperative skills, and they could see the benefits of these activities. Pedagogical skills were also developed:

I have also learned a lot about teaching: how to prepare a good demonstration and how to emphasise the correct elements of a food preparation process (critical moments). (11517)

In order to apply food preparation skills, the students had to understand the chemical and physical principles of cooking. One student stated:

After this term, I have a far better understanding of the kinds of phenomena that affect food preparation and cooking. (11518)

The students also noticed changes in their metacognitive skills, with one student noting:

I have now started to watch myself more. I have a better understanding of why I had failed when I tried to comprehend the connections to chemical phenomena in cooking. (1153)

Interestingly, the skills learned throughout the course were transferred from the classroom to the student's own home, as exemplified in one student's response:

I have learned how to clean the dishwashing machine with citric acid, and I cleaned my dishwashing machine at home using the same formula. I have really strived to apply and transfer my new skills to my home. (11520)

### **AIMS, autumn term**

Table 2 summarises the main themes and subthemes found in data collected from the beginning of the autumn term.

These new study aims indicated that students wanted to continue in their practice of using novel food items. One student stated:

I want to go out of my comfort zone by deliberately choosing recipes that are new to me. (21520)

Developing high-level food preparation skills was also seen as important, as one student noted:

I aim to be more organised and manage my time better, both with regards to my own work and the work of my peers. I am quick to start a task, but I should plan better beforehand. (21517)

Time management was also seen as an important aim with regards to future work as a Home Economics teacher:

I will try to better understand the time required for different phases of food preparation. In the future, I can better plan how much time is needed for different parts of the lesson. (2157)

Table 2 Study aims set by students (n = 27) at the beginning of autumn term

Main themes	Subtheme	Description
Activities in the classroom	Food items (39)	To learn new food items and their use(s) in food preparation.
	High-level food preparation skills (32)	To learn to apply basic food preparation skills, to organise, and to work systematically and sequentially. To learn to work in a responsible and independent way. To learn about the critical phases of food preparation. To learn how to convert passive knowledge into active knowledge and how to teach that to future students.
	Planning and deepening an understanding of food culture (8)	To learn how to plan menus in the context of food culture and traditions. To be able to use pedagogy in conducting each phase of the lesson, while students are having meals. To learn sensory evaluation. To strengthen cooperative skills.
	General food preparation skills (12)	To learn new food preparation skills and how to apply them in practice.
	Food recipes (5)	To learn to read, apply, and develop recipes.
	Food preparation tools and machinery (3)	To learn new tools and their safe and ergonomic use. To learn how new technology can save time.
	Table setting and serving (3)	To strengthen skills in table setting and serving.
Thinking skills	Developing and arguing teacher behavior (13)	To learn how to demonstrate skills to students and provide reflections from the student's viewpoint. To learn to trust one's own skills and be friendly, clear, and calm while teaching future students.
	Knowledge (8)	To learn more about the chemical and physical changes of food items during food preparation processes. To learn how to use appropriate terms and concepts.
Interest and courage	Feeling safe and secure about own skills (22)	To have more courage about own skills and knowledge related to food preparation. To be more secure while working alone or in groups. To have more courage in using new dishes, food items, and preparation methods.

The students also linked reflective practices to these planning skills:

If I were to be more precise in my own work, then I would need more time to think on how I should teach this technique to my future students. (21526)

The scope of the study aims that students set at the beginning of the autumn term were also broader, compared to those set at the beginning of the spring term; for example:

I want to learn more and study more routines for sensible and responsible work in the kitchen. (2152)

One tool for achieving this was finding alternative methods, as cited in the responses:

Sometimes, it will be useful to scrutinise the old routines I have already learned. (2158)

This set of aims also raised new subthemes, compared to data collected at the beginning of the spring term as well as data collected in 2014 (Soljanto & Palojoiki, 2015). The students wanted to learn about teacher leadership in the classroom:

I want to gain more confidence while working with my peers. This is a tool for developing my teacher identity. It is not enough that you can do something yourself; you should also be able to teach your skills to others. (2159)

One student, whose background was in vocational education, had started to reflect on the difference between teaching food preparation skills as a teacher and preparing food as a cook. This student aimed to focus more on being understandable and concise while explaining various food preparation processes, stating:

My aim is to more intensively follow what the other students demonstrate. During the spring term, I did not understand why I should stop doing my own work and follow somebody else's explanations on some phases of food preparation. I had previously learned that you do not stop your work for nothing and need to prepare food quickly. Now I understand that the point is to learn how to teach and verbalise phenomena. Good Home Economics teachers can explain things simply and understandably. (2154)



### ACHIEVEMENTS, autumn term

This last opportunity for students to reflect on the goals they achieved during the autumn term were important in revealing their developmental paths. They were again satisfied that they had gained new skills and knowledge about food, but also that they could reflect on high-level food preparation skills. One student noted:

I found time management skills to be very useful. Previously, I just persevered in completing my tasks. Now I have the skills to better plan my timeline. (21522)

Other high-level skills that the students mentioned were the abilities to plan; to work systematically; to organise tasks; to be able to focus on the task at hand; and to be patient, persistent, and independent. One student reflected on this, stating:

I can work more fluently now, and this helps me to focus better and plan what I need to do. Now I have more time to cooperate with my peers. (21511)

The thinking skills that students developed were related to teaching and pedagogy:

I have always learned about teaching, and I think it is important to understand the most critical phases of food preparation processes and be able to choose recipes using a pedagogical perspective. Compared to restaurants, Home Economics classes consider factors other than gastronomical values in choosing recipes. (2154).

The students also experienced how important it is for the learning climate to be supportive and secure; for example:

Our team had a good spirit and I was encouraged to try new things. I did not have to be afraid of mistakes, since I learned a lot from them. (2156)

### Discussion

During the 21st century, there has been a shift towards increasingly complex and diversified food choices and practical cooking skills (Richardson, 2005). As such, future Home Economics teachers should have strong pedagogical, cooperative, and practical food preparation skills. Without the latter, they will be unable to perceive the pedagogical development of their students and act in a reasonable way within the quickly changing environment of the Home Economics classroom. Our data shows that the students varied in their mastery of these skills when the course began in spring; however, the aim of the course has been, and will continue to be, focused on higher-level learning, empowering the students and cultivating their self-reflective skills (Marton et al., 1993). Table 3 summarises the main changes found across the four data sets, revealing that the students' early study aims, which were focused on basic levels of knowledge, moved towards a more holistic view on what they should understand when they become teachers in the future.

Table 3 Summary of the main changes between students' ( $n = 27$ ) aims and achievements over the course of the academic year

Term	Aims	Achievements
Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>focus on single food items</li> <li>focus on basic food preparation skills</li> <li>deepening simple food preparation skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>seeing alternatives</li> <li>learning about lesson organisation</li> <li>understanding the learner's perspective and seeing it as important</li> </ul>
Autumn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>focus on high-level food preparation skills</li> <li>gaining more confidence</li> <li>learning how to demonstrate skills and techniques</li> <li>acknowledging peers</li> <li>focusing on cooperation</li> <li>gaining a more holistic perspective on the whole process of learning food preparation skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understanding the value of cooperation</li> <li>being able to better manage time</li> <li>reading and choosing recipes from a more critical, pedagogical perspective</li> <li>confidence in own skills</li> <li>self-reflections on the need for further learning after the course is completed</li> </ul>

The ability to critically reflect on their own skills will help the students evaluate and give feedback to learners who are learning basic cooking skills (either in comprehensive school or in adult

education). This kind of reflective practice and research-based critical thinking (i.e., understanding the phenomena) will be of great value to them in their future careers, which were skills that were shown to have become well developed throughout the course of this study. The students were also able to cultivate their critical thinking skills (e.g., regarding food media) and gain courage in experimenting with novel techniques and skills. This kind of explorative attitude will become even more crucial as the revised Finnish national curriculum took effect in 2016, which requires special attention towards supporting students' practical skills and their development (POPS, 2014).

The students' meta-skills of planning and evaluating learning activities were also shown to have developed over the academic year. The changing views on teachers' expertise in schools means that young teachers should foster the strong cooperative attitudes they have learned during their education. In our data, chemical and physical phenomena in food preparation has been emphasised as tools for cooperating with science teachers; however, this is only achieved if the Home Economics teacher can first demonstrate a strong ability for practical skills themselves.

## Conclusion

Home Economics education is surely a complex, yet highly important learning environment for food-related skills and knowledge, one that everybody needs now as much as they will in the future. There should be more research focusing explicitly on Home Economics teachers' practical skills development because teachers' practical mastery of food preparation skills is key for obtaining a high level of professionalism.

Without having one's own foundation of strong practical skills, the Home Economics teacher will be unable to focus on pedagogical issues within the learning environment, build a safe learning environment where the students feel free to make mistakes, and provide individual support for their students. The development of strong practical skills is a continuum starting from basic food-preparation skills to more holistic and higher-level food-preparation skills. For achieving this the Home Economics student-teachers need enough time and support.

Home Economics teachers in higher education must also find a balance between cultivating generic skills (i.e., being reflective and critical) and subject-specific skills (i.e., having practical skills and knowledge of one's own regarding the complexity of food and food preparation in homes). There cannot be one without the other. As demonstrated here, along with strong practical skills, the future Home Economics teacher should have good pedagogical skills. Demonstrations of practical skills and well-managed time, using recipes that were chosen from a pedagogical perspective, are essential for qualified Home Economics teachers. In our data, the focus on how skills are learned and taught is important. The students were able to be self-reflective and saw this as a key element for developing one's identity as a teacher (Postareff, 2007).

## Biographies

Helena Soljanto, MEd, teaches at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Finland. She has held lecturing positions at various levels of Finnish institutions, from comprehensive school to higher education, and is deeply experienced with the challenges of teaching Home Economics. Her research interests cover the development of food education, pedagogy of Home Economics education, and teaching practical skills.

Professor Päivi Palojoiki is the head of a research group *Food, culture and learning* at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Finland. Her research focuses on subject-didactic questions related to the teaching and learning of Home Economics within various cultural settings and school levels, ranging from comprehensive school to higher education. She is especially interested in formal teaching and learning situations, such as in the classroom, but also examines informal learning environments such as homes or NGOs.

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