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Linking the loop: Voicing dimensions of Home Economics

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyse how individuals working within the field of Home Economics describe the profession against the background of the Position Statement published by the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) in 2008 and discussion papers detailing the Position Statement published in the first issue of the International Journal of Home Economics (IJHE). This paper links individual statements on the meaning of Home Economics provided for Linking the Loop project with four key dimensions or areas of practice of Home Economics, as defined in the IFHE Position Statement, and reflects the statements against generational theory. A qualitative content analysis of 94 statements provided by Home Economists around the world provides an insight to the variety in understanding and defining the field—a process that is essential to secure a viable future for the profession.

Introduction

Home Economics; what it is, what it encompasses and what as a profession it seeks to provide and prove are subject to much debate. Home Economics is not a new subject but one that has been around for a long time: Even the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle was concerned with the organisation and management of households in the meaning of *oikos* (Richarz, 1991). In modern times, efforts to formalise domesticity go back as far as the mid-1800s with one of the most influential early examples being the Treatise on Domestic Economy for the Use of Young Ladies at Home (Beecher, 1845), written by Catherine Beecher (1800-1878). As was encompassed then, over 150 years ago—Home Economics embraces a wide range of applications and many diverse areas of life, both inside and outside of the home setting. As Arcus (2008) highlights, increasing concern for household-related topics resulted, at the beginning of the 20th century, in the foundation of the International Federation for Home Economics. She further describes the shared interest of the Home Economics pioneers “in the well-being of the family and in strengthening the home to benefit the broader society” (Arcus, 2008 p. 2-3).

Current discussions within the international field of Home Economics have focused around the process of developing of a position paper for the International Federation for Home Economics. Pendergast (2008a, p. 5) has pointed out that the Position Statement: “is an attempt to locate the profession in the contemporary context by serving as a platform, looking ahead to viable and progressive visions of Home Economics for the 21st century and beyond.”

This paper looks at the Position Statement as “an organic document developed for the next decade with the intention of ongoing review and providing a foundation for the work of the Federation, its individual and organizational members” (IFHE, 2008 p. 6).

Here, the aim is to look beyond the Position Statement and reflect it against the statements made by individual Home Economists for the project *Linking the Loop* (LTL) initiated by the Young Professionals Network (YPN) of IFHE. Whilst elaborating on how individual members of IFHE describe different dimensions of Home Economics and by identifying specific characteristics from the statements, we can advance the discussion to produce a viable and progressive vision of Home Economics. Beyond these issues, this paper provides an empirical background for the Position Statement. Also, empirical evidence in addition to what experts and individual members already made available via the Position Statement is presented here. This analysis helps to further strengthen Home Economics as a profession, a scientific discipline, an arena to influence policy, a curriculum area, and, very importantly, to help to contribute towards people and communities in their everyday life.

Discussing Home Economics

The following section introduces the main characteristics of the Position Statement and the discussion around it as published in the International Journal for Home Economics (IJHE). We also present the *Linking the Loop* project, which provides the empirical basis for the analysis.

The IFHE Position Statement

The IFHE Position Statement *Home Economics in the 21st Century* (hereafter: HE21C) was launched at the IFHE Home Economics Congress 2008 in Lucerne, Switzerland. HE21C was developed through a 4-year consultation process with members and experts of IFHE to serve as a basis for Home Economists to discuss the field, to elucidate basal dimensions of Home Economics, to initiate the process of rebranding Home Economics, and to highlight commonalities, challenges, and the societal impact of the profession. Inter- and transdisciplinary approaches to Home Economics as a profession and a field of study are described and located within society at the beginning of the 21st century. Hence, Home Economics is illustrated as consisting of four dimensions or areas of practice (IFHE, 2008, p. 1):

- Home Economics as an *academic discipline* to educate new scholars, to conduct research, and to create new knowledge and ways of thinking for professionals and for society
- Home Economics as an arena for *everyday living* in households, families, and communities for developing human growth potential and human necessities or basic needs to be met
- Home Economics as a *curriculum area* that facilitates students to discover and further develop their own resources and capabilities to be used in their personal life, by directing their professional decisions and actions or preparing them for life

- Home Economics as a *societal arena to influence and develop policy* to advocate for individuals, families, and communities to achieve empowerment and wellbeing, to utilise transformative practices, and to facilitate sustainable futures.

HE21C was published together with seven discussion papers submitted by Home Economics professionals representing the different regions of the world. These papers illustrate a variety of conceptions and highlight some key issues for future work on positioning and rebranding Home Economics. Here, some of the key statements made in the discussion papers regarding the role of HE21C are presented and the concepts and ideas provided regarding the challenges faced by Home Economics professionals highlighted.

On the basis of Japanese experiences in defining the philosophy and principles of Home Economics, Kuramoto (2008) states that HE21C can help to provide a philosophical foundation and historical compass for the field, thereby increasing its capacity to meet the new agenda and needs of the individual, family, community, and society in all parts of the world. Also, Turkki (2008) sees the statement as the common wisdom of Home Economists that enables the recognition of possibilities for Home Economics as a field in the present world and also in the future.

Benn (2008) emphasises the need for Home Economists to better argue for the field in order to define Home Economics as a science in its own right. Benn predicts that, without strongly defining Home Economics as a field specifically looking at individuals and their immediate surroundings, the field is at risk of being lost among other disciplines. On the basis of analysis of the historical development and the identity of Home Economics, Davis (2008) calls for a systematic, constructive dialogue to ensure a clear understanding of the field and its name.

According to Turkki (2008), the profession is strongly linked to society, and Home Economists need to empower themselves to work in different forums and levels of society. In her response to the statement, Hodelin (2008, p. 19) argues for the importance of personal awareness and the continuous “academic, social, political and emotional preparation of self”. This allows for Home Economists to take professional action enabling an impact on social change. McGregor (2008) calls on Home Economists to become ambassadors of the profession; “advancing the interest of the profession, guided by its values, mission and philosophical underpinnings” (McGregor, 2008, p. 27).

Dewhurst and Pendergast (2008) have studied how HE21C has been received by Home Economics teachers in Scotland and Australia. The results show a high level of agreement on the multidisciplinary nature and the potential of Home Economics to prepare individuals for their personal and professional life. Still, the preferred name of the field and rebranding of Home Economics are shown as areas of weaker commitment to issues presented in the HE21C. The authors call for extended community-building strategies in order to engage Home Economics practitioners to work to achieve the common goals set in the HE21C.

The discussion presented here shows that Home Economics is subject to a continuous process of change and redefinition, and, in many ways, is fighting for its existence. The multidisciplinary nature of Home Economics is shown through the great differences in how

individual Home Economists see and promote the field. Still, HE21C is strongly valued as a serious, collaborative attempt to provide a cohesive and internationally recognised perspective of the field (Pendergast, 2008a).

Linking the loop

Members of the IFHE Young Professionals Network (YPN) initiated *Linking the Loop* (LTL) as a project first presented at the World Home Economics Congress 2008. LTL is an ongoing project developed with the aim of providing a stimulus for Home Economists around the world, inaugurated at the IFHE World Congress 2008. As the name suggests, the project aims to link Home Economists around the world, allowing their voices to be heard. Regardless of whether IFHE members are able to physically be present at IFHE meetings, the project facilitates their involvement and contribution. The project therefore highlights the diversity of the Home Economics profession, and offers insights into the work being achieved internationally in the field by professionals representing and working across the generational spectrum. It acts as a signal to the global arena that Home Economics has a body of strong, motivated professionals who are enthusiastic about taking the profession forward into the 21st century.

For *Linking the Loop* IFHE members were asked to contribute to the project by providing a statement, answering the question: *What does Home Economics mean to you?* Further, they were asked to indicate name, year of birth, and country/nationality, and to provide a photo. The responses were collated and presented as a slideshow at the IFHE Congress 2008 in Lucerne and have subsequently been added as an ongoing scroll on the IFHE website (www.ifhe.org). As an ongoing project that, like the subject with which it deals, is continuously adapting and evolving, the project will continually be updated with each major IFHE meeting. *Linking the Loop 2* is expected to be presented at the IFHE Council meeting in Ireland, 2010. The LTL concept initially targeted *new* members (i.e., those young in age and/or new to the profession) with the foresight of being a way of marketing Home Economics to a wider audience. However, the response to the project was so positive, from members of all ages and generational locations, that it was extended to include all respondents. LTL is strongly inspired by generational theory. Based on the work of Strauss and Howe (1991) on generational dynamics, this theory provides an insight to diversity in thinking about our profession.

Generational theory

Generational theory (Strauss & Howe, 1991) was introduced to the field of Home Economics by Donna Pendergast (2001, 2008b) as being critical to the future of Home Economics. Pendergast (2008b) links the well-developed theory seeking to understand and characterise cohorts according to their birth generation with the profession of Home Economics. Given that the history of the profession spans a century and its future depends on the retention and attraction of present and future generations, understanding the generational dynamics offers a strategic method of better understanding and embracing the future of the profession. Thereafter, generational theory can be used to understand and reflect on the origin of different approaches to Home Economics.

Pendergast (2008b) distinguishes the following generations: The Progressive Generation (having influence 1901-1924 during the GI birth generation) is the founding generation of Home Economics. They gave the domestic sphere a scientific underpinning, and faced the initial battle for equality of women and men, thus proving to be highly progressive and revolutionary. They are succeeded by the Missionary Generation (having influence 1925-1942 during the Silent birth generation) who, affected by the economic situation, depression, and wars, faced the profession with a strict view of management and thriftiness. The GI Generation (having influence 1943-1960 during the Baby Boomer birth generation) is labelled as upcoming affluence in the Western world. This generation was witness to the consumer revolution where consumer values were the driving force of culture and the economy. This experience is recognisable in the characteristics of the cohort—being more economically optimistic, conservative, and used to being the leading cohort in society, particularly in terms of affluence. The following Silent Generation (having influence 1961-1981 during the Generation X birth generation) incorporates an emanating consumerism and relevant critical scientific approaches, including feminist studies.

The subsequent Baby Boomers (having influence 1982-2002 during the Generation Y birth generation) are a distinctive group named such due to the post World War II rise in fertility. Baby Boomers typically reject and/or define traditional values, and are regarded as a privileged group, growing up in an improving advancing world. Generation X, a reactive cohort, display individuality, rebellion, and confidence, and are far more pragmatic than their predecessors. In contrast, Generation Y (1982-2003) grew up in a globalised world, with notions of post-modernity including issues of fragmentation and further individualisation. Born into an advanced technological multinational world, this cohort is separated from its previous generations not only by age, but also by values, beliefs, and digital literacy. Comfortable in an arena of continuous mass communication, this generation displays inconsistent qualities with regard to values and attitudes and freely swing or switch loyalties depending on their immediate wants and/or needs.

Finally, Generation Z (those born post 2003) are thought to present society with a cohort of active consumers, with a strong social conscience and work ethic—ideal for trying to reconfigure the profession to set it up in the 21st century. However, information on this generation is largely speculative due to a lack of research to date and the fact that members are still very young. In accordance with generational theory, the statements of *Linking the Loop* were categorised by date of birth and the relating cohort, or generation of birth, of the person who made the statement. The indication of date of birth and country of origin makes it possible to distinguish between generations and regions.

Analytical approach

The following chapter explains the course of action and the context in which the work was carried out, and gives a concise account of the analysis process. Description of the interpretive framework and method of analysis is followed by characterisation of LTL statements according to dimensions of Home Economics presented in HE21C, and an analysis of generational and regional variation in the statements. Finally, the discussion puts the results into theoretical context, relating them to the considerations on the future of the Home Economics profession.

The analytical focus in this paper is on statements that are offered by IFHE members, and on how these individuals culturally construct *Home Economics* in their statements made through the *Linking the Loop* (LTL) project. Individuals made concise affirmative statements about what Home Economics personally means to them. The term *interpretive framework* refers “to a set of assumptions, ideas and principles that define a particular, theoretically informed perspective and a set of appropriate practices for the process of interpretation, thus opening the data to particular interpretations” (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, p. 103) and provides a lens for systematic and reflected examination of the statements of LTL and thus as individual praxis to think, reason, comment, and theorise on Home Economics.

Content analysis that encompasses both quantitative and qualitative characteristics (Wolff, 2007) was applied to the analysis of the LTL statements. A quantitative analysis on the regional and generational distribution of the statements lays the foundation for further qualitative analysis. In the quantitative analysis, the LTL statements were classified under the four dimensions of Home Economics as

1. an academic discipline;
2. an arena for everyday living;
3. a curriculum area; and
4. a societal arena to influence policy.

(IFHE, 2008).

For the purpose of this research, each author made the initial classification independently. Collaborative qualitative analysis was then continued, with the researchers discussing and agreeing on each classification. An awareness of the influence of each researcher’s tacit knowledge in applying the categories to the statements (Silverman, 2006) was maintained throughout, thus guaranteeing that the qualitative approach highlights a content specific analysis. Moreover, the role of the authors as researchers was not to criticise or to assess statements made in LTL statements but to scrutinise the statements to identify dimensions and interrelating functions. Certain limitations come along with this approach. These will be considered in the discussion later in the paper.

After preliminary examinations of HE21C and the individual LTL statements, the analysis was focused on the four dimensions or areas of HE practice, as defined in HE21C. Hence, it was important to align the statements with HE21C to enhance the discussion on what Home Economics means to individuals. The LTL statements can be regarded as naturally occurring empirical data (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006) because they have not been created for the purpose of being a subject of analysis (Silverman, 2006). However, we have to keep in mind that the statements are intended for public display and therefore it can be assumed that the participants of *Linking the Loop* have put special effort in the production of these personal expressions.

The 94 statements available were published at the 21st World Congress of IFHE in 2008. The statements give an idea of and exhibit the way in which *Home Economics* is meaningfully discussed and reasoned about. The statements define an acceptable and intelligible way of conduct with respect to it at a certain point in time, the year 2008. The individual cultural texts are not analysed as discrete, closed-off entities, but as texts that get their meaning within a network of intertextual relations (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). After the initial classification, LTL statements were re-organised by the age of respondents and by regions. Conclusions are drawn on the whole process, highlighting both the commonalities with HE21C and the new elements raised in the individual statements.

Individual statements and dimensions of Home Economics

The issues in discussion and some new elements raised from the LTL statements will be presented in the following results section. For the purpose of analysis, 94 statements received from the *Linking the Loop* (LTL) project in 2008 are used. The statements sent by Home Economists represent all IFHE Regions, namely Africa, Asia, Americas, Europe, and the Pacific. Judging by the age of respondents, a significant number of statements come from students and young professionals, reflecting the original intent of the project. However, the age range of the respondents is wide. The oldest contributor was born in 1943, and thus belongs to the Baby Boomer generation. The youngest participant is a member of Generation Y, born in 1992. Hence the difference between oldest and youngest contributor comprises nearly 5 decades.

The 94 individual statements submitted were first categorised according to the four dimensions/areas of practice of Home Economics, as defined in HE21C. Many of the statements referred to more than one dimension. Some statements could not be explicitly classified under any of the dimensions, mainly due to linguistic or translation challenges that made some of the statements incomprehensible. A fifth dimension: *Home Economics as a profession* strongly arising from the individual statements was also included. This category can also be found in HE21C, but is not explicitly mentioned in the four dimensions of Home Economics. The profession is an overarching level that can be applied to all the four areas of practice. The dimension of the profession will be considered further in the discussion section.

In analysing the statements as entire, we can examine the use of single words in the frame of the sentence, such that we can emphasise how the dimensions are couched within the statement. By proceeding this way, the statements were categorised under one or more dimensions. Thus, overall 43% of the statements were classified under more than one dimension/area of practice. The following table summarises the division of the statements according to the primary dimension reflected in the statement. The primary dimension was defined by identifying the focus of the statement, or the starting point for defining the meaning of Home Economics. This is clarified through the following example from one statement: "Home Economics is a subject which all should study; it is useful for our everyday life". Here, Home Economics is first seen as a curriculum area (primary dimension) that is further applied in everyday life (secondary dimension).

Table 1: Division of LTL statements according to the primary reference to the dimensions of Home Economics

Dimension / Area of practice	Mentioned as the primary dimension	% of all individual statements (n = 94)
A Academic discipline	13	13.8
B Arena for everyday living	40	42.6
C Curriculum area	15	16.0
D Policy arena	7	7.4
E Home Economics as a profession	12	12.8
Other	7	7.4
	(n = 94)	100.0

As indicated in Table 1 above, everyday life and life skills are mentioned the most often (42.6%). The other dimensions: academic discipline (13.8%), curriculum area (16%), and Home Economics as a profession (12.8%), are almost equally reflected. The least mentioned area of practice was identified as *policy arena* (7.4%). In order to consider the relationship between the categories, attempts are made to describe these categories according the statements of LTL. Moreover, the relationship between the categories and the persons giving the statements will be highlighted in the subsequent sections when analysing the differences in the statements provided by Home Economists of different ages and from different parts of the world.

The voice of different generations

The generational division used in this analysis is based on work by Strauss and Howe (1991) and Pendergast (2001, 2008b). Although the inputs from the GI Generation (1901-1924), the Silent Generation (1925-1942), and Generation Z (2003+) were not represented in LTL statements, we can still include three generations and a period of five decades in the analysis. Table 2 indicates the dimensions of Home Economics according to generational location.

All three generations place a strong emphasis on Home Economics as an arena for everyday living. Notable here is the increased diversity in the statements provided by representatives of Generation X. For the generation in mid-adulthood, entering more powerful positions within the profession, Home Economics is seen in a more holistic way than it is seen by Baby Boomers, who exhibit a transfer of values and carry experiences of responsibility thus far. This reflects the traits of the Generation X cohort who, in contrast, assert their own individualistic values in an effort to build on their beliefs of variety and freedom. Generation X is currently at the reactive stage of the generational cycle. It is important to recognise that statements of this generation displayed a sense of achievement, an overprotective attitude, and pride about their profession: "It is a great hope for sustainability, to provide us with the

best quality of everyday life we can get, for our families, communities and countries." This is reflective of the stage in life at which this generation is situated.

Table 2: Dimensions of Home Economics by generational location

Dimension / Area of practice	Baby Boomers born 1943-1960 (n=18)		Generation X born 1961-1981 (n=41)		Generation Y born 1982-2003 (n=35)	
Academic discipline	3	(16.7%)	7	(17.1%)	3	(8.6%)
Arena for everyday living	8	(44.4%)	13	(31.7%)	19	(54.3%)
Curriculum area	4	(22.2%)	7	(17.1%)	4	(11.4%)
Policy arena	0	(0%)	7	(17.1%)	0	(0%)
Home Economics as profession	2	(11.1%)	4	(9.7%)	6	(17.1%)
Other	1	(5.6%)	3	(7.3%)	3	(8.6%)

The decrease in the focus on Home Economics as an academic discipline among the youngest Generation Y and the general declining trend on the focus of Home Economics as a curriculum area may perhaps reflect the shift of the field beyond academic spheres towards commercial and industrial areas. Generation Y members are characterised as focussing on fun lifestyles as a belief system, and display elements of uncertainty, flexible loyalty, and short-term desires. This laissez-faire attitude, in addition to the fact that Generation Y members have developed through an unstructured training/educational environment (in comparison to their Baby Boomer and Generation X predecessors), offers an explanation for the move away from the institutional perspective of Home Economics purely as an academic sphere. Generation Y, the digital natives, are the millennial generation—thus witnessing a wider world, an international arena in which they are players. This is further identified through the focus on networks, communication, and wider global partnerships, that is:

"The ability to work as part of a supportive network to create a positive living environment."

"It is about involving people in examining their own conditions and beliefs and the ability to deal with the ever changing situations within the micro and macro environment."

"Home Economics is one subject that can be brought outside the classroom and applied to everyday life."

Spatial reflections on Home Economics

In addition to generational considerations, it is interesting to highlight possible differences between the regions of IFHE. The International Federation for Home Economics is divided into five different regions, according to the respective continents or spatial areas. The regional division was completed according to the IFHE regional structure. The regional variation of the individual statements regarding the primary dimension of Home Economics is indicated in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Dimensions of Home Economics according to region

Dimension / Area of practice	Africa (n=8)	Americas (n=7)	Asia (n=22)	Europe (n=54)	Pacific (n=3)
Academic discipline	2 (25%)	0 (0%)	7 (31.9%)	3 (5.6%)	1 (33.3%)
Arena for everyday living	4 (50%)	4 (57.1%)	5 (22.7%)	27 (50%)	0 (0%)
Curriculum area	1 (12.5%)	1 (14.3%)	6 (27.3%)	7 (13%)	0 (0%)
Policy arena	0 (0%)	1 (14.3%)	1 (4.5%)	4 (7.4%)	1 (33.3%)
Home Economics as profession	1 (12.5%)	1 (14.3%)	1 (4.5%)	9 (16.7%)	0 (0%)
Other	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (9.1%)	7 (7.4%)	1 (33.3%)

Most of the contributors came from the Asian and the European region; there was a limited number of statements from the regions Africa, Americas, and Pacific. Thus, the results of the regional differentiations that can be derived from the statements are concentrated on the European and the Asian region. However, it is interesting to notice that in Asia, emphasis was placed on Home Economics as an academic discipline whereas for Africa, Americas, and Europe the main emphasis was on Home Economics as an arena for everyday living.

The results indicated in the table above offer suggestions on how the opinions stated in LTL reflect the meaning of the field of Home Economics for professionals in the distinct regions. For instance, Kuramoto (2008, p. 22) cites as a representative of the Asian region, citing the Japanese Society of Home Economics: "Home Economics is an integrated science, a practical science centring around family life." This coincides with the high percentage (31.9%) of Asian statements corresponding to the dimension of Home Economics as an academic discipline. This high percentage could be considered as reflective of the general educational culture that differs by region. Asia is regarded generally as a region with high academic emphasis, in contrast to countries in other regions. The cultural importance of education is highlighted as being fundamental to success in countries such as Japan, in contrast to America where emphasis on educational value is not depicted as the sole determinant of success or failure ("Educational systems of Japan and the US," 2009). Another issue raised and integrated with

this example is the role of regional organisations and their influence on the perception of Home Economics. It can be argued that in Europe, for instance, Home Economics professionals are more concerned with practices of everyday life, whereas Asian Home Economists refer to academic aspects of the profession. The focus on different dimensions of Home Economics is discussed in more depth in the subsequent sections.

Home Economics as an academic discipline

The first dimension of Home Economics as stated in the HE21C is as an academic discipline "to educate new scholars, to conduct research and to create new knowledge and ways of thinking for professionals and for society" (IFHE, 2008, p. 6). The statements of LTL affiliated to this dimension of Home Economics as an academic discipline referred to *knowledge based profession, integrated discipline, field of study and profession, integrated and practical science, and scientific educational system*. Moreover the statements that primarily categorised Home Economics as an academic discipline often referred to the dimension of Home Economics as an arena of everyday living. Therefore, it is often emphasised that Home Economics as an academic discipline is mainly concerned with research drawing from and feeding into the everyday life of individuals, consumers, families and communities. Hence, the aspect of quality of life is important, as academic research creates knowledge about everyday life and helps to clarify challenges and problems. These interdependencies also relate to the other categories of curriculum area and developing policy, as will be shown in the following parts of the analysis.

Home Economics as arena of everyday living

Home Economics "as an arena for everyday living in households, families and communities for developing human growth potential and human necessities or basic needs to be met" (IFHE, 2008, p. 6) was the dimension/area of practice mentioned most often. Given that the other dimensions are strongly associated with the everyday life dimension, special importance can be assumed. This area is therefore rather broad with a wide variety of declarations made in the statements. Some aspects that particularly stand out include: *well-being, quality of life, a happy life, and a positive living environment*. However, tasks and skills are also identified as being important in the professional environment of Home Economists in the area of practice of everyday life. For example: "It is not only to do with cleaning, cooking, and laundry" but moreover "understanding, creating, and managing economic and human resources." Tasks and skills are also strongly associated with the following dimension: Home Economics as a curriculum area.

Home Economics as a curriculum area

HE21C describes Home Economics "as a curriculum area that facilitates students to discover and further develop their own resources and capabilities to be used in their personal life, by directing their professional decisions and actions or preparing them for life." (IFHE, 2008, p. 6). In this analysis, statements grouped into this category were those shown to highlight education, teaching, and/or the application of knowledge and skills. As mentioned previously, Home Economics as a subject or teaching area is closely related to everyday life. Statements supporting this approach focus on practicalities and applications of the taught subject, dealing with life-skills such as coordination, balance, self-sufficiency, and management:

“Home Economics is about learning and applying the knowledge and skills” and “the best opportunity that a person has to learn the life-skills.” It is seen by individuals as a[n] “(essential) subject” providing “education” and “manual training” or simply “preparation for everybody’s life.” The spread of generational responses categorised in this way indicate that a higher proportion of Baby Boomers used these expressions in their statements, reinforcing the attention this generation places on institutional leadership. Asian statements place emphasis on the curriculum arena, mirroring the focus on academic issues in the Asian region as previously discussed.

Home Economics as a societal arena to influence and develop policy

In the final dimension, Home Economics is portrayed “as a societal arena to influence and develop policy to advocate for individuals, families and communities to achieve empowerment and wellbeing, to utilise transformative practices, and to facilitate sustainable futures.” (IFHE, 2008, p. 6). Although of importance for the profession, this dimension was less often found in the LTL statement of individuals than were other dimension. This could be considered surprising given the high number of Generation Y respondents, whom it can be assumed have grown up in a digital, globally aware society. However, this category presents an area of the profession that is fairly underdeveloped and underutilised, and it cannot be assumed that Generation Y individuals are any more qualified for policy formation and development than their predecessors. All statements that were categorised in this group were from Generation X. It is reasonable to suggest therefore that these statements reflect an unmet need in the profession that the *nomadic, depressed generation* focus on as important. This raises issues as to whether the statements reflect not only what Home Economics means to individuals, but what the participants aspire it to be. Phrases used by individuals who identified the meaning of Home Economics primarily around this dimension included “advocate” or “empower citizens”, “work towards public policies” or addressing “communities” and “contribute to society” to raise the issue of an “ability to cope and adapt sustainably to changing environments.”

Discussion

The results of the investigation show how the statements of individual Home Economists relate to HE21C. It is interesting to see the centrality of everyday life and life skills above all other dimensions of Home Economics in the statements provided by Home Economists from all over the world. Individuals define the meaning of Home Economics through its focus on effective practice, which is underpinned by a strong knowledge base. Hence, one individual statement comes to the conclusion that Home Economics “provides a great link between theory and practice. It encompasses all disciplines and touches all aspects of our life. It is truly the best education anyone can receive. It has a transformative function.” (Baby Boomer, Asia).

In the LTL statements, Home Economists stress the impact of the profession and the power it gives to an individual to work for the best of consumers, families, communities, and the society. However, one of the key points to be highlighted as a result of this research is that Home Economics and its meaning is not easily defined. The heterogeneity of the statements reflects the diversity of Home Economics. It also perhaps indicates that although the HE21C

identifies the key dimensions of the field by way of building a concise definition, in reality it is not possible to fully recognise all the dimensions that exist. Regional variations, societal norms, and cultural differences all influence how Home Economics is taught, considered, and ultimately used by individual professionals across the world. The limited regional and generational analysis conducted here indicates that the profession is seen differently according to the respondent's location or age. These results strongly support the recommendation given by Dewhurst and Pendergast (2008) on conducting further research on how Home Economics is seen by different groups and thereby enhancing our ability to work towards commonly agreed goals. The challenge of diversity is, on the other hand, one of the biggest strengths of Home Economics.

The present analysis suggests that the Home Economics profession can be depicted as having four dimensions that are complementary; they reinforce each other as well as act alone. Since Home Economics is deeply rooted in the everyday living of all individuals, Home Economists aim at supporting individuals and families in their everyday life within their communities. The work of professional Home Economists is carried out at the level of individuals, families, and communities but similarly at the wider societal arena where policies, products, and services for individuals and families are continually being developed. These processes are mediated through the academic discipline that provides the theoretical framework for the professional activity within Home Economics at micro and macro levels of the society. The curriculum area links the academic knowledge to the lives of individuals, thus aiming at achieving an optimal and sustainable way of life.

Although this study was carried out with the highest accuracy, limitations are not absent due to the nature of research. As mentioned in the methodology section, the data is naturally occurring and throughout the analysis the authors were aware that the statements have been produced with the intent of public display. In addition, it is reasonable to surmise that the statements may, perhaps unconsciously or without intent, represent not only what Home Economics *is* and what it means but also what it *was* or *might be* in the future. It is also reasonable to suggest that given the opportunity to present personal approaches and ideas about the subject and profession, that participants also could have displayed an element of what Home Economics *could* or *should be* in the future. These can be understood as constraints of this study: It appears impossible to track the evolvement of such statements.

Moreover, the process of simplification that was applied to the categorisation of the LTL statements, that is, the process of reducing the statements into organised units, can also be seen as a limitation: Pre-designed categories (the dimensions of Home Economics as given in HE21C) as a coding scheme may have limited the outcome of the analysis. On the one hand, categories help to organise the statements, but on the other hand these categories can deflect attention away from uncategorised issues (Silverman, 2006; Wolff, 2007). However, with the intent to align the statements of LTL with HE21C, and being aware of the constraint, the dimension of *profession* was included, as it occurred in the statements.

Conclusion

The aim of this investigation was to analyse how individual voices fit in accordance with collaboratively produced ideas on the nature, role, and impact of the Home Economics profession presented in HE21C. After all, individual Home Economists are fundamental in creating the image of the field and the profession in their respective contexts. Home Economics is discussed in a variety of contexts at all levels: in the daily life of families, educational settings, civil society, and academics. It is a major challenge for IFHE and other Home Economics organisations to provide individuals with tools to argue for the central role of Home Economics in our societies at present and in the future. The HE21C can become a powerful tool if spread and used widely by professional organisations and individuals representing the profession. The Linking the Loop project will continue to challenge Home Economists to provide their individual views on the field, and to consider their work in light of what they do and what they strive to achieve, thereby providing IFHE with the opportunity to see how Home Economists continuously redefine and realise the profession in different parts of the world.

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