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Critical competencies for effective teaching : perceptions of home economics teachers

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**Critical Competencies for Effective Teaching: Perceptions
of Home Economics Teachers**

By

Esthery Dembo Kunkwenzu

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of

Master of Education

**at the Faculty of Education
Edith Cowan University**

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ABSTRACT

Home economics is a multi-faceted, inter-disciplinary, integrated field of study drawing from a multitude of disciplines including sociology, psychology, anthropology, chemistry, physics, architecture and the arts (Henry, 1995). As a school subject, home economics in Malawi is taught at primary school, secondary school as well as at university level.

This study explores home economics teachers' perceptions of competencies critical for teaching the subject. Data was collected from secondary school home economics teachers in Malawi. The study is a qualitative investigation of how experienced teachers describe effective teaching of the Intergrated home economics syllabus, and what they perceive as critical competencies for meeting the goals and objectives of the course. The research design included interviews, observations and discussions of curriculum and teaching documents.

Using the ETHNOGRAPH computer program, the data was analysed to identify significant patterns of meaning and behaviour which related to the teaching of home economics in Malawi.

This study noted that home economics teaching in Malawi was faced with problems resulting from the conditions in the environmental context of the schools. These problems did not only affect teaching performance, but also the way teachers perceived competent practice.

The findings of this study provide useful useful information to extend the understanding of the nature of home economics teaching in Malawi. The information can be useful for the planning of more effective preservice and inservice teacher education programs and for the development of curriculum support materials.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher learning.
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signature

Date 3/3/98

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My sincere thanks to my supervisor, Delia Quinn, whose assistance throughout the course of this project has enabled me to produce this work.

Sincere thanks to the twelve teachers who shared with me valuable experiences of their teaching. Their identities remain anonymous but their contribution to this work is greatly appreciated.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AHEA	American Home Economics Association.
CBTE	Competency Based Teacher Education.
J. C.	Junior Certificate.
J.C. E	Junior Certificate Examinations.
MANEB	Malawi National Examinations Board.
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate Examinations.
PCK	Pedagogical content knowledge.
PCKg	Pedagogical content knowing.
NDS	Normal desired standard.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

This is a study of how home economics teachers in Malawi perceived competent practice. Malawi is a land locked country situated in South East Africa. It covers a total area of 118,500 square kilometres, one-fifth of which is taken up by lake Malawi. Lake Malawi lies in the Great Rift Valley about 400 metres above the sea level. It is bordered to the north and north east by the United Republic of Tanzania, to the east, south and south west by the Republic of Mozambique and to the west by the Republic of Zambia. The current population of the country was estimated at 10,000,000 (Malawi Government, 1992). A map of Malawi is included as Appendix A.

Malawi is predominantly an agricultural country. Problems such as malnutrition are still a major concern in Malawi. It is estimated that one in every four children dies of malnutrition before reaching the age of five (National Statistical Office, 1992). Among other things, malnutrition has been attributed to causes such as poor knowledge of nutrition by families, food habits, problems of food security, and poor hygiene in the home environment (Malawi Government, 1996). Whilst these issues may be viewed as health concerns, they pose great challenges to home economics in its mission to improve the well-being of the family. Apart from subjects such as biology and agriculture that deal with issues related to family life, home economics is the only subject in the school curriculum that deals with specific issues pertaining to the well-being of the Malawian family.

The existing secondary school home economics syllabuses were last revised in 1989, since which there had been no curriculum review of any type. There were three national home economics syllabuses which were followed by all the schools. These were: the integrated home economics syllabus; food and nutrition; and clothing and textiles. The present study collected data from teachers that were teaching the integrated home economics syllabus. The integrated

syllabus was taught in the majority of the schools that offered home economics. The integrated syllabus covered all aspects of home economics found in the other two home economics syllabuses. Appendices B and C are copies of the integrated home economics syllabuses for the Junior Certificate Examination (JCE) level and the Malawi School Certificate Examination (MSCE) level respectively.

The education system in Malawi is examination oriented. The secondary system is of four years duration. During this time students sit for the Junior Certificate Examinations (JCE) in year two and the Malawi School Certificate of Education Examinations (MSCE) in year four. The two examinations are prepared and administered by a central examining board known as the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB). These examinations determine whether or not the student proceeds to the next level of his or her education. All the home economics syllabuses, require students to sit for both theory and practical examinations.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant firstly because the findings provide valuable information which can be a basis for further research for the improvement of home economics teaching in Malawi. Secondly, the findings of this research are important as they bring awareness of important teaching experiences in home economics which are of interest to teachers, teacher educators and to curriculum planners. It is in the interest of every educational system to ensure that teachers are competent in the subjects they teach. Perceptions concerning distinctive qualities and characteristics of a competent home economics teacher are important in stimulating and guiding improvements in the teaching of the subject. Although studies in education indicate that it is difficult to identify exactly which teacher behaviour promotes effective learning (Brophy & Good 1994; Barry & King 1994), it is also clear from these studies that teacher characteristics do have a significant effect on students' learning. Therefore, identification of competencies that home economics teachers perceive to be critical for teaching the subject is an important step towards improved learning in home economics.

Some teachers' perceptions may not necessarily be related to effective teaching and learning. Such data, however, can bring awareness of how home economics teachers interpret the existing syllabus and how they interpret what is fundamental for teaching the subject. The findings can help also to expand the understanding of the nature of teaching in home economics in Malawi. Such information is useful for preparation of curriculum reviews, in-service training courses and for the planning of pre-service teacher training courses. The information can also provide a basis for making changes in school programs.

Focusing on perceptions of practicing teachers as a means of identifying critical competencies provides an opportunity to re-conceptualise the role of the home economics teacher with regard to teaching responsibilities, professional development, and roles in curriculum and staff development. Focusing on teacher perceptions can also help to reveal important elements inherent in the teaching of home economics which would otherwise be impossible to identify if observed from an outsider's point of view. It is of prime importance that the teachers' perceptions on such issues be reflected through interpretative research.

Finally, focusing on teacher perceptions provided an opportunity for home economics teachers in Malawi to voice their concerns and participate in reviewing issues of interest in their subject area.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to describe the nature of secondary school home economics education in Malawi, and to bring forward an awareness of how practicing teachers perceived and described competencies that they regarded as critical for effective teaching of the subject. The study collected data on the perceptions of experienced teachers. There was no attempt to classify the teachers as expert or non expert teachers because this was not an issue for this study. Instead, emphasis was placed on gaining understanding and meaning from the every day teaching experiences of the teachers. In this case experienced teachers referred to those teachers who had taught for not less than five years.

The study sought to answer three main questions:

- (1) What is the nature of a typical home economics lesson?**
- (2) What are experienced home economics teachers' perceptions of effective practice?**
- (3) What knowledge, practices, skills and attitudes do experienced teachers perceive as critical for home economics teaching in Malawi?**

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

OVERVIEW

It is in the interest of every educational system as well as the broader society to have effective and competent teachers. This literature review looks at the nature of home economics education by focusing on some of the major issues of concern in the subject. Literature on the meaning of teacher effectiveness and teacher competence is reviewed. Literature on the methods that have helped to frame these research areas has also been reviewed.

HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION

Two home economics areas are of interest to this study. Firstly the meaning of home economics and secondly the issues facing home economics as an area of study. Studies relevant to the Malawi situation are also reviewed.

What is home economics?

Home Economics is a subject as well as a group of related disciplines that addresses the everyday world of individuals and families by focusing on the provision of food, shelter and clothing within the domestic economy (Henry, 1995). The mission of home economics is the promotion of individual and family well being. The family is the main focus. There are five main core areas that are commonly known as the main components of home economics. These are: food and nutrition, clothing and textiles, human development, family studies, and housing and environment. The definition for home economics adopted during the fourth Lake Placid conference in 1902 was: "Home economics ... is the study of the laws, conditions, principles and ideas concerned with man's (sic) immediate physical environment and his (sic) nature as a social being" (AHEA, 1902, cited in East, 1980, p. 11).

The content of home economics is non-static and multi-dimensional in order to provide for adequate knowledge to cope with changes in the family as well as the environment at large.

Home economics is a unique area of study because it requires the integration of knowledge drawn from the arts, the pure sciences as well as from the social sciences in order to be able to solve the various issues facing the family. In view of this, Henry (1995, p. 10) defined home economics as "a multi-faceted, interdisciplinary, integrated field of study drawing from a multitude of disciplines including sociology, psychology, anthropology, chemistry, physics, architecture and the arts."

Issues in home economics education

There are a number of issues which have been identified as affecting home economics as an area of study. The nature of the subject as an interdisciplinary and integrated field of study makes it difficult to portray the subject as a unified whole. Since its foundation as an area of study, home economics has constantly changed its name, and even today home economics programs continue to be known by different names. Nearly two decades ago, East (1980) noted that even when one home economist described the field to another, there was no complete agreement. This problem still persists. Istre & Self (1990) noted that:

At the core of the problems facing home economics is a lack of a unified identity and name; difficulty in articulating a common perspective to students and the public; and limited attention to refining a conceptual framework for the subject. Although there appears to be a general consensus among home economists that the 'improved well being of the families' is the ultimate goal, very few specifics have been advanced to clarify further on the focus of the subject (Istre & Self 1990, p. 4).

Changes in academia have supported subject specialisation in a quest for more detailed knowledge. These changes have influenced the trend for home economics specialists to look outwards towards their related disciplines rather than in towards their common focus (Vincenti, 1990). This has created another problem in that it has resulted in the fragmentation of home economics into sub-specialties. Each component has pursued its own knowledge based on the root discipline with which it is most closely aligned (Brown, 1980; Horn, 1988). Many professionals have expressed their concern over this arguing that it has resulted in home economics losing its integrative perspective. It has also been argued that increased specialisation in the quest for depth has resulted in home economists that are less effective in

their work (Brown, 1985; Horn, 1988; Ley & Webb-Lupo, 1988; McCallers, 1987; Vincenti, 1990). This problem is based on the understanding that a home economist must be able to integrate knowledge from many sources in order to be able to fulfil its mission of assisting individuals and families in solving complex practical problems of everyday living.

Brown (1980) argued that the perception of science as the only source of real knowledge has contributed to the weakening of integration in home economics. Brown observed that most of the early home economists such as Ellen Richards Swallow (1842-1911) viewed science as the answer to all questions. They supported technical education in the management of social issues and advocated for social engineering whereby families and the public were to be manipulated by technical scientific methods. This philosophy was embedded in the historical context of the Industrial Revolution and the prevailing view that empirical science was the only way of knowing.

Home economics is concerned with what people think and do regarding the day to day matters of the family, and with the resolution of practical questions which have bearing upon the quality of life. Because of this, most scholars have argued that the subject's ability to meet these goals is reliant upon not only use of technical action gained through the empirical sciences, but also through use of practical and emancipative action (Baldwin, 1986; Brown 1980).

The technical approach to home economics curriculum relies in control of the natural environment to make it more productive and habitable. It is derived from empirical-analytic science (Baldwin, 1989). Baldwin (1986) argued that this approach in home economics leads to a focus on a technical orientation to the definition and resolution of family problems which is contradictory to the aims of home economics:

Assumptions underlying this view give rise to certain beliefs and practices in home economics education. For example they lead to a focus on management -- a focus which reinforces a technical orientation to the definition and resolution of problems of the family and to family life which is contradictory to the aims of home economics. For, if those aims relate to the resolution of practical or moral questions the focus

should be on interpretation, reflective critique of conditions underlying problems, and dialogue to determine collective action, rather than on the means-end rationality of management (Baldwin 1986, p. 4).

The technical approach to home economics curriculum is limited by its focus on prediction and control. This focus creates a mechanical-engineering orientation to problem solving which is not always appropriate for the resolution of family problems.

The practical (also called interpretive) approach enables individuals to uncover factors which influence their beliefs, values and practices; factors originating in personal, family and social history or stemming from contemporary concerns (Baldwin, 1986). The practical approach unlike the technical one, involves developing the cognitive skills used to solve problems and make decisions (Smit, 1992). The practical approach, however, is limited in that it does not incorporate emancipatory action to problem solving. The latter action is necessary in order to make improvements in most family issues.

The emancipatory approach to home economics curriculum incorporates knowledge of the interpretive approach which is extended to include critique of ideology and social action. The central focus is on emancipation of the society. For instance, in home economics the focus could be on identifying underlying social issues of concern to the family, and then empowering the family members to be able to take appropriate action. An emancipatory approach seeks to penetrate surface issues in order to identify underlying causes of problems and determine action to be taken to eliminate them. Such a theoretical base is what has been argued as necessary in order to develop a home economics curricular which is rationally and morally defensible (Baldwin, 1986; 1989).

Home economics programs in Africa have been criticised as being irrelevant to the life and needs of the local people (Eghan, 1989; Waudu, 1993). African countries inherited their educational systems from their former colonialists. In many cases, the educational systems, principles, values and practices are reflective of these colonialists. Eghan (1989) observed that

in most home economics programs, people look down upon the local traditional practices as being inferior and tend to dwell mostly on western concepts which are not necessarily relevant to the African context. Furthermore, Waudo, (1993) identified several other constraints facing home economics education in Africa. These included:

- (1) use of irrelevant curriculum usually adopted from their colonial masters;
- (2) lack of qualified staff at every level;
- (3) lack of funds to support programs;
- (4) lack of classrooms, teaching resources and equipment;
- (5) negative attitudes towards the subject;
- (6) lack of training facilities such as colleges and equipment, research documentation, and communication related to home economics subject areas;
- (7) little networking or collaboration within Africa;
- (8) lack of impact on women's programs;
- (9) conflict of values among the educated home economists;
- (10) shortage of time allocated to the subject; and
- (11) lack of involvement of the community.

Such is the nature of home economics. With so many problems, how do those in the field view the challenge of effective and competent practice in the subject? Before this can be explored, there is need to examine the meanings of effective teaching and competent practice.

RESEARCH IN TEACHING

Three areas of research in teaching have helped to shape an understanding of the meaning of effective teaching and competent practice. These areas are: process-product research; teachers' thought processes research; and teacher knowledge research.

Process-product research

Teacher effectiveness and teacher competence studies have their origins in process-product research. Teacher effectiveness and teacher competence have been areas of interest

since the start of research in teaching. During this time period, definitions of effective teaching and their characteristics have changed. Process-product studies aimed at identifying relationships between what the teacher did in the classroom and student outcomes (Brophy & Good, 1986). Teacher effects research, as it was called, was interested in identifying teacher behaviours and patterns of teacher-student interactions associated with student achievement gains (Brophy & Good, 1986).

The 1970s saw an increase in the use of Competency Based Teacher Education (CBTE) programs as a result of the emphasis on process-product research. Analysis of CBTE reveals that the teaching profession was viewed from an extreme "experts systems model" of professional work (Chappell & Hager, 1995, p. 3). Components of the teaching profession were analysed and rules formulated in order to establish relationships between the variables. According to this system, learning outcomes were predictable so long as all the components of the system were identified and followed.

Today, the need to ensure that teachers are competent in the skills and knowledge required for effective classroom management, pupil assessment, subject teaching, and professional development is still an important area of interest (Pollard & Tann, 1993). While earlier approaches to CBTE focused on competence as a measure of effective teaching, recent literature suggests that competence should not be used as a means of teacher assessment. Competence should be used to shed light on key issues in the particular subject area (Bartlett, 1992). CBTE viewed the teaching profession as open to mechanistic analysis which, if conducted exhaustively, could codify performance and produce optimal solutions to all teaching and learning environments. Chappel & Hager (1995) argued that this is what led to the failure of the system. Furthermore, more recent literature has emphasised the fact that the teaching and learning process is not a one way process. It is a complex bi-directional process in which both the teacher's and students' cognitive processes and actions interact during classroom discourse. Learning efficiency is affected by both teacher and student actions (Barry & King 1994, p. 379).

Erickson (1986) noted three problems concerning process product research. The first problem was that the work proceeded from an inadequate notion of interaction: "one way causal influence as a behavioural phenomenon, rather than reciprocal exchange of phenomenologically meaningful action"(p. 133). The second problem was that the standard work gave an extremely reduced view of classroom process. Its use of predetermined coding categories as a means of data collection gave no clear detailed evidence about the specific classroom processes that were claimed to lead to desired outcomes. The third problem noted was that, in these studies, the product studied was too narrowly defined, often as end of year achievement test scores (Erickson 1986). Furthermore, Erickson (1986) also noted that conclusions drawn from this type of research, only suggested in general terms what to do in order to improve student achievement. There was no specific information provided to the practitioner or researcher on how to implement what was called for.

In an interview with Brandt (1992), Shulman pointed out that the generalisations about effective teaching from the early process-product studies had too many limitations to be a basis for information. For instance, he noted that the sampling procedures used did not give a true reflection of what a real teaching process was like. According to Shulman, there is need for "a literature that focuses on the intersection of content and pedagogy, that brings together the 'wisdom of practice' on a topic by topic, idea by idea basis" (Brandt, 1992, p. 18). Shulman viewed use of research methods such as case histories and specific stories about classroom practice as significant for enriching this 'wisdom of practice'.

Another critic of the early process-product research on teacher competence was Copa (1989). Copa (1989) contended that it was misguided to conceive of teaching primarily "as a rule-governed activity" in which facts, principles, and procedures from a body of professional knowledge are "applied to problem situations to bring about a priori goals" (p. 141). Instead, Copa (1989, p. 141) argued for the need to view the complex dilemmas faced by teachers as "context-specific, unpredictable and difficult to define", therefore, not lending themselves to routine ways of responding nor to the use of ready made solutions.

Process-product research failed to answer most of the questions that researchers wanted to find answers to. According to Brophy & Good (1986), this research area, however, is significant for establishing three major conclusions:

- (1) that teachers make a difference: some teachers elicit greater gains than others because of differences in how they teach;
- (2) that differences in achievement gains occur in part because of differences to exposure to academic content and opportunity to learn;
- (3) that teachers who elicit greater achievement gains maximise 'time on task' as their lessons feature more instructional discourse and more interactive learning (Brophy & Good, 1986, p. 341-342).

Good and McCaslin (1992) summarised the findings of process product research in teaching for the past two decades and identified themes occurring in the research surrounding effective teaching. The themes identified included:

- (1) appropriate teacher expectations and a sense of efficacy;
- (2) class management and organisation skills;
- (3) curriculum pacing;
- (4) active teaching;
- (5) teaching to master; and
- (6) a supportive learning environment.

Despite the decades of research in teaching, this summary indicates that it is still difficult to define effective teaching in a precise manner.

Process-product research was the first phase of research interested in teaching. A shift in interest to teachers' cognitive processes resulted in educational researchers focusing on teachers' thought processes and decision making processes as they affect teaching. This research area is important to the present study as it has enabled researchers realise the role of teacher perceptions in education (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Shavelson & Stern, 1981).

Teachers' thought processes research.

Teachers' thought processes research was concerned with understanding teachers' decision making processes and belief systems (Shavelson, 1988; Clark, 1988). Results obtained from this research area are important for interpreting effective teaching and understanding what teachers perceive as competent practice. Among other things this research area has shown that teachers treat their beliefs as knowledge (Grossman, Wilson & Shulman, 1989). Furthermore, results from this research area indicate that teachers' interpretation and implementation of curriculum is influenced by their knowledge and beliefs (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Romberg & Carpenter, 1986). Another important conclusion from this body of research is that it has shown that it is not just the observable teacher actions that affect classroom learning but also the teachers' thought processes (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Shavelson & Stern; 1981). This is why it is important to include teacher perceptions in trying to interpret teacher effectiveness and competence.

Teacher knowledge research.

Teacher knowledge research aims at finding out what knowledge is important for informing teaching. Fenstermacher (1992) identified four questions which he raised as of concern to teacher knowledge literature:

- (1) What is known about teaching?
- (2) What do teachers know?
- (3) What knowledge is essential for teaching?
- (4) Who produces knowledge about teaching?

All these questions are important for understanding and interpreting data from research. In trying to answer these questions, certain issues have been raised in the literature and are discussed below.

Role of Subject matter knowledge

Among the areas of concern in teacher knowledge research has been the role of subject matter in teaching. Some researchers, such as Ball & McDiarmid (1990) argue that subject

matter knowledge positively affects teaching. There is evidence in the literature, however, indicating that while subject-matter knowledge is an important prerequisite for effective teaching there is scarce evidence to support that subject matter expertise makes a person a good teacher of that subject (Ferguson & Womack, 1993, p.56). For instance, a study comparing the teaching effectiveness of liberal arts graduates with that of graduates in education, showed a higher rate for the education majors than the non-education graduates on classroom management skills, pedagogical content knowledge, and on their ability to relate content to the students' knowledge and interests (Denton & Lacina 1984; Grossman, 1990). This showed that it was not only subject matter which is important for effective teaching, but also pedagogy.

Pedagogical content knowledge

Another area of interest in the study of teacher knowledge has resulted from the work of Shulman (1986; 1987) on pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). These studies show that both the teachers' subject matter knowledge and 'pedagogical knowledge' are crucial to good teaching and student understanding (Shulman, 1986: 1987; Cochran, DeRuiter & King, 1993).

Shulman (1986) proposed that effective teachers have three types of knowledge: knowledge about the subject matter they teach (content knowledge), knowledge of general instructional strategies (pedagogical knowledge), and knowledge of specific strategies for teaching a particular subject matter (pedagogical content knowledge). According to Shulman (1987), pedagogical content knowledge is the knowledge that enables practicing teachers to make connections between their knowledge of pedagogy and their knowledge of content:

The key to distinguishing the knowledge base of teaching lies at the intersection of content and pedagogy, in the capacity of a teacher to transform the content he or she possesses into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by the student (Shulman, 1987, p.15).

Shulman argued that this connection is critical for effective teaching and that it included:

For the most regularly taught topics in one's subject area, the most useful forms of representation of those ideas, the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanation, and demonstration - in a word, the ways of representing and formulating

the subject that make it comprehensible to others (...) also (it) includes an understanding of what makes the learning of specific concepts easy or difficult: the conceptions and preconceptions that students of different ages and backgrounds bring with them to the learning (Shulman 1986, p. 9).

According to Shulman (1987, p. 8) the knowledge base of teachers should consist of the following categories:

- (1) content knowledge; which is the teacher's content background in the subject they teach;
- (2) general pedagogical knowledge; which includes 'broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organisation that appear to transcend subject matter';
- (3) curriculum knowledge: this is the knowledge of curriculum materials that can be used to teach a particular topic;
- (4) pedagogical content knowledge: this is 'that special amalgam of content and pedagogy';
- (5) knowledge of learners and their characteristics; which informs teachers about how students learn, their developmental levels, motivation, preconceptions, and misconceptions;
- (6) knowledge of educational contexts: this extends from understanding group dynamics in the classroom to educational financing and character of the communities;
- (7) knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values and their philosophical and historical grounds. This is the knowledge that helps teachers to put their own goals into a larger perspective.

Cochran et al. (1993) proposed a modification of Shulman's pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) to pedagogical content knowing (PCKg), which is illustrated in figure 2.1. According to Cochran et al (1993), pedagogical content knowing was defined as "a teachers integrated understanding of four components of pedagogy, subject matter content, student characteristics, and the environmental context of learning"(p. 266).

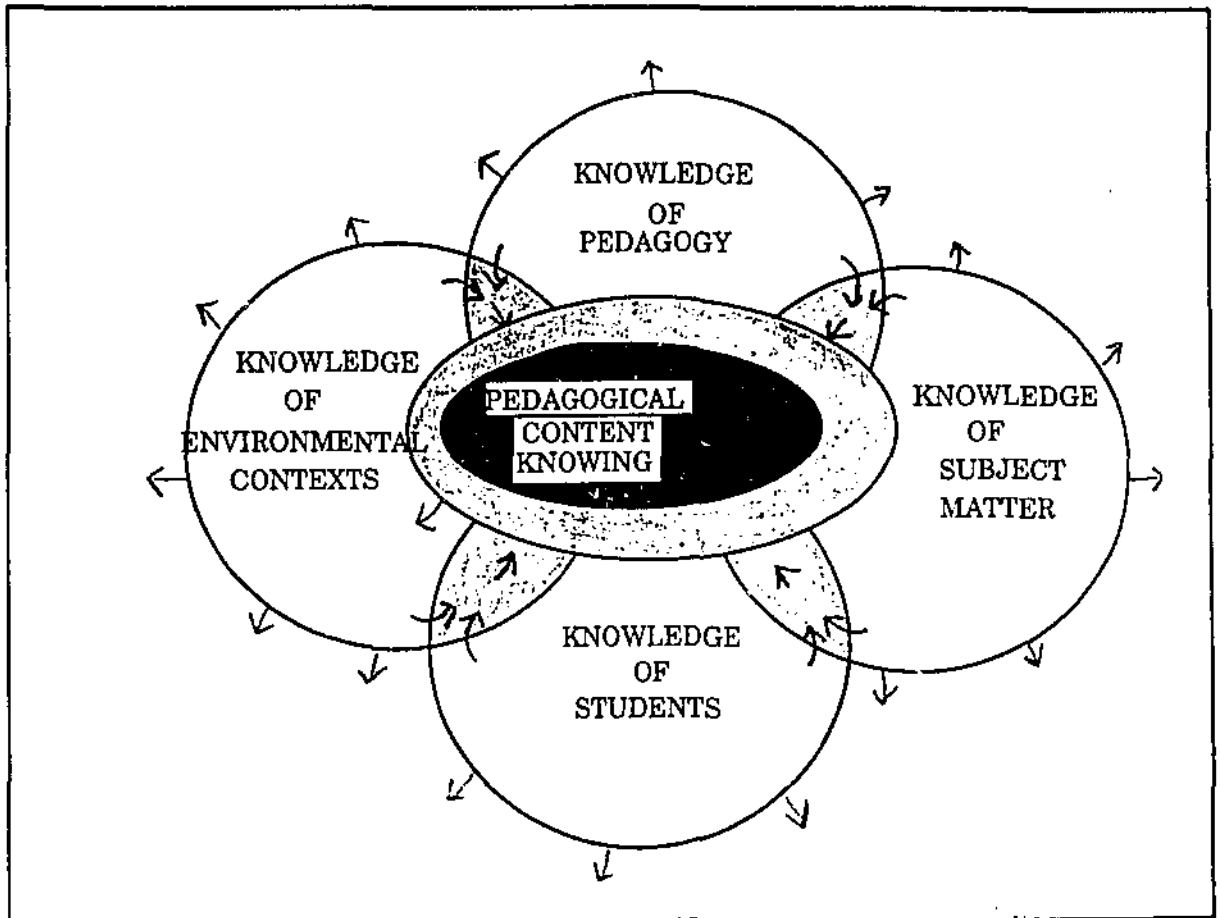


Figure 2.1. Developmental model of pedagogical content knowing (PCKg) as a framework for teacher preparation

Source: Cochran, DeRuiter & King (1993: 268)

The pedagogical content knowing model has some similarity to that presented by Fennema & Franke (1992) on teachers' knowledge in mathematics teaching. This model was also developed from Shulman's model of pedagogical content knowledge. Fennema & Franke argued that the teaching context is the structure that defines the components of knowledge and beliefs that come into play. They stated that within a given context, teachers' knowledge of content (a) interacts with knowledge of pedagogy and students' cognition and, (b) combines with beliefs to create "a unique set of knowledge that derives classroom behaviour" (p. 162). Fennema & Franke's framework is presented in figure 2.2.

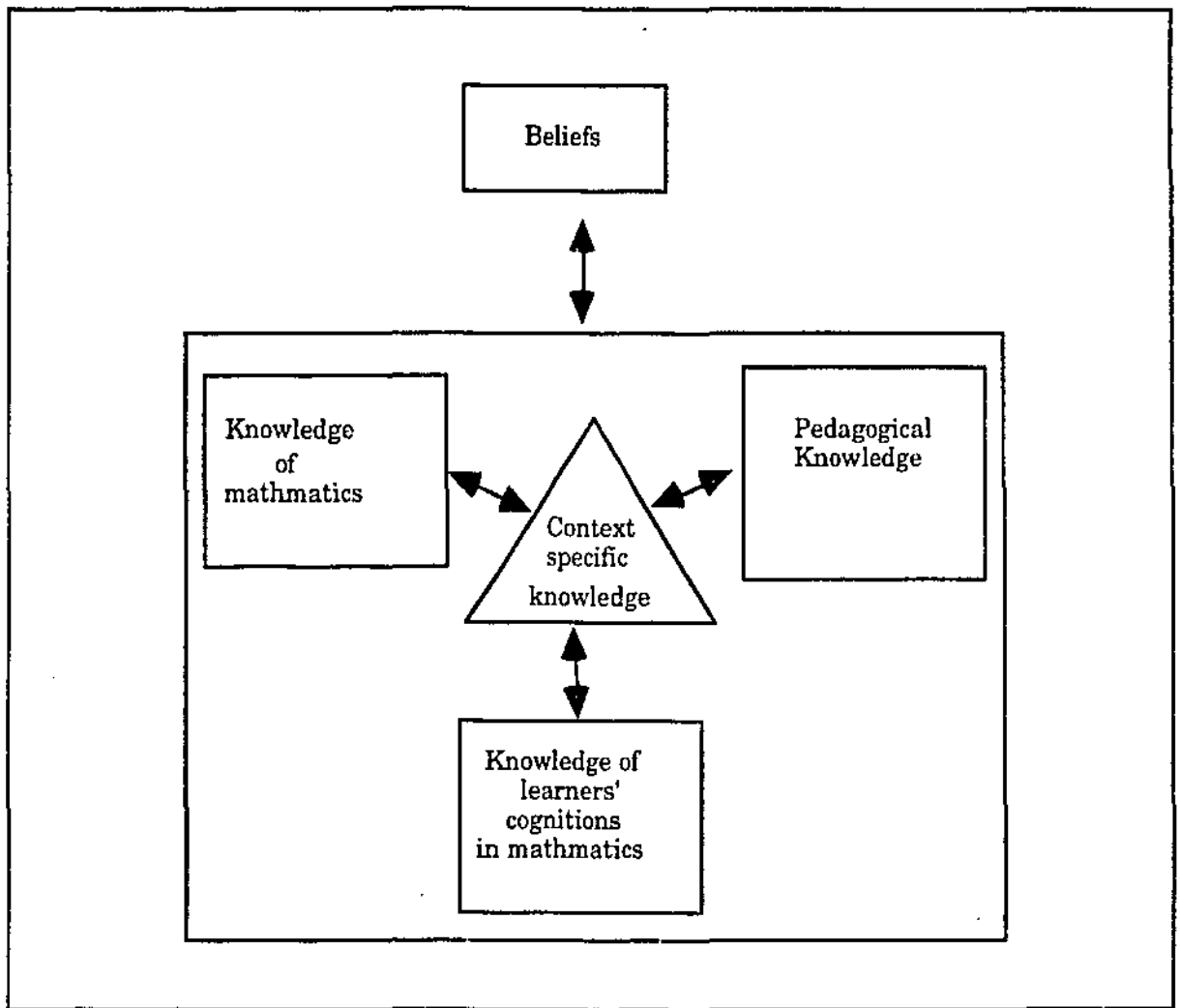


Figure 2.2. Teachers' knowledge: Developing in context

Source: Fennema & Franke (1992, p. 162)

The models described above share a common view that the four types of knowledge important in teaching are: subject matter knowledge; pedagogical knowledge; knowledge of learner cognitions; and knowledge of the context. In all the models presented, pedagogical content knowledge is at the centre of the knowledge base in teaching.

Studies conducted by Shulman (1987) and Feiman-Nemser & Parker (1990) suggest that pedagogical content knowledge develops over time as a result of experience in many classroom settings and in contact with many students. Earlier studies on differences between

novice and experienced teachers by Berliner (1986) and Leinhardt (1986) noted similar findings.

Berliner (1986) found that inexperienced teachers had incomplete and superficial levels of knowledge. The study identified several significant characteristics about lessons conducted by novices and experienced teachers (referred to as experts):

- (1) novices held literal views of objects and events whereas experts made inferences of objects and events;
- (2) experts were able to categorise problems to be solved at higher cognitive levels and to use higher order systems to categorise the problems;
- (3) experts were faster and more accurate at recognising events that took place in the classroom;
- (4) experts were sensitive to the task demands and social structure of the job situation and they were opportunistic planners who changed tact quickly when lessons did not move at a productive pace.

Berliner's study indicated that the experiences learnt from their daily classroom practices made teachers more competent and effective in their work.

In another study by Leinhardt (1986), classroom observation schedules, interviews and video tapes were used to study characteristics of novice and expert (experienced) teachers. Similar results were obtained:

- (1) experts provided interviewees with a more explicit detailed plan of their intended actions in a lesson;
- (2) experts referred to students in their discussions;
- (3) experts gave richer descriptions;
- (4) novices' lessons were characterised by fragmented structures and long transitions between lesson segments.

The studies by Berliner (1986) and Leinhardt (1986) showed that there are differences between novice and experienced teachers resulting from their practical classroom experiences. The studies by Shulman (1987) and Feiman-Nemser & Parker (1990) showed that this experience is important for the development of pedagogical content knowledge which has been identified as the knowledge base in teaching.

There is evidence in research on teacher knowledge suggesting that although teacher knowledge research aims at understanding more about the teachers' teaching world, the teachers' voice is often omitted (Reynolds 1992). Reynolds observed that research on teaching has mostly been conducted by researchers interested in teaching rather than by teachers interested in research. The questions that teachers ask, therefore, and the interpretive frames that they use to understand and improve their own classroom practice have often been omitted in research. Reynolds (1992) continued by stating that:

We can not assume that what is documented through the many descriptive and correlational studies of effective teaching and learning to teach us what should be. Descriptions are not necessarily grounds for prescriptions. Ultimately our definition of what constitutes competent practice by beginning teachers will reflect what wise practitioners take to be the most salient conception of competent teaching (Reynolds 1992, p.3).

A similar idea was presented by Clandinin (1986, cited in Fenstermacher, 1992) who contended that:

Teachers are commonly acknowledged as having had experiences but they are accredited with little knowledge gained from that experience. The omission is due in part from the fact that we have not had ways of thinking about this practical knowledge and in part because we fail to recognise more practically oriented knowledge (Clandinin, 1986, p.508).

Teachers gain a certain type of knowledge through their everyday teaching experiences which is not fully recognised. Yet, according to the studies by Berliner (1986) and Leinhardt (1986) these knowledge and experiences do make a difference in teaching. The studies by Shulman (1987) and Feiman-Nemser & Parker (1990) also acknowledge the experience gained through teaching as responsible for the development of pedagogical content knowledge which

has been referred to as the knowledge base in teaching. What then is this 'practically oriented knowledge? Studies in teaching refer to this knowledge as professional craft knowledge.

Professional craft knowledge

Practical knowledge refers to the knowledge that teachers gain through their classroom experiences (Brown & McIntyre, 1993; Cooper & McIntyre, 1996). According to Cooper & McIntyre (1996), professional craft knowledge was defined as:

the knowledge that experienced teachers gather throughout their career that enables them to make decisions about how best to approach professional tasks. This knowledge is firmly rooted in teachers' practical experience and is directly linked to their daily practice. By definition, craft knowledge describes the knowledge that arises from and, in turn, informs what teachers actually do (Cooper & McIntyre 1993, p.76).

Cooper & McIntyre (1996) agreed with the earlier observations by Clandinin (1986) and Reynolds (1992) by noting that while experienced teachers clearly possess such knowledge, the culture of teaching and the nature of schools are such that this knowledge is often not articulated. Feiman-Nemser & Floden (1986) noted from studies with mathematics teachers that in addition to practical knowledge, teachers often hold beliefs, values and perceptions about appropriate ways of doing their job, yet, most of these are not often articulated:

Whether or not teachers can identify the particular nature of the subject, they must hold beliefs and values with respect to maths that influence how they teach. These will affect what content they select, whether they consider it accessible to all pupils, and how they choose to make it accessible to them. It is reasonable to assume that their actions throughout these processes will reflect their personal perceptions and beliefs related to the subject and pedagogy (Feiman-Nemser & Floden 1986, p.508).

If practicing teachers possess a certain type of knowledge that is only obtained through their daily classroom experiences, then there is need to find ways of enabling teachers to articulate their experiences of this knowledge in order to fully understand the classroom culture and teaching of any subject area. It is therefore of prime importance that the teachers' perceptions and experiences on such issues be reflected through empirical qualitative research.

In trying to make sense of what constitutes professional craft knowledge from teachers' perspectives, Brown & McIntyre's (1993) study found that teachers' actions and goals were influenced by three main factors. These were referred to as the normal desired standards of pupil activity (NDS), progress and the conditions of teaching (or environmental context). The conditions of teaching were identified as a crucial element in the teachers' accounts. The teachers' definition of the conditions which impinged upon teaching were in five categories related to pupils, time, content, material environment, and the teachers themselves. Figure 2.3 presents the summary of the Brown & McIntyre's (1993) study.

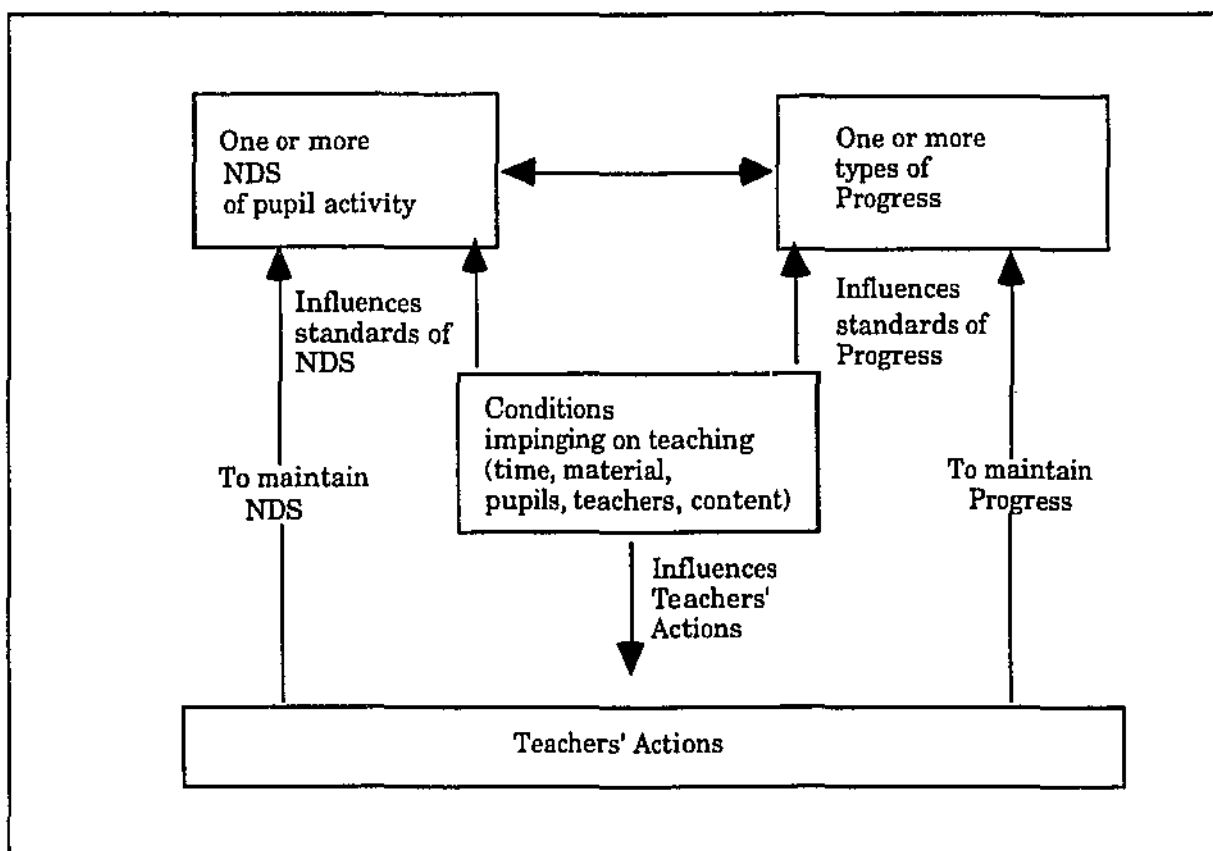


Figure 2.3. The concepts which teachers use in evaluating their own teaching.

Source: Brown & McIntyre, 1993 p. 70.

In a related study to that of Brown & McIntyre (1993), similar results were obtained by Cooper & McIntyre (1996). Cooper & McIntyre's study found that teachers' craft knowledge

about how to achieve desired goals was characterised by the need to take into account a wide range of sometimes competing factors. These included:

- (1) the nature of the subject;
- (2) pupil characteristics;
- (3) their own knowledge and perceived abilities;
- (5) the particular content being taught;
- (6) time constraints; and
- (7) material conditions.

Both the studies of Brown & McIntyre (1993) and Cooper & McIntyre (1996) noted that environmental conditions impinging on teaching influenced the way teachers described their teaching experiences. These studies collected data from the perspectives of the practitioners and the students - the active participants in the process of teaching. Such data are important for making comparison with the theoretical knowledge that is documented in order to bring about positive change in any education system.

The on-going discussion calls for a need for research in teaching to be informed by both theoretical knowledge and practically oriented knowledge. Practical knowledge has been referred to here as professional craft knowledge. But how does this knowledge help to understand how home economics teachers in Malawi perceive competent practices for effective teaching? Schon (1991) defined competent practice as a reflective process

through which practitioners sometimes make new sense of uncertain, unique or conflicted situations of practice (assuming) neither that existing professional knowledge fits every case nor that every problem has a right to answer. We will see students as having to learn a kind of reflection-in - action that goes beyond the stable rules -not only in devising new methods of reasoning ... but also by constructing and testing new categories of understanding, strategies of action and ways of framing problems (Schon 1991, p.39).

Using Schon's (1991) definition, competent practice for effective home economics teaching can be revealed through teachers' reflections of their daily teaching practices (craft knowledge) in relation to what has been termed as the knowledge base in teaching.

Not much is known about effective and competent teaching in home economics as a subject. Studies in teacher effectiveness have mostly been conducted in two subject areas: mathematics and reading. These studies have been conducted mostly at elementary grade levels. Yet the results are assumed to be true across all subject areas and grade levels (Reynolds, 1992). This poses problems when one wants to create a more comprehensive picture from a different subject area. One of the few studies in home economics was that conducted by Yahnke (1995) on teacher competence. Yahnke noted that school teachers and teacher educators held different perceptions of competences necessary for beginning home economics teachers. This study used descriptive statistics to analyse the results. The scope of this study was also limited to competencies for beginning teachers. There is still very little known about what practicing home economics teachers perceive as critical competencies for effective teaching of the subject. There has been no research conducted in this area of home economics teaching in Malawi.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.

The conceptual framework identified literature from the teacher knowledge research as important for understanding teaching experiences. The knowledge base in teaching literature (Shulman 1986; 1987) and professional craft knowledge (Brown & McIntyre, 1993; Cooper & McIntyre, 1996) are important for understanding what actually happens during classroom learning. Through a process of teacher reflection (Schon, 1991) of their every day practices, competences perceived critical for effective teaching can be revealed. This was the basis of the conceptual framework presented in figure 2.4.

Teacher knowledge is not an isolated construct in its effects on teachers' classroom behaviour, but an interplay of several complex factors. The conceptual framework that was most fitting for use in this study identified four types of knowledge as the primary factors that interplay in any teaching situation. These four factors were the most salient areas related to the

process of teaching as it occurs. These were: knowledge of pedagogy; knowledge of students; knowledge of subject matter; and knowledge of the environmental context.

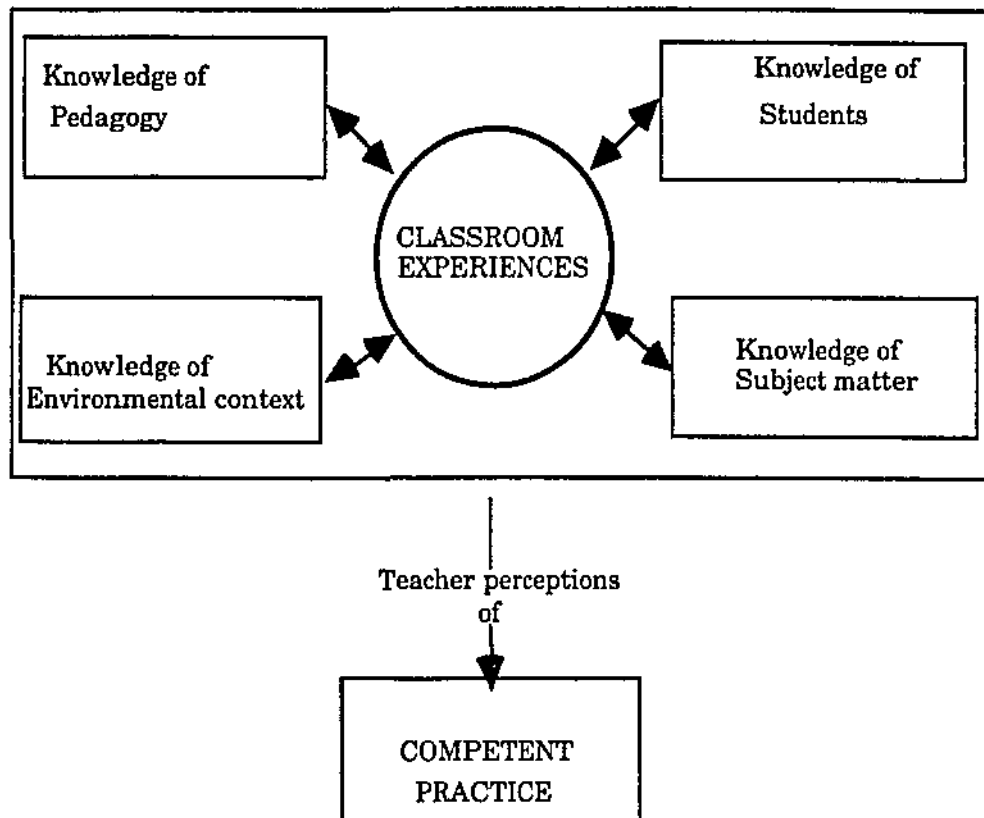


Figure 2.4. Conceptual Framework for the study of how teachers perceive competent practice.

For the purposes of this study, knowledge of pedagogy referred to the skills, theories, principles of class management and organisational practices and general methods used in teaching. Knowledge of students referred to teachers' knowledge of factors affecting learning, principles and theories of learning, and teachers' knowledge of developmental stages of the learner. Knowledge of subject matter referred to the content knowledge of a specific subject. In this case, it referred to the content knowledge of home economics. Knowledge of environmental context referred to all social, physical, biological, political and economic factors in the school as well as the total environment which may impact upon the school and have

effects on classroom teaching. During teaching, teachers interpret these areas of knowledge to create classroom experiences that they perceive as effective. In figure 2.4, classroom experiences were presented as a circle linked with bi-directional arrows to show that the interaction with each of the four sources of knowledge was a continuous and two way process. Classroom experiences act as a medium through which the four types of knowledge interact, are interpreted and manifested. Classroom experiences referred to all the teaching and learning activities that occur in the classroom. It included how the teaching and learning process actually took place. This knowledge reveals how practical knowledge (craft knowledge) is experienced. It is through teachers' reflection and articulation in these areas of knowledge and their classroom experiences that one can gain understanding of what is perceived as competent home economics teaching.

In conclusion, this conceptual framework adopted a process of teacher reflection of classroom practices and concepts from the teacher knowledge literature as a means for understanding what home economics teachers in Malawi perceived to be the critical competencies for effective teaching. This framework was important for providing a perspective for viewing issues to be explored during data collection. The data collection method is described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research method and procedures applied in the study. The study arose out of the researcher's curiosity and involvement in teacher training. The purpose of the study was to explore how practicing home economics teachers in Malawi perceived effective and competent teaching in the existing national secondary school home economics syllabus. Burns & Grove (1993) stated that descriptive studies are designed to gain more information about characteristics within the particular field of research. As there had been no independent research on home economics teachers in Malawi, a descriptive design to explore the teachers' perceptions of the competencies necessary for effective teaching of the subject was conducted.

The study aimed at gaining access to teachers' professional 'craft knowledge' (Brown & Cooper, 1993; Cooper & McIntyre, 1996) and to facilitate the teachers' own articulation of the ordinary everyday teaching which they did routinely and spontaneously in classrooms. The emphasis was on investigating what the teachers described as effective practice and competent teaching. The research design, sampling procedures, types of data sought, sources of data, procedures and data analysis techniques used to access this knowledge are discussed below.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study was concerned with providing detailed descriptions and explanations of teacher behaviour, practices, knowledge and skills perceived to promote effective teaching. The research questions guiding this study focussed on understanding how home economics teachers described their daily classroom practices as a means of interpreting their perception of effective and competent practice. The research questions were stated in chapter one page 4 and are repeated here:

- (1) What is the nature of a typical home economics lesson?

- (2) What are experienced home economics teachers' perceptions of effective practice?
- (3) What knowledge, practices, skills and attitudes do experienced teachers perceive to be critical for home economics teaching in Malawi?

The research questions outlined above, necessitated the use of a qualitative design because of its ability to take into account the complex multifaceted nature of human society (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) in which the teaching and learning process takes place.

According to Lincoln & Guba (1985, p.227), the purpose of qualitative studies is to accumulate sufficient knowledge to lead to understanding. Most qualitative studies recommend the use of an emergent research design, which means that data collection and analysis are simultaneous and ongoing activities that allow for important understandings to be discovered along the way and then pursued in further data collection effort. During this process, the participants are able to think about and reflect upon their experiences, and the researcher is able to follow up on any emerging themes. These characteristics make it possible for one to uncover hidden or taken-for-granted characteristics that would otherwise not be possible to identify. Similarly, it is through such a process, that significant meanings in teaching experiences can be revealed. A qualitative design, therefore, provided the best opportunity for the researcher to collect and interpret the types of data sought.

The data for qualitative research are drawn from several sources, including interviews, observations, field notes, written records and other documents (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Triangulating the methods of data collection in this way allows the researcher to compare different perspectives and ensure validity of the findings. In this study the principal method for data collection was participant interviews. Triangulation was achieved through the use of classroom observations and analysis of curriculum documents in the follow up interviews.

As a researcher (and a home economics teacher) entering a familiar field, the likelihood of interference from previous experience was noted. For this reason the process of 'bracketing'

was employed in order to set aside preconceived views and collect data from the participant's point of view. On the other hand, the knowledge that the researcher was, at one point, in the same role as those being interviewed made it easy for the participants to accept the researcher's credibility to the study area. Being a previous home economics teacher also facilitated access to the schools as well as the participants.

Pilot study

Prior to data collection, a pilot study was conducted in Perth, Western Australia. The pilot study was conducted with two home economics teachers and one university student who was formally teaching home economics in her country of origin. The two Perth based teachers were selected for their experience in teaching a home economics curriculum that was somewhat similar to that of Malawi. The university student was a home economics teacher for more than five years in her country of origin prior to her arrival in Perth. Their syllabus matched that of Malawi. The pilot study was designed to determine the strengths or weaknesses of the data collection probes. It was perceived necessary also for the generation of preliminary categories for elaboration and probing during the main data collection phase.

Participants in the pilot study were each interviewed separately using an interview guide. The interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and one hour. Teachers in the pilot study described competent teaching in light of how students performed or experienced the learning activity. They described competent practice in terms of a teachers ability to identify teaching activities that made learning more exciting for the students.

The pilot study showed that there was a need to design more specific probes in some categories. The probes were designed and included in the final interview guide accordingly (see Appendix D)

Procedure

A research proposal was presented to the Higher Degrees Committee and the Ethics Committee of Edith Cowan University. When approval was granted, a letter was written to the Ministry of Education in Malawi seeking permission to carry out this study in Malawi (see Appendix F). The letter was accompanied by a copy of the proposal. Permission was granted while the researcher was in Malawi (see Appendix G).

Once permission was granted, a visit to the Ministry of Education was made where a list of home economics teachers and their placements within the Lilongwe schools was obtained. Initial contact with each of the schools was made. All potential participants were briefed on the aims of the study and how it would involve them. Their voluntary participation in the study was then requested. Preliminary discussions aimed at developing researcher-informant rapport and to assure the participants that the study was non judgemental of their teaching practices were held with each participant. Participants were informed about the precise details of the research and given a copy of the interview guide. All interviews took place in the school where the participant was teaching.

The Sample

Purposive sampling was used for the selection of the participants. Purposive selection requires that the researcher establishes in advance a set of criteria or list of attributes that the participants must possess. Exemplars that match the specified array of characteristics are then sought and identified for the study (LeCompte & Presisle 1993). Purposive sampling ensures that the sample is information rich (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). This study did not aim at collecting data from expert teachers but from experienced typical secondary school home economics teachers. Teachers selected were those with at least five years teaching experience. This was done to ensure that the participants had adequate teaching experience upon which to reflect. All potential participants were approached and twelve selected on the basis of their willingness to participate in the study. Due to limited number of experienced home economics teachers, two teachers teaching at a teacher training college were also included in the sample.

These two were secondary school teachers but had just been posted to this teacher training college. Table 3.1 shows the teaching experience, educational qualifications of each participant and the type of school where each of the participants was teaching at the time of the study.

Table 3.1: Teachers' experience, educational qualifications and type of school

NAME OF TEACHER	TEACHING EXPERIENCE	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	TYPE OF SCHOOL
BRENDA	10	Diploma in Education	National girls secondary school
MARGRET	5	Bachelor of Education	National girls secondary school
SILVIA	13	T2*	National girls secondary school
SUSAN	20	Bachelor of education	Teacher training college
MARTHA	20	Bachelor of education	Teacher training college
MONICA	11	T2*	Co-educational day secondary school
KATE	13	Diploma in education	National girls secondary school
SHELLY	13	Diploma in education	National girls secondary school
MATILDA	10	Diploma in education	Co-educational day secondary school
DOROTHY	13	Diploma in education	Co-educational day secondary school
NAOMI	10	Diploma in Education	Co-educational day secondary school
KELLY	11	Diploma in education	Co-educational day secondary school

T2* means the teacher has a primary school teaching certificate.

There are four different types of secondary schools in Malawi: boarding secondary schools; day secondary schools; grant aided secondary schools and private schools. With the exception of private schools, the sample constituted teachers from all these schools. None of the private schools in Malawi offers home economics in its curriculum. All the three types of schools offer a similar national curriculum which is centrally controlled by the Ministry of Education.

Data Collection

Data for the study were collected through participant interviews, class observations (see Appendices D and E) and cooperative review of curriculum documents. The total data collection period was ten weeks. Appendix H shows a time line schedule of events during this period.

Each of the first interviews with participants ranged in duration from forty minutes to sixty minutes. All the participants were interviewed individually by the researcher. The interviews took place at the participant's school in the participant's work room or in a home economics classroom. All interviews were conducted in English. All participants were comfortable with English as it was the language used in all schools from the primary to university level. All interviews were audio taped. According to Barribal and While (1995), audio taping ensures that an identical replication of the contents of each interview is available to facilitate analysis. Further, access to the intonations and pauses recorded help to validate the accuracy and completeness of the collected information. Audio taping also reduces the potential for researcher error by, for example, recording data incorrectly or cheating by logging an answer to a question that was not asked (Patton, 1990). An interview guide (see appendix E) was used in the initial interview. This style was selected because of the need to probe deeply and to allow the participants to express their thoughts. The researcher attempted to allow the flow of conversation to develop while returning to the interview guide when appropriate. The guide was then used to maintain the focus of the interview and to verify the internal reliability of the statements made by the participants.

The audio tapes were transcribed at the end of each day. The process of transcribing allowed the identification of follow-up questions for the second and third interviews. The second round of the interviews was conducted after a classroom observation. The proposed number of class observations was six. During data collection, however nine of the participants were observed while teaching. All lessons observed were three period lessons lasting between one hour forty five minutes and two hours. An observation schedule was used to guide this

interview (Appendix F). Each class observation was followed by an interview. During this interview, the researcher sought the participants clarifications on the observations made and also asked any follow up questions from the previous interview. Follow-up interviews on emerging issues were also made with the other three participants who were not observed while teaching.

The third interview involved a cooperative analysis of curriculum and teaching documents. In all cases the main documents used were the syllabus and the teachers schemes of work. With the help of the participant teacher, the researcher made sense of the document contents in order to get an insight into how the participant interpreted them.

Data Analysis

All interview scripts were transcribed and recorded on two computer files. Data from participant observation, document analysis were also recorded on the computer files. The ETHNOGRAPH computer program was used in the data analysis. This is a software program useful for the organisation of qualitative data. ETHNOGRAPH enables the researcher to sort information, to re-code areas of a text, and to identify themes which co-exist. ETHNOGRAPH also enables the retrieval of data at various stages of the research so that if a researcher has a provisional theme emerging, he or she can summon other instances of that theme through use of this software (Seidel, Kjolseth & Seymour, 1995).

During the data analysis, content analysis was employed. This involved reading through the data files and coding them using the ETHNOGRAPH and then categorising the patterns of the data. This process gave the researcher an opportunity to further gain understanding of the emergent themes in the data.

The constant comparative method for analysing qualitative data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used in this study. This method combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all incidents observed and coded. This made it possible to compare across categories as the researcher recorded and classified the categories. For

instance, the issue of a 'domestic orientation' of the subject was apparent at the first interview. This again emerged as a stronger force in the second interview discussions after the classroom observations, as well as on the final follow-up interviews which centred on looking at the curriculum documents. At each level of these interviews, the issues raised were constantly compared and in the most salutary cases, a code was attached in order to be able to find meaning of the data being collected. This process allowed for continuous refinement and feedback throughout the processes of data collection, data coding and data analysis as events were constantly compared with previous events. At the same time, this process allowed for discovery of new relationships in the data collected.

RELIABILITY OF RESULTS

The sample used in this study consisted of twelve participants from five schools. This sample size is not generalisable to the total population of home economics teachers in Malawi, however, since there has been no other study on the nature of home economics teaching in Malawi, the results of this study can provide a valuable basis for future research. Furthermore, the concepts of generalisability, validity, and reliability used to judge the quality of quantitative research are considered to be inappropriate to judge the soundness of qualitative research (Burns, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In quantitative research an instrument is considered valid when there is confidence that it measures what it intended to measure (Sandalowski, 1986). Because qualitative research emphasises the meaningfulness of the research product rather than the control of the process, Lincoln & Guba suggested that credibility rather than internal validity be the criterion against which the truth value of qualitative research be measured. If the truth value of qualitative research lies in the closeness of the investigator-subject relationship (Sandalowski (1986), then credibility of this study is ensured by providing detailed descriptions of behaviour and interpretations of the participants as well as those of the researcher.

Reliability in quantitative research refers to the consistency, stability and dependability of a test or testing procedure (Sandalowski, 1986). Lincoln & Guba proposed that audibility be

the criterion for rigor or merit rating to ensure the consistency of qualitative findings. A study and its findings are auditable when another researcher can clearly follow the 'decision trail' used by the investigator in the study. In addition, another researcher should be able to arrive at the same or comparable but not contradictory conclusions given the researcher's data, perspective and situation. This study makes available all research material concerning all phases of the study. The processes and patterns of interaction for the data collection are portrayed as clearly as possible. Exact quotes to participant interviews are presented as well as the exact lines and data files where this was recorded. This helps to ensure the reliability of the results.

Other measures that have helped to ensure the truth value and credibility of this study include: a triangulation of interview, observation and co-operative document analysis as data collection methods. During data collection, validation was obtained from participants by asking for their confirmation to summaries made from interviews.

In quantitative studies strict sampling procedures are maintained in order to ensure representativeness and generalisability of the results. In contrast, the sample sizes used in qualitative studies are usually small because of the large volume of verbal data that will be analysed, and because qualitative research tends to emphasise intensive and prolonged contacts with the participants (Sandalowski, 1986). Sample size cannot be determined because it is dependent on the nature of data collected and where those data take the researcher. For this reason, representativeness in qualitative studies refers to the data rather than the subjects or the settings. The purpose of qualitative studies is not to generalise the results to the total population but rather to obtain rich data and understanding of an experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Similarly, the present sample cannot be generalised to the total population of home economics teachers in Malawi. It provides, however, rich data on the nature of home economics teaching in Malawi which is valuable for informing decision making in teacher education programs, in-service training courses, planning of curriculum documents as well as in general curriculum implementation in home economics.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A range of ethical issues were considered in this study. Prior to any interview the researcher made appointments to interview the participant. Each participant was given a letter explaining who the researcher was and the purpose of the research. Attached to this letter was an informed consent form. Each participant was asked to read and sign the informed consent form as an indication of a willingness to being interviewed (see Appendix J). Offers of joint publications, in future, were made with interested teachers

All data collected were treated as confidential. Pseudonyms were used on all data files. No names were used on the documents containing research data. A master list of the schools visited was kept separate from the research documents. Audio tapes were kept locked up with the researcher keeping the key. Only the researcher and the supervisor had access to raw data. After five years all notes and tapes will be erased and destroyed.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

OVERVIEW

The conceptual framework presented in chapter two identified teacher reflections of their every day classroom experiences as important for understanding what is perceived as critical competencies for effective home economics teaching in Malawi. The teacher knowledge literature was used to understand factors affecting teaching. As outlined in chapter two, the study had three research questions:

- (1) What is the nature of a typical home economics lesson?
- (2) What are experienced home economics teachers' perceptions of effective practice?
- (3) What knowledge, practices, skills and attitudes do experienced teachers perceive as critical for home economics teaching in Malawi?

These questions were used to develop the interview guides which guided data collection (see Appendix D).

The results in this chapter have been presented in two main subheadings: the culture of home economics teaching, which mostly focused on the first two research questions; and classroom practices, which reflected the third research question.

THE CULTURE OF HOME ECONOMICS TEACHING IN MALAWI

This section presents how home economics teachers described the aims of the subject and the nature of a typical home economics lesson in Malawi.

Perceived aims of home economics education in Malawi

The teachers in the study shared a common view that the primary aim of teaching home economics was to prepare the young girls for their future roles in womanhood, as wives or mothers.

The aims and goals are to train the girls to (become) good wives. (Monica: ETHNO 3747-3748)

I think I said we are training the mothers of tomorrow. Especially here in a developing nation, home economics is very relevant. In Malawi we have the materials at home such as the fruits and vegetables, but we seem not to utilise these things because we lack the relevant knowledge. (Silvia: ETHNO 1879-1886)

I think from experience on how I teach, I would like them (students) to learn in home economics and apply it in their homes. For example if a girl has learnt home economics..., has a child..., she should be able to utilise the knowledge learnt in class to take care of the child, prevent malnutrition. In needlework, same thing..., utilise knowledge learnt in class (Kate: ETHNO 3013-3022).

I think the main theme or the objective for teaching is..., like we want to encourage our students to know more about cookery, home management..., by the time they go home at least they should be able to manage their homes..., because we do not only teach about cookery but home management (as well); cleaning and home management. Apart from that we want our students to learn how to use some equipment as I said (Margret: ETHNO 136-146).

The content was thus perceived as useful to help the girls be good future mothers, to manage and utilise local resources within their home environment, and to learn how to use modern kitchen equipment.

Some teachers also stated that they aimed to prepare the girls for the work place. This referred to self employment as well as employment outside the home.

Home economics is very important. It's like we want to train the young girls to become better mothers in future. But not only that, in home economics we deal with areas such as child care..., so the students can go to work in other organisations such as Red Cross, UNICEF. So, it is not just for the home (Naomi: ETHNO2 118-125).

The aim..., I think what we are achieving is to come up with somebody who is going to live an independent life in the sense that she can start up a business - tailoring or bakery, therefore she will be independent and not have to look for employment unlike other subjects (Brenda: ETHNO 873-883).

There were other teachers who felt the mission of home economics was fully met in the subject. They perceived the aim as being the promotion of the well being of the family. They stated that the content helped the students to develop critical thinking and practice problem solving skills:

To improve the standard of living for the family (Dorothy: ETHNO2 688-699)

I think the subject also makes them think critically, improve personal and family meals - they eat balanced meals. Because for one to start planning balanced meals, it means you are aware of the problem and are trying to find ways and means of getting it out of the way (Susan: ETHNO2 2012-2025).

We want to promote skills that will help to improve the Malawian family (Martha: ETHNO2 2498-2499).

Matilda, Susan, Martha and Monica had boys taking home economics in their classes. They stated that the subject was relevant to the lives of the boys as well. They emphasised on the fact that the content of home economics could not be classified as for girls only nor for boys only because the subject dealt with issues that both men and women experienced in everyday life. For this reason, they all stated that the presence of the boys did not necessitate a change in their teaching approach.

What I do is I tell the boys how relevant the topic or the skill is to them. I give the examples of our hotels where most of the workers are men. Even the night dresses, I tell them that they are making a gift for their mother or sister or girlfriend..., it also helps to remind them that when you are a tailor you make clothes for all kinds of people. You would be surprised to note that the boys are even more eager and interested to do these things. They are even more motivated than the girls (Matilda: ETHNO2 1630-1644).

Similarly, commenting on their class participation, Kelly observed that the boys were even more motivated than the girls during lessons:

They show a lot of interest in the lessons. To me they are more motivated than the girls. I don't know what is wrong with us females, but my boys are very hard working and they are very active in class. They are so different from the girls (Kelly: ETHNO2 1268-1274).

These teachers initially described the subject as aimed at preparing girls for their future roles in womanhood. Yet they saw it as being relevant to the lives of the boys as well.

Classroom Routine

All the teachers described their teaching as constituting two main parts: theory and practice. The theory part was mostly described as teacher dominated. It constituted of such

activities as explaining new concepts, defining new terms or demonstrating a new skill. The practical part would follow to enable the students to practice what had been taught.

A typical home economics lesson..., of course when you come to the class you first introduce the theory: explain, define, describe, what so ever. Whatever you introduced, immediately you must apply that in a practical situation. The theory they have learnt has to be put into practice (Brenda: ETHNO 888-897).

Normally when they (students) come, they have the theory, - and that is just me talking. The students listen or I ask them questions and they answer. Then you involve them in whatever methods you want them to acquire. So there may be a demonstration. After the demonstration you ask them questions or comments. And then later on you will want the pupils to practice whatever you demonstrated. After the practice, I like to have a class discussion to close the lesson (Naomi: ETHNO2 142-155).

There are two meanings of 'practical' as used in home economics. The first meaning of practical is concerned with using concrete situations involving action by the family. The second meaning of practical is concerned with norms or values as standards socially accepted as authoritative or justifiable (Brown 1993) with a technical perspective. In the present study, the meaning of practical was limited to activities such as cooking, sewing and cleaning, which are typical of the second meaning. Some of the common answers given in describing a practical lesson were:

Normally we home economics teachers when we say practical we refer to cooking (Brenda: ETHNO 785-787).

For example we are teaching about meat cookery. If it is in cookery first of all..., like..., the choice of meat, structure, then after that we go to the lab for the practical. On the practical part, we teach about cookery (Margret: ETHNO 57-63).

Common activities are like cleaning of rooms, we also have laundry, cookery, first aid (Monica: ETHNO 3760-3762).

Some of the practicals involve cleaning of the equipment, washing, cleaning different rooms in the house; and also if we are dealing with needlework it also includes knitting, sewing and so on (Silvia: ETHNO 1904-1909).

These descriptions supported the view that the aim of the subject was to prepare girls for their future domestic roles in womanhood. Further interviews and the class observations indicated that the cookery practicals were a significant part of the practical aspect referred to by

the teachers. In general two themes dominated the teaching of the subject: a domestic perspective and a technical approach in teaching.

Teaching Problems

There were a number of problems that teachers in this study referred to as affecting their teaching. Matilda and Shelly felt that one of the main problems in the school was lack of adequate physical facilities in the home economics department. They stated that this made it difficult for them to effectively teach the subject.

The home economics lab we have here is just a class. There is no provision for a bedroom, no living room, the cooker we have is at fault, the cutlery, cups, are those that were bought when the school was being opened so many years ago. We have large groups, sometimes we have up to forty in a class and when it comes to group practicals they have to work in large groups and some stand behind others, not doing anything at all. So in the end you find others doing extremely well - those that have been practicing, - and the ones that were just relying on their friends do very badly (Shelly: ETHNO 2731-2747).

In some other departments they are quite comfortable, they have all the facilities, in ours we don't have any facilities. At the moment we only have two electric cookers against sometimes forty two students. So you can imagine how it is like to supervise a practical (Kate: ETHNO 2984-2991).

Shortage of teaching resources was a common problem experienced by all the teachers in this study. In schools where the class sizes were large, the problem was even worse. For these teachers teaching resources did not refer to resources such as video or overhead projectors because such facilities were never available in the schools. Teaching resources referred to the basic teaching necessities such as reference books or teachers' guides. In some schools even copies of the home economics syllabus were not available.

Only that I feel we are not given enough guidelines on what to teach especially the J. C. (Junior Certificate level). Because I don't remember when I last saw a J.C. syllabus..., so whatever we teach is something..., we just make-up from the books..., those that outline topics from the junior levels, but we do not have a syllabus or we use our old syllabuses (Naomi: ETHNO2 83-92).

Another common problem was shortage of textbooks. The teachers expressed concern that shortage of such teaching facilities greatly affected their teaching in that it limited their

choice of teaching methods. For instance, they could not assign students to do some reading as home work.

I mean it's like we spoon feed the children because of lack of books. If we had books we would give them exercises. The kids would have time to read them during their free time but as of now at (my school) the books we have is just one Barbara Hammond for the whole school, -*Cookery explained...*, and you can imagine how it is like teaching in such situations. We press for orders and the answer we get is, 'there is no money' (Shelly: ETHNO 2306-2317).

My students do not have any reference books as whatever is in the department we have kept as teachers' copies. We only have one *Domestic science*, one *Cookery explained* and one students cookery book. We get sometimes some donations but these are very few. More over the donations that come are usually not very relevant (Matilda: ETHNO2 1569-1578).

According to Kate, reference books helped to build a teacher's confidence in the content knowledge. With the current situation, she felt she was less confident as there was no way of confirming some of the issues that she taught in class.

As I said you gain knowledge from textbooks. Of course you use your own personal experiences as well. But that want help much. You still need some where to say 'what I have said is this'. That's how you gain confidence (Kate: ETHNO 2953-2958).

The financial situation in the schools was such that the schools were not able to purchase most of the teaching resources needed for teaching. As such, teachers sometimes had to rely on book donations which, as noted by Matilda above, were usually not very relevant.

Along with the problem of shortage of teaching materials, the teachers also shared the feeling that the home economics syllabus was very broad. They expressed the view that the syllabus had a lot to be covered in it and yet reference books were not available.

The syllabus is too long, there is too much to cover. Yet you do not have enough books, I mean reference books (Margret: ETHNO 82-85).

It's (the syllabus) broad and not specific. (Kelly: ETHNO2 1461).

Poor funding was another common problem expressed by all teachers. Furthermore at the time of the study, the schools were facing another cut in funding from the government.

To my knowledge this is my third year in this school and I haven't received anything. So that is frustrating (Naomi: ETHNO2 56-59).

I would say that the cash budget really is affecting our planning. Money is not available for practical lessons. You can prepare for practical all right but when the time comes the money to purchase what you need is not available. And as I said to be a good home economics teacher at least the practical side..., you have to be good in it. That also creates problems with the type of students that you produce. During exams the examiner will be looking for practical skills., but they won't be there (Kate: ETHNO 3466-3479).

There is no more funding for the subject. Home economics is a practical subject but we teach all subjects in theory because of lack of funds- no money to buy resources, that is food items for the classes (Matilda: ETHNO2 1511-1518).

Throughout all the interviews, there was a conflict between what the teachers felt was the nature of their every day lessons and what they felt was a good home economics lesson. The teachers expressed the view that for a good home economics lesson, as much as possible, theory work needed to be followed by student practice. Due to the problems experienced, however, not much student practice was done in the actual lessons.

Normally we are supposed to have them (practicals) once a week but due to lack of funds, some times we do it once a month as a result because there are so many skills that they(students) should learn, but they can't..., lack of practicals means they fail home economics because of lack of practice (Kate: ETHNO 3131-3138).

(We have practical lessons) maybe once or twice a term according to resource availability. Unlike in the past when we were able to have a practical each week. This affects your planning as well as what you choose to teach (Monica: ETHNO 4021-4026).

Well, last year the only practical exam was during mock examinations (Margret: ETHNO 278-280).

It was noted that the teachers emphasised the use of practical activity in teaching also because of the nature of the end of year examinations. Teachers felt they had to include practical activities because the students would be expected to pass a practical examination. Yet most teachers felt that most of the topics were being taught in theory when in fact they should be covered in practical lessons. Responding to a question on how more practical topics such as methods of cooking were handled, Naomi stated:

Theory work. It's all done in theory. Sometimes we try to use knowledge from home and try to bring about the reality. But otherwise we just have to do theory all the time..., theory..., theory..., theory (Naomi: ETHNO2 62-67).

The classroom observations and review of the curriculum documents, especially the teachers' schemes, further confirmed that the actual day to day class learning had very little practical activity especially in terms of cookery.

Four of the five schools visited offered home economics as a compulsory subject to one stream in each year. The class sizes were therefore between 38 to 45 students. The teachers from these schools shared the view that their classes were too big to conduct any meaningful practical work especially in cookery. This was more especially because of the limited resources available. Matilda, who was teaching at the school where home economics was offered as an optional subject, stated that very few students opted for the subject. Matilda felt negative perceptions of the subject held by fellow members of staff restricted enrolment in home economics to mostly the weak students. This she perceived as one of the big challenges in her teaching.

Generally as a teacher I feel I am demoralised by what happens in school especially these days. Firstly because home economics is an optional subject, not many opt for it. And yet I wish it was compulsory and for boys and girls. The knowledge in the subject is useful to everyone in the home. In this school they give us students that fail in other subjects and expect them to do well. This has to do with peoples' perceptions of the subject. The sad thing is that even my fellow members of staff have that negative perception. So for one to really do anything, you really have to work extra hard and be dedicated to it, otherwise you can just give up and ask to teach another subject (Matilda: ETHNO2 1776-1794).

The problem of negative perceptions of the subject was mentioned by other teachers as well such as Shelly and Dorothy:

Our own colleagues think that home economics teachers are in the department doing nothing but eating. And when you come from class they ask you, 'can you share with us what you have been cooking?' And I also ask them to share with me what they were doing in mathematics. We then just laugh it off. Even the administration, sometimes when you ask for funds, they don't understand (Shelly: ETHNO 2751-2761).

It's like people think that anyone can teach it. Even fellow members of staff rate it very low. They think all we do is cook and eat. So when you say that you are a home

economics teacher you are really not proud of it. Especially these days, all the primary school teachers that come to secondary school are given home economics to teach. So, you know what that means. A women's subject (Dorothy: ETHNO2 672-683).

Susan expressed concern that in order to teach the subject, one needed money. This was not easy because of the complicated procedures that one had to follow in order to get the money.

Something that I don't like about the subject is that to teach it you need money. In order to have a practical you have to go around to see the bursar, to see the head asking for funds. Sometimes you get it sometimes you don't. So, that's the part that I don't like. If it was just theory, I would love it a lot (Susan: ETHNO2 1972-1980).

There were other concerns that the teachers expressed to do with the practical aspect of the subject. Brenda felt that there were too many things that a teacher had to take care of in order to conduct a good practical lesson. Yet the teaching load was also in most cases very high.

Looking for resources..., you know that you have to loo' for resources and at the same time you have a certain class waiting for you. They don't consider that you have to look for resources on your own when they are giving the load. They don't consider that on top of the teaching, you have to find the resources. For example, I have to order the resources and go and buy everything. But that time is not taken into account. Here at secondary school we don't have laboratory assistants so we do everything ourselves (Brenda: ETHNO 852-866).

All school subjects had a subject inspector at the Ministry of Education headquarters whose role is to look into issues and problems of the subject. At the time of this study, the position of home economics inspector had been vacant for more than four years. Susan reflected on such practice as neglect for the subject. Furthermore, since the curriculum as well as the examinations were centrally controlled, Susan observed that there was not much that the classroom teacher could do without 'support from above'.

Like I said, there is not much that a teacher can do in the classroom if there is no support from above. The people that are supposed to do something about it, I don't know what they are doing. Now that affects the teacher. There is no motivation in the subject (Susan: ETHNO2 2408-2415).

The teachers shared the view that the practical aspect of the subject was a very important part of the teaching and learning process. Because they could not conduct most of the practical activities due to the problems outlined above, the teachers expressed feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration with their teaching experiences. The teachers felt that the practical aspect gave the students an opportunity to practice what they had learned in theory in class and to reinforce the knowledge.

If they practice they should be able to use that practice at home. Teaching without practice is really difficult. If they don't try it you will be surprised in future when you ask them about it they will say they don't know it (Kate: ETHNO 3190-3196).

The teachers also expressed the observation that the practical lessons motivated and attracted students to do home economics:

Students are interested when they know that they are going to do a practical. Without that they think they are not learning. So I try to keep them active. Sometimes I use group discussion. If they can't have a practical they discuss a meal or just plan a meal as if they are going to cook. Or sometimes they even practice some table setting for that particular meal. I try to be a little creative. Well I try (Dorothy: ETHNO2 826-837).

What I have seen in my teaching is that the theory can have so many activities, but the girls are not so happy with it. But the moment you say that you are having a practical, they get so excited. They look forward to it You will see them at break time already in their aprons. They are so happy. But the theory, they are not as happy (Kate: ETHNO 3119-3128).

The teachers themselves also expressed a liking for the practical aspect. Most of them stating that they had learnt a lot from their teaching experiences.

Well, to begin with I find it interesting. I have learnt a lot of things myself from teaching it. I can prepare nice dishes, - gives you an idea or you learn a certain style in life that..., I mean I got to know things that I did not (Dorothy: ETHNO2 663-669).

Well I think there are a lot of things that I have learnt in Home economics. I started liking it in my secondary school days. What I noticed was that home economics teachers were different from the others. One, the way they dressed, or the way they posed..., so I always liked them. Now from that time I just like home economics and I think home economics has taught me a lot of things (Brenda: ETHNO 816-826).

On the other hand, there were other teachers who questioned the value and relevancy of the syllabus. Dorothy argued that the syllabus needed revision if the content knowledge were to

be more relevant. She noted that some of the concepts taught in the syllabus were foreign concepts and not well understood even by the teachers themselves. She questioned also the value and credibility of some practical activities done in the subject.

Firstly, the syllabus is old. They have not revised it for a long time and I think it is time they do that. Secondly, I always wonder how relevant some of the issues are. We are teaching foreign concepts that even ourselves are not very familiar with; on the other hand some things we teach are I think obvious. I don't see some of the sweeping and mopping we do as really necessary (Dorothy: ETHNO2 982-993).

Dorothy also criticised some of the activities done in class as common practices that did not have to be taught in class.

I don't think there is anyone in Malawi who can say she can not sweep (Dorothy: ETHNO2 183-1989).

Susan argued that practical activity was not a necessity for home economics teaching. But the nature of the existing syllabus made it seem so. She also expressed the need for a curriculum review.

As the syllabus is, you need the practicals. So unless curriculum developers come in and listen to the views of the teachers and then take them up. Otherwise I don't see why we should be teaching practicals in home economics (Susan: ETHNO2 1983-1989).

Constant update of knowledge as well as changes in the subject was viewed as of great importance especially in home economics due to the nature of the subject. However, none of the teachers in this study had ever gone for any in-service course, or home economics workshop. This was perceived as another problem. In-service was therefore mentioned as necessary to improve and update their teaching practices.

As teachers we should not just teach what is in the book because like in this case we may just confuse the students or load them with irrelevant and unrealistic material. So like I said maybe it was better if home economics teachers were exposed to changes taking place around them, otherwise, we are supposed to teach things of everyday life but we are the least well informed people ourselves. No in-service, nothing. This is not easy (Kate: ETHNO 3377-3391).

Once you are out of college you are forgotten. You don't know what the ministry is doing or what our subject inspectors are doing. You just go on with what you learnt

twenty years ago. You use the same knowledge year in year out. We need seminars. We should share. Home economics teachers should meet to share what we know. If we could have at least some initiative or have a trip out during the long holiday to see what others are doing in other countries. I don't know, at least something (Shelly: ETHNO 2771-2784).

The teachers' source of knowledge for teaching was mostly their day to day teaching experiences. Teaching experience was perceived as valuable knowledge in teaching, not only because there was no in-service in the subject, but also because the teachers felt it helped them become more competent in their teaching practices. In most cases reference was made to the value of knowledge or skills gained through discussion with a colleague, or experiences learnt from the time they started teaching.

I have done home economics from primary school as a student all through up to college. Now I have been teaching it all these years. So I am confident that when I teach, I know what I am talking about (Martha: ETHNO2 2671-2676).

When I just started teaching it was not easy for me to know where to start from in teaching. Sometimes I wasted a lot of time on a simple demonstration, sometimes I was just confusing myself and my class when I tried to explain things. Now I know that with form ones, I start with this and finish with that. I no longer over plan or under plan (Kelly: ETHNO2 1377-1386).

Generally the limitations experienced from the environmental context of the school, as described above, made the teachers feel that they were not able to effectively teach the subject. These limitations created feelings of frustration in the teachers. Practical activities were perceived necessary in order to motivate the students, to reinforce acquisition of skills taught and in order to prepare the students for their practical examinations. Yet, it was not usually possible to conduct such lessons.

CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Significant class practices noted in this study were concerned with methods of teaching and the teaching skills used in the subject. The teachers' knowledge of the nature of students and their perceptions of the home economics content emerged as factors that affected choice of classroom practices.

Methods of teaching

All the teachers shared the view that for a good home economics lesson students had to be kept active. They emphasised the need to use a variety of teaching methods. Teacher demonstrations, group work, discussion and questioning were the methods that the teachers felt they used in their teaching more frequently. The teachers stated that the selection of these methods was based on the fact that they made the students active during the two hour lessons.

The teachers noted that apart from making the classes active, discussion enabled the students to share knowledge. This was perceived important because in most classes the teachers observed that the students had different levels of knowledge gained from their home environments. Demonstration was mostly used to impart a new skill to the classes. This method was used to ensure that the class grasped a new skill which would be repeated in a practical by the students.

On methods of teaching..., better to use er..., like demonstration is important. Apart from demonstration..., discussion, - because there are some other things that when teaching you find that there are some students who already know and they are even able to explain even better than the teacher can do so it is important to encourage discussion in class (Margret: ETHNO 227-236).

I think with these girls, if you don't demonstrate..., as you know that during our time, I don't know, may be we were interested in the subject, but things are now different. But if you don't demonstrate and you just say today we are going to prepare this, thinking that the girls will follow the recipe, they will come up with a mess. So each dish they are going to prepare, make sure you demonstrate. So that when they make a mess they should not have an excuse. Because if you don't demonstrate they say `but we didn't understand. We have never made this before. So, normally I do a lot of demonstration (Brenda: ETHNO 1268-1285).

All the nine lessons observed during this study had a component of some sort of group work which would include discussion or students practicing on some cookery skill or cleaning activity.

Questioning was perceived as another important skill. Questioning was used by the teachers to establish what students already knew as well as to clarify important points during teaching.

Methods of teaching which I think I frequently use and I think are practical..., of course explanation- you can not run away from it, you have to explain certain things. Question and answer,- especially if you ask probing questions. Probing questions which will make the girls think. It's very important in home economics to make the girls understand why each step is carried out. You may be teaching on how to launder something,- soak the item; so the question is 'why do we soak the item?' So they have to answer the questions, which means they will know why each is carried out. In home economics those questions are very, very helpful. Instead of just writing the methods or instructions down without asking the girls. So, explanation, question and answer. (Brenda: ETHNO 9882-1003).

I always start with questions. What do they already know? Then theory on say the importance of eggs. As I said I like to have the actual things or the foodstuff in this case the eggs would be used on a discussion or a simple experiment on testing for the freshness of an egg. This promotes the participation of the girls as well. As I do this I continuously ask questions. Then I may give a group question. So they may go in groups of say people to discuss a question on taboos to do with eggs. After this they make class reports. Finally you make them copy a drawing of an egg which is labelled to show the parts and nutrients found in each part of the egg. in fact in such a lesson, the three periods go just like that - because its very interesting (Kate: ETHNO 3319-3339).

Furthermore questioning was perceived as useful for making students participate especially if the lesson being taught was dull and mostly theory oriented.

I also use a lot of question and answer to awaken them (students) to avoid having a dull class. When you are teaching a theory lesson, question and answer helps to make the class lively and less boring (Matilda: ETHNO2 1590-1598).

The lecture method was perceived as another regularly used method of teaching due to the existing situations when funds for obtaining teaching resources were limited. In fact, Monica and Dorothy felt that they used the lecture method in their teaching more than any other method.

With this system of cash budget the most frequently used method of teaching is the lecture. Because we are lacking the resources and we can't demonstrate so most of the time we do theory work (Monica: ETHNO 3873-3883).

As I said that the purpose is to keep the class active. I use the lecture because I find it's what works when I have so much to cover and also that most of the time we do not have resources for practical work. So I am actually giving them theory most of the times that we meet (Dorothy: ETHNO2 852-859).

The study noted that most teachers were frustrated with their teaching practices. In some cases they clearly stated that they found the subject dull and boring. These experiences were due to the fact that the teachers were no longer able to teach the subject the way they perceived to be effective. The restrictions due to the shortage of funds meant that they taught concepts more theoretically such as using the lecture method.

Well lecturing is dull but then it is the situation. Where funds are not available..., let me tell you that the teaching of home economics is no longer exciting. It is no more exciting, why? Because we no longer have funds to buy the teaching and learning items. If I am to be honest I think I use lecture method more in my teaching than discussion. The subject is now like history. Home economics should be teaching realities but now we are teaching in abstract. So skills that I use..., there isn't much really (Susan: ETHNO2 2093-2107).

The study noted that teachers perceived student centred teaching methods as more suitable for teaching home economics. Due to limited resources, however, they were forced to use teacher dominated strategies, such as the lecture method of teaching, more frequently.

Teaching skills

The teachers in this study perceived that for effective practice, the teacher should possess good practical skills in cookery, needlework as well as the general household and cleaning chores.

Well, you have to be good in all that you are teaching. For instance in cookery say you are demonstrating, you need to be an expert in that skill. So you need good skills and knowledge about food handling, methods of cooking and even techniques in special skills like use of different equipment. Same thing with needlework, good skills for making samples. Your samples have to be exemplary otherwise you don't give a good example to the class. You are setting a standard so its got to be the best (Naomi: ETHNO2 411-425).

On the practical side, a good teacher should have what I may call hands on skills. Say in cookery she should be knowledgeable on how to use the various kitchen equipment and machines, different recipes as well as methods of cooking. This comes with practice. You have to be doing it, practicing. Same thing in textiles. Think of pattern making without the knowledge of how to make them. Even just the knowledge is not enough, you need experience in the ways of cutting and altering the patterns; same with seams and so on. Book knowledge does not help that much. Practice is important (Kate: ETHNO 3430-3446).

Some teachers also expressed that in order to make the teaching of home economics in Malawi more meaningful, emphasis needed to be placed on use of local examples and customs. For instance, Susan observed that when she used local materials and food stuffs as opposed to the commonly practiced western dishes or practices, the students found it very interesting:

(The topic on) 'Types of families'..., boys and girls found it interesting to learn about nuclear families. We were trying to compare with the extended family that we are more used to. So they went into groups to discuss. Their group reports were very interesting. Another that I remember was on buffet meal. I used local foods. When we think of a buffet we think of western ideas such as soup, but these are not there in the Malawian diet. So I tried to think of Malawian meals. It was interesting we used *thobwa*.. That made it interesting (Susan: ETHNO2 2209-2224).

Good management skills were identified as an essential asset for good home economics teaching. The teachers noted that they were constantly dealing with issues to do with management of the home economics department, their classes and management of resources.

Planning was mentioned by all the teachers as an essential part of their teaching process. Planning enabled the teacher to plan lessons using what resources were available and make modifications on the method of teaching when necessary resources were not available. Planning was also important to the teachers because it enabled them to prepare lessons that suited the scope, and the nature of the students.

I think lesson planning is very, very important because when you are planning you also look at the resources you have and that means you can also make modifications on the method. Then you look at the scope, level of students. Lesson plan helps you to look at these and then what you have, before you actually meet the class, very very important (Shelly: ETHNO 2393-2403)

I think for me to come up with an effective lesson or a good lesson, much time has got to be spent on the planning of the lesson. Because whatever one plans and if that is implemented it means you come up with a good lesson. But if you plan badly, it means the lesson will also be a bad one. So at least some time should be spent on lesson planning. However, here at the sec school we don't literally sit down and write a lesson plan, but sometimes what I do is sit down and write some few steps or things that I want to cover in my lesson. Especially that I told you that sometimes we don't have resources. So in three periods if you don't plan, what are you going to do with the students? (Brenda: ETHNO 916-936).

In order to come up with an effective home economics lesson, the teachers said that much time was spent on the planning. The teachers felt that they needed to prepare for a lot more things in home economics than in any other lesson. For instance, if a demonstration was to be presented, there was need for the teacher to ensure that she had mastered the skills and this sometimes meant practicing before hand, or sometimes there was need for prior set up of the class or some other activity. All these made planning more time demanding.

Lesson planning is very important. In home economics it is especially important because you have a number of things that you have to prepare for. For instance if I have to present a demonstration, it means I have to go to the class early enough, make sure I have what I want and that I can do it. Some times I have to come to put some recipes on the board before my class comes. If I were to do all these things during home economics time then we would never finish anything. So actually what I would say is know what you are going to teach in a week in advance because there is a lot involved. So I always say that a home economics teacher is a busy teacher because of all these preparations. If you are to make ends meet all the time you have got to be active (Dorothy: ETHNO2 717-737).

The need for good organisation and proper record keeping was perceived as vital for any teacher in order for smooth running of the department as well as for accountability purposes. Susan explained that because of the practical nature of the subject one had to organise not just the lessons but the resources in the laboratories as well. This involved such activities as book and record keeping. In most cases this was with reference to particularly the needlework and the food and nutrition areas.

Firstly for a class to be organised, you have to be organised yourself. For instance you prepare in advance. It's a practical subject so to be organised you have to you have all your materials ready. Your book work should be organised and up to date. For both cookery and needlework your stock books should be ready. Management is not just the lessons but the equipment in the lab as well as your record books- stock book, accounts book, market book. If you have all these and well managed, then you will run well. So I am thinking of skills in record keeping (Susan: ETHNO2 2181-2198).

The teachers emphasised on the need for proper management of the limited resources in order to ensure that practical work was not wasteful. Teachers ensured that they gave specific rules on how the conduct of the practical work was to be done. They also ensured that they closely monitored the use of ingredients for the cookery practicals. A good home economics teacher was characterised as one that was 'active' in class.

For example, in cookery, especially the practical, that must be very well managed. And if you are just lazy, that is probably why we are always saying that we are out of resources. Because we don't manage them effectively. When you have got the rice, the sugar and the rest of them, you don't just leave them on the open for students to collect and use. You have to tell them that according to this recipe, maybe the recipe says 100g flour, but you can cut down so that the flour lasts longer: ok you are not going to use 100g, you are going to use 50g instead. But you know the girls are after eating, so if you stand very far, instead of getting 50g, they will get 90g, which means we have misused the resources. So it's again very very very important that you supervise how they get the ingredients, or even using water and so on. Sometimes they leave water running or they wash under a running sink. You have to train them how to use that water wisely or conserve by using a basin (Brenda: ETHNO 1187-1215).

Home economics is a practical subject. I always emphasise on weighing of things say..., ingredients. Say in baking, they have to take only the right amount of flour or ingredients needed. Or even when taking thread for sewing, they have to take only the required amount. Because usually there is a tendency among students to take too much. And then when planning..., say for a manual worker, one person, they have to take an amount for one person and they are told how much this is. And during the exams certain things are given straight to them so that they are not misused (Shelly: ETHNO 2494-2509).

All the teachers in the study thus described resourcefulness as an important teacher quality. They stated that as the situation was, if any teaching was to take place, they had to try and be very resourceful, otherwise the teaching of the subject would be very boring.

Susan and Naomi felt that home economics had to try to generate funds for their teaching in order to be able to meet the cost of purchasing teaching resources for practical lessons. Susan recalled her home economics income generating club at one of her previous schools as having been a useful solution to the financial problem in the subject. The funds generated were used for purchasing resources for practical lessons instead of always waiting to receive money from the school where in most cases, funds were not forthcoming. At Naomi's school, a similar project (club) was under way.

For the students when there are no practicals they find it very boring. When I was teaching at (my previous school) I borrowed some funds from the head master then and started a small business that we used to raise funds for home economics. What I used to do was that after classes each day I would work with two students from each class and bake some *mandasi*. They sold this to fellow school mates so we could finance our own practicals. The students were very motivated as we could do a practical any time we planned. I don't think this is still going on at (that school) (Susan: ETHNO2 2143-2158).

I should say that the subject, home economics is a practical one, but we are not doing that. Because of that I can not say we are teaching effectively. As a department, because of this we met and have agreed to start a club that will be run by students under our supervision. Students will contribute money and we will be preparing dishes such as cakes and the students will sell. These will be used as funds for running home economics practicals. We are hoping that this way each class will be able to have a practical every fortnight (Naomi: ETHNO2 449-464).

The teachers shared the view that class supervision was one of the important tasks in their teaching. They stated that with the large class sizes and the practical activities involved in the teaching, they did a lot of supervision in order to make the lessons proceed smoothly.

My role as a teacher..., I think we had done already done the theory part before, I had suggested on how to conduct the practical. So I had put them in groups and had asked them to come up with plan for the dishes that they were going to prepare. For instance some of the dishes they got from the books and some they made themselves. They listed the menus that they were to prepare. So I checked these, where necessary I cut down or added what was missing and so on. Then I gave them what they needed. When the practical day came, there was no theory they just came to their assignments and I was supervising them as they went on with their tasks. In the end we had time to discuss each dish. They were boarders so we didn't worry about time (Naomi: ETHNO2 375-377)

As a teacher I was going round making sure that everybody is participating. Because usually when you just leave them you find that some others are just standing doing nothing. And then there are roles changed. So you go round so that what they are doing is what you told them. And when they make mistakes, you correct them. In the end they are confident and happy (Margret: ETHNO 577-582).

All teachers described classroom communication as important for all teaching. They expressed the view that effective classroom communication depended on the teacher's approach. Generally teachers in this study did not feel that they had class communication problems because of the way they handled their students. Teachers felt that it was important in home economics to promote respect for one another and this was demonstrated by the way a teacher related to the students. In most cases this was with respect to the adolescent developmental level of the students at this time.

I think it all depends on how one handles the class. Say if students make noise and you tolerate that, the they will say that this teacher is easy going. But I think what is important is the first impression you give to the class. Once you have given the impression that you don't want this, it means they will always follow what you want.

So for my classes I would say the class relationship is always very good (Brenda: ETHNO 1048-1060).

Students relate to you the way you do to them. Especially that here we are dealing with adolescents. If you respect them and their feelings, then you are by all means going to have a good class environment. In home economics this is important because when they come, I am sure they don't feel the same way as they do when they go to their English classes. I always want them to feel at home. Look at one another as a family. But if one is not careful this can be dangerous as then the students may take it too easy. So to say on skills I think you have to know your students well. Be aware of what adolescents are and their needs. Be sensitive to them (Dorothy: ETHNO2 756-773).

Most of the teachers emphasised on instructional clarity as an important quality in teaching practical lessons as well as when students are to work in groups. The teachers stated that group work could easily result into a waste of time if no proper instruction was given at the beginning of the lesson. When this happened, students felt that home economics is not a serious subject. Matilda explained how she ensured that instruction was clear before assigning group work:

What I do is, sometimes within the lesson I put some group work. Maybe after teaching I put the girls into groups and they plan in preparation for another lesson when I know that the resources will be available. So I make the girls plan for whatever it is. Maybe I give them a question, then they plan depending on the lesson I had. They choose the meals in groups..., then later on..., but what is important is that before they go to those groups, they have to be sure of what they are going to do, and what the teacher expects of them in the end. So I give them instructions..., 'you go in groups of six. In those groups choose a secretary who is going to jot down what you are going to discuss and what is going to be reported to the whole class (Matilda: ETHNO2).

Dorothy, Susan, Brenda, and Martha described creativity as a vital teaching resource that they found very useful in teaching home economics. For example, a competent home economics teacher was perceived as one that was able to make lesson presentation interesting through use of visual aids.

Maybe I am creative. I try to think of all sorts of ways of introducing my topics to them I am also good with visual aids. Most of my colleagues even come to borrow my charts for their classes (Dorothy: ETHNO2 931-936).

The teachers also felt that although book knowledge was important in teaching home economics, it was important to find more creative and interesting ways of presenting this

knowledge. This was mostly because the teachers felt that most of the content knowledge from books was irrelevant and not reflecting the Malawian culture. They thus stressed that for competent practice one had to be able to interpret and relate the knowledge from the books to the Malawian setting. This was what they perceived made the lessons more effective as well as interesting. Commenting on this, Susan stated:

I should add on to say sometimes we teachers stick to what is in the book. We have to be open. Think of other ways of doing things, like I gave the example of using local resources instead of the western meals. Same thing with even charts, I use the back of a last year's calendar and make a big chart. So, think. Make the students alert to current issues. Like putting up news paper cuttings on the black board just to relate class topics to real life. So it really helps, but you have to put effort (Susan: ETHNO 2391-2404).

Use of visual aids was perceived as important for effective teaching. Because chart paper was not readily available, most teachers emphasised the fact that for competent practice, a home economics teacher needed be able to improvise. For instance, in the case of Susan above, she described the use of 'the backs of old calendars' for making posters.

Similarly, because of problems such as limited resources and peoples' negative attitudes towards the subject, Dorothy perceived assertiveness as an important quality for home economics teachers. She also expressed the need for home economics teachers to stand up for the things that they believed in. She stated:

I may add on to also say that I find that in home economics what really makes learning go on smoothly is a teacher's assertiveness. Sometimes its really difficult to get resources and if you just sit back, nothing will be done for you (Dorothy: ETHNO2 960-966).

In view of the existing problems as well as the environmental conditions in their teaching of the subject, almost every teacher in the study mentioned dedication to duty as important. They stated that the subject took a lot of one's time in order to teach it effectively. Most of this was as a result of the limited resources which meant teachers had to work out other ways of teaching with what was available. They thus, felt that it was because of their own

personal interest in the subject, dedication and a willingness to spend extra time, that it was possible for them to meet the demands of the subject.

To be a good home economics teacher you must have interest in the subject because it is very involving. It needs dedication. And also you need to develop good relationship skills with the girls because if you are harsh to them, that means they will be..., they want respond positively to you. You need to be dedicated to the subject (Monica: ETHNO 3976-3985).

To be a good home economics teacher you just have to be hard working yourself. You don't have to depend on the time given to you on the time table. Let's say you have to make samples, you can't make samples in class. When students come they have to find those samples ready. You need to make them in your own time, so it means if you are not dedicated, you teach without samples and or visual aids. And as I said if you are lazy and not dedicated the money could be there but if you are lazy and don't want to go to town to buy the resources or you don't want to set up...sometimes you may not teach a class because you have just been lazy to set up the trays or to bring the food from the store room to the table - but you need to sacrifice your time (Brenda: ETHNO 3976-3985).

Kate and Brenda described the home economics teacher as a role model. They felt that home economics teachers needed to practice what they taught in order to make it more meaningful to their students.

A Home economics teacher must be exemplary. You must try to reach the standards of what you are teaching. Think of teaching of cleanliness and yet you yourself are not clean it's obvious that the students are going to ridicule you. As I said you need well planned lessons as the girls are grown ups. If you get lost or run dry they know that you are stranded (Kate: ETHNO 3419-3428).

I think I am a good model to the students and they strive to get the same as I have shown to them and sometimes I even hold extra classes because usually we have disturbances- we go to a funeral, we have this and that disturbance, and the students know that we are behind. We just have to cover as much as possible. And I try to keep the department as clean as possible..., I have just arrived here and I haven't done much. But where I was, at (my previous school) I had some potted plants in the department and the girls would water. And you know what? The girls started looking for their own small pots and planted theirs at the hostels. And during the exams when they said clean and decorate your own living room, they used those same flowers. They brought into the living room making the room look live. So I feel maybe I am a good model to the students (Brenda: ETHNO 1558-1582).

Teachers in this study perceived that for competent practice a home economics teacher had to have good practical skills. This was mostly mentioned in relation to the food and nutrition and clothing and textiles areas. The discussions also showed the need for teachers to use local resources in teaching these areas. Good management skills such as effective planning,

class supervision, resource management and effective classroom communication were mentioned as critical for effective home economics teaching. Finally teachers also mentioned teacher characteristics such as dedication and resourcefulness as important for one to be able to teach the subject effectively.

Knowledge of Students

The way the teachers described their class teaching showed that, for the most part, they were guided by a consideration of the nature of the students they had. They also emphasised using procedures that promoted student learning and allowed learning to be transferable to their daily life environments. For instance, there was emphasis on the need for teaching that progressed from what students already knew to the unknown (or new knowledge) in order for them to grasp the information with ease. Kate stated:

I always feel that when you are teaching make sure that you move from what the students know to the new learning. So as a teacher you should first find what your class knows and then drive them to discover the days topic. I feel this works because after all home economics is supposed to be something with every day life (Kate: ETHNO 3403-3411).

Emphasising the need to teach from what students already knew and the need to relate learning to students' every day experiences, Matilda and Kelly described their lessons as follows:

Well it was on pregnant mothers. One I was just referring to. The students found it fascinating to find that we were discussing issues that are normally discussed by adults. It was mostly a theory lesson with some group work and discussions. What I was doing is to start by asking them questions first in order for them to recall what they already know from their home experiences. I know that each one of them has had an experience with pregnant mothers, sisters or a relative in the home. We discussed the theory behind the different activities, events, food taboos and many more. So I would say that it's important to make learning more relevant to the students' way of life and also to teach from known to unknown (Matilda: ETHNO2 1977-1687)

I began with taboos. Because they know what they are, and they told me how they come about. Then I introduced the concept of a vegetarian which I realised was not a familiar term to them. But when they understood what I meant they were motivated. In the end they planned vegetarian meals in groups and we finally discussed them as a class (Kelly: ETHNO2 1295-1304).

The teachers constantly compared themselves to beginning teachers and reflected on the knowledge that beginning teachers had as being insufficient for effective teaching. In most cases, they felt that the beginning teachers' knowledge was mostly content oriented and it did not have regard for the students' characteristics. Thus, for competent practice, there was emphasis on the nature of the student. These teachers felt that through their teaching they had acquired a way of understanding the students better which was important for home economics teaching. Suasa and Martha said:

Beginning teachers usually concentrate on book knowledge without really considering the child. But after teaching and knowing how the results come out, and then with some of the classes taking national exams, you know how to do some things. Reading is important. You stick to the book but you should also look at the child. So you are able to know at what level to start with the child. Beginning teachers don't know this and they just assume. And there are time when you just give too much. You plan too much for a class and you can even get discouraged when you find that a class can not grasp what you have been teaching. But after two to three years, you know that when these people just come in, this is the material they can handle. So I should move slowly, and then teach them this, they should practice and then they can apply (Shelly: ETHNO 2702-2725).

Well I would say that I am a lot more patient with the pupils. I understand them and I can tolerate some of the things that they do. I correct their mistakes without intimidating them, and I know they like me for that. Knowledge of students is also important and my experience in teaching helps me to understand them better (Matilda: ETHNO2 1756-1765).

The need to motivate students during class time was mentioned as another important teaching skill mentioned by the teachers. Mostly this was with respect to the nature of the time allocated to home economics; usually three continuous periods of forty minutes each - making a total of two hours per lesson. So, one had to keep the students interested in the learning up to the end of the three periods. Use of visual aids, as mentioned earlier, was the most frequently used strategy for this purpose. Although most resources such as chart paper were scarce, and no such facilities as the video were ever available in these schools, some of the teachers felt that the nature of the subject was such that they could use anything from the home to facilitate learning. For instance, Martha explained this as follows:

I believe in using visual aids. And in home economics there are a lot of things that you can use to motivate your lessons. Unlike other subjects, we deal with real life situations so I try to utilise these. In food and nutrition you can find the actual food or use pictures of food. They are found in almost every magazine, *ndimachita kusankha*.

Say I am teaching on family, why not start with my own family pictures. So I would say the secret is to be realistic (Martha: ETHNO2 2592-2604).

In conclusion, home economics teachers in this study identified the teachers' knowledge of their students as important for effective teaching. A competent teacher was described as one who was able to identify students' prior knowledge and teach from known to unknown: that is, teaching that progressed from what was known by the learner to the new knowledge. The teachers placed emphasis also on making teaching relevant to everyday life situations. Use of visual aids was identified as a method that motivated students during lessons. While some teachers complained of the acute scarcity of resources in the schools, some teachers in the study felt that the nature of the subject was such that a teacher could not completely be without a visual aid. They stated that in home economics, one could easily make use of anything found in the home and bring to class as a visual aid to stimulate the class.

Perception of content

The teachers in this study perceived possession of adequate content (subject matter) knowledge as important in their teaching. Shelly stated that the teacher had to be a master in her subject:

One must have the interest (in the subject) and you have to know what you are doing. You should be a master of your subject (Shelly: ETHNO 2682-2686).

As stated previously, the teachers also shared the view that the secondary school home economics syllabuses were very broad and unspecific. Furthermore, the study found that most teachers did not feel that they were adequately competent in all the content areas of the subject. For instance, Naomi made the following observation:

The syllabus is wide especially the junior one, I always wish the subject was divided into two. I am competent in needlework, but I can't say the same for the other area. There are so many things involved. Needlework, I can do anything. But generally the content in the integrated syllabus is very wide (Naomi: ETHNO2 581-590).

The study noted that the teachers were all more comfortable talking about the food and nutrition and needlework areas, than all the other home economics areas. Some of the skills mentioned as necessary for competent teaching in this area included good knowledge and skills in cookery, management of the laboratory and laboratory equipment, supervision, and good teacher-student relationships.

Food and nutrition is the part that makes home economics more practical. So I would say that as a teacher I should have good knowledge to do with cookery, management of the laboratory as well as lab equipment..., I think you also have to be good with handling students and supervising them. Because the way we relate to them. I think in home economics we are closer to them and if you are not careful, they can take control of your class. So you really have to know your work, how it is done as well as how to handle your class (Matilda: ETHNO2 1705-1715).

Food and nutrition; you need skills in cookery, that is like methods of cooking, you also have to read widely to have good knowledge of nutrition. Clothing and textiles you are talking of being able to sew, make pattern and of course know the theory as well. Human development, this sometimes is attached to food and nutrition- so I teach them while integrated. So its some theory and some practical knowledge as well (Kelly: ETHNO2 1320-1331).

Food and nutrition is practical. For example when you are teaching on eggs the best way is to start with importance of eggs, uses of eggs, composition etcetera and then you do a practical on eggs. So you start with theory and finish off with a practical. These should compliment each other (Kate: ETHNO 3308-3315).

Brenda described the skills needed in teaching the needlework area as follows:

When you are a clothing and textiles teacher definitely you should have the skills in the subject. You need to have skills and knowledge in embroidery, you need skills in sewing, crocheting and so on if you are to be able to impart the knowledge to the students. You need knowledge and skills in cutting out, how to use patterns, and the like. Otherwise the girls will just make a mess of whatever they are going to make (Brenda: ETHNO 1451-1461).

The teachers shared the view that the food and nutrition and needlework areas were what contribute to the practical nature of the subject. In both areas, they perceived that for a teacher to teach well, one must have good practical skills.

Food and nutrition, I think there should be a lot of skills we should have in order to teach this area. Firstly we need the knowledge, the subject matter. And then the skills in how to handle the various components that are in the subject. I am thinking of skills in methods of cooking, food preservation..., there is a lot. Needlework is the same. Because these are practical areas, the teacher has to know how to do the practical skills

in order to demonstrate or make samples for the teaching (Martha: ETHNO2 2625-2639).

For clothing and textile, it's..., we do the patterns, you teach them how to cut, so when we are doing the cutting we are supposed to show them how to cut and the like. So it's the same. But in housing and environment, most of the time it's theory, not much practical. The same thing for human development. Of course in human development we may take the students to the hospital, - say on child care, or sometimes we bring the child to the class (Margret: ETHNO 461-475).

Naomi was the only teacher in this study who expressed more confidence in the needlework area. Most of the teachers described the needlework area as a difficult part to teach stating that the level of practical skills required for a teacher to teach effectively needed to be quite high.

Well, personally, I find clothing and textiles tough to teach. Maybe because I think it is very practical and you can not run away from them. To teach it, you really have to do practicals and you should be good at it. It's unlike the food and nutrition section where some times you just apply knowledge in your daily life. (Susan: ETHNO2 2247-2255).

Clothing and textiles is also very practical and success of lessons depends on how good you as a teacher are. As I said earlier on, that makes the learning sound relevant to your pupils (Matilda: ETHNO2 1716-1721).

Most teachers felt they had inadequate knowledge especially for the areas of housing and environment and family resource management. They expressed their personal need for subject matter knowledge in these areas. Expressing this concern, Matilda and Kelly stated:

I find topics on housing and environment difficult to teach. Maybe I do not have enough background in this area. And since college, I haven't had a chance to have anything more so, my knowledge I think is limited. However, what I do is to take the class for field visits. But this is not like we do most of the time because sometimes the places that I want to take them are very far and we have no transport. But all in all a home economics teacher should always start from what her students know in order to make learning relevant. As for the skills, I would say, as much as possible be able to perform the practical skills at a high level. What I know is that a teachers' experience helps to perfect skills. Like when I just started and now, I know that I am much better (Matilda: ETHNO2 1731-1752).

Family resource management and housing I think they are the same. I always find that I have to do a lot of search for information in order to cover the topics. So I would say I have insufficient content material and I always feel that is what a teacher should look for in order to teach it well (Kelly: ETHNO2 1338-1347).

On the other hand, Susan felt that the area of family resource management was an important part. She noted that families were constantly dealing with management of resources in the home every day and yet not much of this was included in their teaching.

For family resource, I wish the curriculum had more of this. Because this is the part we are dealing with in our every day life, we need more of it. However, I think the knowledge we gained in college needed more substance. Most of us our knowledge is limited to college information.... so maybe this is why it's not covered to the full. You know there is very little we cover in the syllabus (Susan: ETHNO2 2256-2268)

The teachers in this study perceived that for effective teaching, a teacher had to be competent in both the practical skills as well as the subject matter knowledge in each of the home economics areas covered in the syllabus. The study also found that the teachers perceived that there were differences in the type of practical skills and content knowledge required to teach each of the home economics areas. Furthermore, it was noted that there were differences in areas in which the teachers felt confident. While all felt confident with the food and nutrition area, most of them perceived the needlework area to be difficult because of the practical skills required. They also expressed lack of content material for the family resource management and housing areas. Yet they were expected to teach all these areas. It was noted that such feelings made the teachers feel inadequate.

Shelly expressed the feeling that some of the inadequacies felt were a reflection on how the subject was taught at college during teacher training. She stated that while in college home economics was taught as separate units; such as food and nutrition, textiles and design, at secondary school, the teacher was supposed to teach these as an integrated unit. She observed that most beginning teachers had problems in integrating the units as they were not viewed as a union but separate components. She stated:

I think there is a problem. Sometimes you teach them the way they were taught to you in college. In college they are handled separately. But looking at them, they are not separate subjects. For example, clothing and textiles..., I think I find it tough because I use the same materials I developed in college. Here, because of shortage of resources its not handled to the full. Also in human development, you know it goes together with..., food and nutrition as well as clothing and textiles. They are interrelated. If say the university people or those that deal with these, if they handled it as one, teachers in the field would not find problems especially beginners. Beginners are usually at a loss.

Most of them are interested in clothing and textiles and food and nutrition which is ok for forms one and two. When they go to form three you find that..., especially clothing and textiles, it is ignored (Shelly: ETHNO 2617-2614)

In summary, the study noted that the teachers felt that for effective practice a home economics teacher needed to be competent in all the subject matter areas of the subject. The teachers noted in most cases that they were competent in some areas and not others. Such feelings made them feel inadequate because they were expected to teach all the content areas of the integrated home economics syllabus. The study noted also that there were differences in the way teachers perceived their own levels of competence in the content areas. Only one teacher expressed more competence in the needlework area. The majority of them felt this was a difficult area to teach due to the high level of practical skills required to be able to teach it. It was also noted that most teachers felt inadequate in the family resource management and housing and environment areas.

SUMMARY

The results from this study show that the teachers perceived the primary aim in teaching home economics as to train girls in domestic skills and chores which would prepare them for their future roles in womanhood. This was evident even in the type of practical activities involved in the lesson.

A number of problems were identified which teachers perceived to be obstacles to effective and competent teaching of home economics. The teachers shared the view that the challenge to teach effectively and competently in view of all these limitations was not easy. This study did not set out to look at problems faced in the teaching of the subject, however, reference to the problems was inevitable as they were perceived as affecting a major part of the teachers' teaching experiences. Throughout the discussions, problems experienced from the schools' environment were used as a basis for viewing competence. The problems encountered included:

- (1) shortage of teaching resources;
- (2) lack of funding;

- (3) large class sizes;
- (4) no teacher incentives such as in-service courses;
- (5) a wide syllabus content; and
- (6) negative perceptions of the subject.

The teachers described an effective home economics lesson as that which had some practical activity. In most cases, practical activity referred to cookery. It was noted in this study, however, that not much of such practical activity was done in practice due to the financial constraints in the schools.

The teachers in the study described the need for adequate subject matter knowledge in teaching each of the content areas in the subject. The content of the integrated home economics syllabus was perceived by teachers in this study as wide and diversified. Competencies necessary for teaching the different content areas of the subject were perceived also as different.

Management skills were perceived as important in teaching home economics in order for the teachers to manage the large classes, be able to conduct meaningful practical lessons and to utilise and maximise the limited resources.

Throughout the study the teachers constantly reflected on teacher qualities such as dedication, resourcefulness and inventiveness as being important teacher characteristics to meet the needs of the subject in view of the many limitations in the environment.

Finally, teachers in the study perceived that student centred teaching strategies were more effective in their teaching. Use of a variety of teaching strategies and techniques that promoted and related learning to the students' everyday home environment were some of the experiences that the teachers felt were more effective in their teaching.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this study was to understand how home economics teachers perceived and experienced competent practice in their day to day teaching. The study found three main areas which were notable in the way the teachers reflected upon and recalled their teaching experiences. These areas were:

- (1) The environmental context which was mostly characterised by a number of problems which the teachers reflected upon as being in conflict with their picture of effective classroom teaching.
- (2) The subject matter context (or content of home economics) which was a significant focus for describing effective teaching as well as their teaching competencies.
- (3) The classroom practices which the teachers used to meet their teaching goals.

This discussion will, therefore, be guided by these three areas.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT.

The findings of this study show that home economics teachers in Malawi perceived competent practice in relation to a number of problems experienced in the environmental context. Figure 4.1 is a framework showing how competent home economics teaching was perceived by teachers in the study. In figure 4.1, the three interlocking circles show that teachers perceived that their ability to successfully teach the subject matter knowledge was limited by the conditions in the schools' environment. Similarly, the schools' environment posed limitations on their choice of classroom practices. Their ability to identify classroom practices to meet the demands of the subject within the constraints of the environment was, therefore, what was perceived as competent practice. This is indicated by the shaded area.

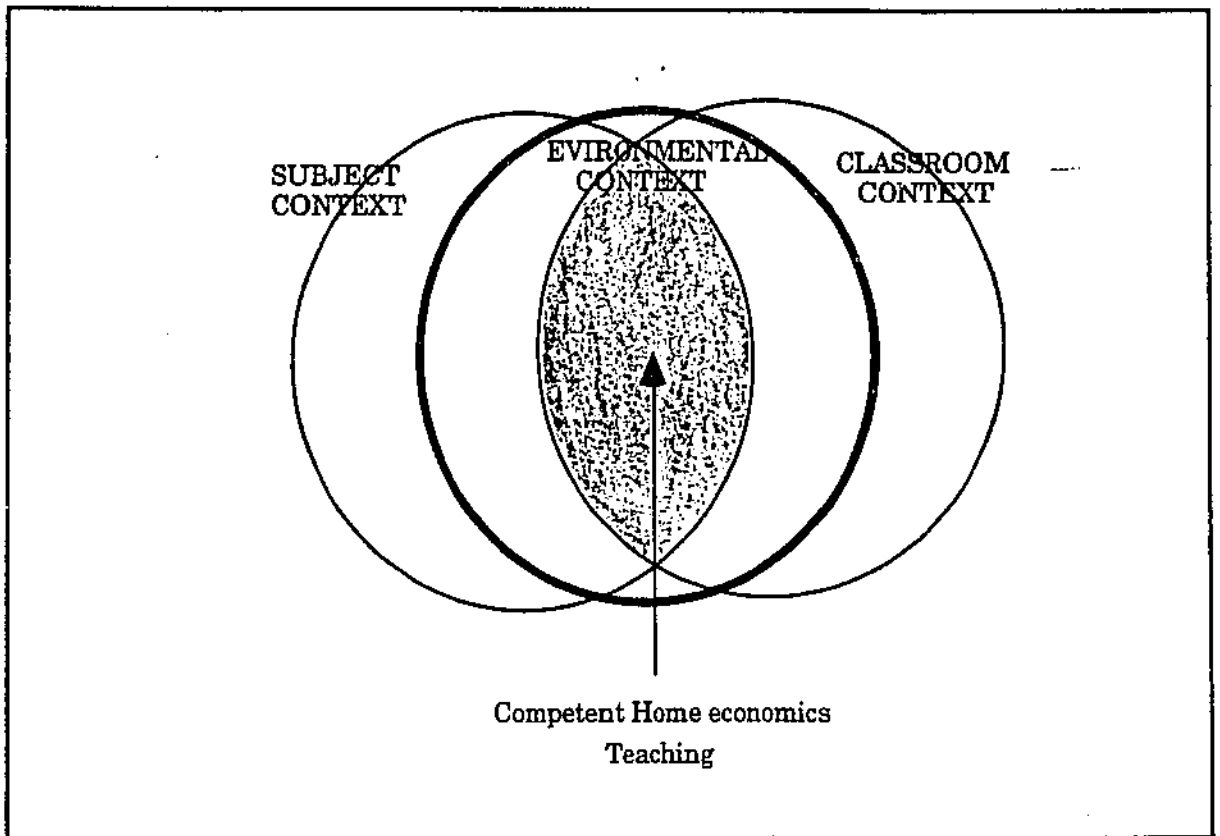


Figure 5.1 Framework of how competent home economics teaching was perceived by teachers in the study.

The problems which were described as characteristic of the schools' environmental context were: large class sizes; shortage of teaching resources; a wide syllabus content; lack of teacher incentives such as in-service courses; and negative perceptions of the subject. These problems were constant and overarching constraints on the teachers' ability to teach the subject matter knowledge effectively as well as on the practices used in teaching the subject.

The findings of this study show that problems experienced from the schools' environmental context were perceived as important for understanding the nature of home economics teaching in Malawi. This finding bears some similarities to those of several other earlier studies in teaching which emphasise the significant role played by teaching contexts. For instance, a study by Yahnke (1995) on competencies for beginning home economics teachers identified the learning environment as a very important factor in teaching. Using descriptive statistics, Yahnke's study established that both experienced teachers and teacher educators

perceived the ability to create a conducive learning environment as the most important competence for beginning home economics teachers. Brown & McIntyre (1993) found that the environmental conditions of teaching had profound effects on what teachers did and the standards they expected to achieve. They noted that the conditions impinging upon teaching were crucial in framing the way teachers evaluated their own teaching. The conditions identified as impinging on teaching in the Brown & McIntyre study included: time, material resources, pupils, teachers, and content. The interplay of these variables was important in understanding how teachers perceived their achievements in the Brown & McIntyre study.

Effective schools research focused primarily on school climate conditions associated with desired school outcomes (Brophy & Good, 1986). Recent research has emphasised the role played by the school climate as the context of teachers' work (McLaughlin, Talbert & Bascia 1990; Rosenholtz, 1991). In support of the significance of the environmental context of schools, McLaughlin et al. (1990) stated:

At the most fundamental level, context matters because effective teaching depends on teachers' opportunity to choose materials, objectives, and activities they believe are appropriate for themselves and their students. Does the curriculum fit the class? Does it fit the interest and background of the teacher? Are the necessary materials available. These factors have a great impact on what teachers can do (McLaughlin et al., 1990, p. 2).

In the present study shortage of teaching resources was a common problem. Most schools had only two or three home economics text books which were used by the teachers as reference books. The teachers felt that for effective and competent practice, students needed to have textbooks so that teachers could plan reading activities or assign some reading for home work. As McLaughlin et al. (1990) had noted, teachers in the present study felt that these problems affected what they could do in class. The study noted that the problems affected not only teaching performance, but also how the teachers described competent practice. The general feeling was that the environmental limitations restricted teaching to certain practices. In most cases these were teacher-centred as opposed to student-centred techniques - the latter of which the teachers felt was more effective for the teaching of the subject.

The problem of limited teaching resources is a common one in most developing countries. Heyneman (1984) noted that this led to rote learning. Heyneman (1984) stated that it was hard to imagine that "any pedagogy is feasible other than memorisation when the students have no books, maps or other pedagogical resources" (p. 295). Because of such limited conditions, for a long time research in schools of developing countries has noted the prevalence of practices that support teacher dominance over passive learners (Heyneman, 1984; Rowell & Prophet, 1990). Exhortations to change the quality of teacher-student interactions have been criticised because they fail to take into account the social and economic context of the schools (Rowell, 1995). Teachers in the present study perceived that for effective and competent home economics teaching, student-centred approaches were more appropriate. Due to the conditions in the schools, however, classroom practices were mostly teacher-centred. This observation calls for a need to examine closely the existing home economics curriculum in relation to the social and economic situation of schools in Malawi.

There was a general feeling expressed by the teachers that the home economics curriculum was very wide. Coupled with problems such as lack of reference books and no in-service training, the teachers expressed feelings of inadequacy and lack of confidence. They stated that for effective practice one had to be confident in what one was teaching. This could only be achieved if they had the relevant reference materials and an update of knowledge through in-service courses. Studies such as those of McLaughlin et al. (1990), Rosenholtz (1991) and Wilson & Corcoran (1988) have emphasised the significance of in-service in teaching. Little (1991) noted that:

In the absence of opportunity to add to their professional competence and stature, teachers who are otherwise well motivated to develop may experience frustration, alienation, an eventual decline in performance, and for some, departure from the occupation (Little, 1991, p. 204).

It was noted during this study that home economics had no subject inspector at the Ministry of Education headquarters. A subject inspector was a person who was responsible for

control and coordination of professional issues in a particular subject. Furthermore, at the time of this study, the Home Economics Association of Malawi, which was a professional body that coordinated home economics issues throughout the country, had been inactive for more than five years. It was not surprising, therefore, to note that the teachers in this study described their daily practice with a lot of dissatisfaction and frustration. Competent practice was perceived in terms of how one was able to overcome the problems facing the subject during teaching. There is a great need to find ways of promoting professional development activities in order to eliminate some of the frustration that home economics teachers were already experiencing in Malawi. Professional development activities help to create communication between practicing teachers, teacher educators and curriculum developers. Such communication is essential for the maintenance of a balance between classroom practices and current professional changes in the field.

Negative perceptions of the subject was another common problem mentioned by the teachers. According to the teachers, both school administrators and fellow members of the teaching staff shared negative perceptions of home economics. Teachers felt this made teaching difficult especially when one requested funds for practical work. The teachers stated that most people believed that all that the home economics teachers did was cook and eat. Negative perception of home economics in school seems to prevail in many societies. For instance, in the Australian society, Smit (1992) noted that home economics teachers were concerned with the way parents and even fellow teachers perceived their subject. Home economics was regarded as concerned with just 'cooking and sewing' and in some cases, 'the basic skills in life'. It would seem that it is just these basic tasks that people outside home economics see in the subject. There is a need for home economics teachers to be able to practice and perform in ways that would enable people outside the subject to see beyond the 'cooking and sewing' if this image problem is to be resolved.

There are many studies in home economics that have identified similar problems as those experienced in the present study (Smit, 1992; Eghan, 1989; Waudo 1993). The

immediate cause of the problems experienced in the present study was lack of financial support which was as a result of the financial situation in the schools. Eghan (1989) and Waudo (1993) noted that in order to improve teaching of home economics in most African countries, there is need to consider certain other factors such as relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the local people. They noted that in most African countries, the home economics content focussed on western culture even though it was not relevant to the life style of people in these countries. Such practices made home economics an expensive subject. The home economics syllabus in the Malawi schools was last revised in 1989. A close examination of the syllabus would help to find ways of how to contain the subject within the current school budget to make it possible to teach.

In general, the teachers in this study perceived that their teaching practices as well as ability to effectively teach the prescribed home economics content were limited by the problems experienced in the schools' environmental context. For this reason competent practice was perceived in terms of one's ability to find ways of overcoming the limitations and manage to teach the subject effectively.

THE SUBJECT MATTER CONTEXT

Two subject matter issues were evident in the teachers' discussions. Firstly, teachers perceived that the content of the subject was wide and diversified. Secondly, it was noted that teachers in this study perceived that for effective teaching, classroom experiences needed to include a lot of practical activities. However, due to the limitations in the school contexts, this was not always possible. These issues are discussed below.

Perception of content

The teachers in this study described the content of home economics as wide and diversified. They also stated that the competencies required for teaching the different content areas were different. Because of this, some teachers such as Naomi felt the content of the subject needed to be split into two separate subjects: needlework and home economics. This

reflected the definition of home economics by Henry (1995) which highlights the multi-disciplinary nature of home economics. Teachers, in most cases, expressed more confidence with the knowledge from one discipline and did not find it easy to apply it to other areas related to a different discipline. For example, most teachers in the present study felt that they had inadequate knowledge in the family resource and housing and environment areas. Most of the teachers felt that they did not have adequate subject matter knowledge to teach these areas with confidence. The teachers stated that to be a good home economics teacher, one had to be a 'master' in all the five content areas of home economics since they taught all the areas. Yet none of the teachers expressed confidence in all the areas. Such experiences gave the teachers feelings of inadequacy. Competence in the subject matter knowledge was perceived as very important for effective home economics teaching.

Other teachers, such as referred to their college experiences as having contributed to some of the inadequacies experienced. They expressed concern that the subject was taught as individual units during the teacher training and yet in school it was taught as an integrated unit. Teachers stated that most beginning teachers found it difficult to teach because of this. This observation reflects on one of the problems in home economics presented in the literature on the issue of specialisation. While most institutions of higher learning emphasise specialisation in a quest for depth, many professionals in home economics have expressed their concern over this. They have argued that specialisation has resulted in home economics losing its integrative perspective. It has been argued that increased specialisation in the quest for depth has resulted in home economists that are less effective in their work (Brown, 1985; McCallers, 1987; Horn, 1988; Lay & Webb-Lupo, 1988; Vincenti, 1990). Vincenti (1990) stated that "While the field is becoming increasingly specialised, it is neglecting or deliberately weakening the integrative aspects of its individual higher-education curricular and of its accreditation standards" (p. 187). These issues have implications on pre-service training of teachers. There is a need to find ways of communicating such subject matter issues so that they can be revisited and addressed properly either during teacher training or through in-service training.

In general, competence in the subject matter knowledge of home economics was perceived as important for effective home economics teaching. This result supports the findings of Ball & McDiarmid (1990), Mullens, Murnane, & Willet (1996), the teacher knowledge literature as cited by Shulman (1987) and the findings of Yahnke, (1994) which identified subject matter knowledge as important knowledge in teaching. Mullens et al. (1996) in their study of mathematics teachers' knowledge, concluded that teacher knowledge of mathematics teaching is critical for effective teaching. They concluded from their study that:

This connection between a teacher's mathematical competence and students' learning seems logical, as a teacher's own high score reflects superior achievement and understanding. Because these teachers are more comfortable with the advanced math concepts than teachers with lower scores, they are more likely to introduce and thoroughly explain these topics. Consequently, their students are more likely to demonstrate mastery of advanced concepts in the examination (Mullens et al. 1996, p.154).

Similarly, it seems logical that mastery of the home economics content knowledge should be perceived as an important competence for effective teaching.

The evidence found in the literature, however, indicates the existence of a debate over whether subject-matter or pedagogy is the important prerequisite for effective teaching. According to Ferguson & Womack (1993), there is scarce evidence to support that subject-matter expertise makes a person a good teacher of that subject. Studies comparing the teaching effectiveness of liberal arts graduates with that of graduates in education by Denton & Lacina (1984) and Grossman (1990), showed a higher rate for education majors than non-education graduates on classroom management skills, pedagogical content knowledge, and on their ability to relate content to the students' knowledge and interests. These findings are of importance especially to teacher educators. The present study has shown that there is a perception that competence in subject matter knowledge is important for effective home economics teaching. However, the studies reviewed, suggest that the need to ensure that this is not done at the expense of knowledge of general pedagogy.

Practical skills

Another significant subject matter issue noted was the nature of practical activities as described by teachers in the study. The teachers stated that for effective practice, a teacher had to be competent in practical skills. The teachers in this study described an effective home economics lesson as constituting such activity as teacher demonstrations, explanation of definitions by the teacher, and student practice. Thus a lesson encompassed both theory and practical activities. The practical part was described as involving activities such as cooking, sewing, and cleaning. Among other reasons, the teachers shared the view that the practical part was an important component because it helped to motivate students due to the nature of the activities undertaken in the lessons.

The teachers saw home economics as a practical subject where students learned new knowledge and skills which could be used for the improvement of life in their homes. There are two meanings of 'practical' as used in home economics. According to Brown (1993), the first meaning of practical was derived from the realisation that the knowledge in home economics is concerned with using concrete situations involving action by the family. This is the meaning that is perceived necessary for achieving the goals of home economics education (Brown, 1993; Baldwin 1989). The second meaning of practical is concerned with norms or values as standards socially accepted as authoritative or justifiable (Brown 1993). This second meaning leads to home economics curriculum that has a focus on management - "a focus which reinforces a technical orientation to the family and family life which is contradictory to the aims of home economics" (Baldwin, 1986, p. 4). The meaning of practical in the present study was limited to this second meaning. This was reflected in the definition of practical lessons as constituting activities such as cooking, cleaning and laundry. Teaching emphasised the acquisition of skills and the technical know-how of doing certain processes and procedures in a certain way that was considered correct. Smit (1991) questioned the value of credentials acquired through study in such practice. Eghan (1989) argued that such practice only perpetuates the negative perceptions of the subject. Recent literature in home economics criticises teaching that puts more emphasis on this technical approach. The current trend has

been to shift from the traditional approach, which focuses on attainment of domestic skills, to a focus on critical thinking and problem solving skills as the primary aims of home economics teaching (Eghan, 1989). Baldwin (1989) argued that this is what can help to create a home economics curriculum that is socially and morally defensible.

There were some teachers in this study who questioned the credibility of some of the practical activities. For instance, Dorothy questioned practical activities such as sweeping as being obvious and common practice to any Malawian girl and that it did not necessarily have to be taught in class. On the other hand, Susan felt that while it was true that teaching should focus on development of critical thinking and problem solving, the nature of the existing syllabus necessitated an emphasis on practical skills. This was why the teachers felt they needed to be competent in practical skills and the technical know-how of practical work. There was more emphasis for the need for practical skills especially for teaching the areas of food and nutrition and needle work. In most cases, the definitions for the class activities implied an emphasis on the technical approach to home economics. For instance, important skills for teaching needlework included skills and knowledge in embroidery, in sewing, crocheting, cutting and pattern making. Important teaching skills for teaching food and nutrition were described as good knowledge and skills in cookery, management of the laboratory as well as laboratory equipment, supervision, and good teacher-student relationships. The problem then was, as outlined earlier, resources for teaching in such a manner were, in most cases, not available. To the teachers, this meant that they could not have the necessary practice that would help to improve their practical skills for teaching purposes.

The practical part was perceived as important also because at the end of the second and fourth years of secondary school, students are expected to sit for examinations which included some practical work. Lack of practice during class time meant that the students' performance during examinations would be poor. The national examinations are prepared and controlled by a central examining body known as the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB). These exams are conducted nation wide so they can not take into account what has been taught

in one class but are based on the whole syllabus. If teaching practices in home economics are to be improved, change must begin with the syllabus documents. So long as the syllabus perpetuates the technical approach, teachers would continue to teach in a similar manner in order to enable their students to perform well in the national examinations. There is need for a critical examination of the current syllabus documents in order to promote change that will allow for appropriate teaching practices and development in home economics.

CLASSROOM PRACTICES.

The way teachers perceived what the aims for teaching home economics were and what an effective lesson ought to be, were noted as important factors that determined their choice of classroom practices. Similarly, these issues helped to shape an understanding of how the teachers interpreted competent practice in the subject.

Perceived aims of home economics teaching

At the beginning of each interview the teachers were asked to describe or explain what they felt to be the main aim of home economics teaching from their daily experiences. The purpose of this question was to find out what the teachers believed to be the central theme in home economics teaching as well as in the existing syllabuses. Research in education indicates that teachers treat their beliefs as knowledge (Grossman, Wilson & Shulman, 1989). Studies of teacher thinking and decision making also show that the way teachers interpret and implement curriculum is influenced by their knowledge and beliefs (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Romberg & Carpenter, 1986). In a study of mathematics teaching, Thompson, (1992) noted that the teachers' conception of mathematics affected their conception of how it should be taught. He thus argued that one's manner of presenting was an indication of what one believed to be most essential in the subject. In defining what was meant by teachers' conceptions of mathematics, he described it as:

What teachers consider to be desirable goals of the maths program, his or her own role in teaching the students, appropriate classroom activities, desirable instructional approaches and emphasis, legitimate mathematical procedures, and acceptable outcomes of instruction are all part of the teachers' conception of maths teaching (Thompson, 1992, p. 135).

Similarly, Eghan (1989) observed that the way leaders and educators perceive problems determines their willingness as well as the way they handle the problem. She stated:

Perceptions and attitudes influence interpersonal relationships, decision making and other aspects of social life. More over, part of and process of change and development is the perception people have of it and the impact it has on their lives. Therefore the way leaders and educators perceive a particular reality determines the extent to which they are willing to consider appropriate action for addressing the problem (Eghan, 1989, p. 210).

Consequently, the way these teachers perceived the central themes of the content was likely to have significant effect on their choice of actions in the teaching of home economics.

The teachers in the present study described the aim of home economics mostly as the preparation of girls for their future traditional domestic roles. The aims of home economics outlined in the syllabuses (Appendices B and C) do not necessarily suggest any gender bias in the subject. Some of the teaching and learning tasks, however, do suggest some bias. For instance in the JCE syllabus (Appendix C) needle work articles prepared include such things as a night dress and child's dress. The teachers in this study also described the practical part of home economics as consisting of such activity as cookery, laundry, cleaning rooms and child care. All these suggest a domestic perspective.

Education of women for their domestic or feminine role is one of the early home economics models that has persisted in the subject (East, 1980). Most feminist research has accused home economics for perpetuating traditional sex stereotypes to the disadvantage of women (Eyre, 1989; Peterat, 1990; Thompson, 1986). Eghan (1989) argued that emphasis on traditional domestic tasks in the teaching of home economics has contributed to the negative perceptions of the subject. On the other hand, home economists argue for the need for the recognition, of the value of this female dominated sphere in its own virtue (Thompson, 1986). Thompson (1986; 1992) noted the existence of two spheres in the space occupied by human action: the public and the private spheres. The public sphere is visible and masculine. By

contrast, the private is invisible and feminine. Home economics belongs to the private sphere. Since the two systems exist simultaneously, each dependant on the other (Thompson, 1986), then none should be perceived as more superior than the other.

As the twenty first century approaches, it is necessary to consider whether it is enough that home economics should focus primarily on teaching of domestic skills. Changes in sex roles, social and economic demands as well as changes in education, require that girls are well prepared not only in the private domestic sphere but for the work place as well. There is need to find ways of focusing teaching to current trends if home economics is to continue to exist in the school curriculum. Smit (1992) argued that this could be achieved by challenging the fact that domestic skills for girls is the only outcome in home economics. She stated that "moving from a technical skills approach to a more critical approach would challenge the importance of the knowledge dimension of 'cooking' and 'sewing'" (pp. 64-65). Furthermore, Smit (1992) argued that such a critical perspective would allow the exploration of alternative possibilities, new ideas and new responses in home economics.

Teachers in this study perceived home economics as primarily for the preparation of girls for their future traditional domestic roles. On the other hand, all the teachers that had some boys in their classes stated that the subject was also relevant to the boys. They also stated that they did not have to change their teaching in order to suit the boys. This seemed contradictory. The current trend in home economics is to encourage boys to take the subject. Educators who support coeducational home economics claim that when home economics is taught in a co-educational setting, the subject no longer contributes to the maintenance of traditional gender stereotypes since it promotes equal participation of both boys and girls in the private sphere (Eyre, 1989). Eyre (1989) described this as "a liberal-feminist equal opportunity solution to gender equity" (p. 22). Eyre, nevertheless, questioned the assumptions held by co-educational home economics. For instance, she noted that liberal feminism attempts to overcome stereotyping primarily through use of non-gender specific language, and through use of illustrations which show both women and men participating in home making and parenting

activities. Eyre (1989) criticised this approach stating that it attempts to allow "unexamined, masculine values to influence curriculum content and classroom pedagogy in home economics"(p. 23). She also noticed that in using this idea, home economics non-gender specific concepts such as family life cycle, parenting, aging, adolescence, violence and communication, are perceived as the same experiences for both men and women, when in reality, they were not.

Furthermore, a study by Eyre (1988, cited in Eyre 1989), in a co-educational food and nutrition classroom revealed that the females took control of domestic tasks and directed action in the settings. The females frequently told the male students what to do and how to perform tasks correctly. Boys were directed to fetch items and they responded to the girls' directions. Girls frequently attempted to correct boys' behaviour in the domestic setting. At the same time, analysis of teacher-student interaction revealed that male students demanded and received more attention from the teacher than did the female students. Boys received more attention because they were unable to perform certain tasks and because they more frequently engaged in off-task behaviour (Eyre, 1989 p. 23). There is need to ensure that co-educational practices in home economics are to the benefit of both boys and girls. In the present study, all the teachers that had boys in their classes stated that the boys in the classes were more active and more motivated to learn than the girls. There is need for further research on the impact of co-education home economics on classroom teaching in Malawi. This can help to clarify the causes of the difference between boys' and girls' participation and motivation as noted by teachers in the present study.

Teacher perceptions of effective practice

There are many studies that have identified characteristics of effective classroom learning and competent teaching (Brophy & Good, 1986; Doyle, 1990; Good & Caslin 1992; Yahnke, 1995). The following are some of the findings that these researchers identified as characteristics of effective teaching: appropriate teacher expectations; creation of an atmosphere that promotes learning; good class management skills; active involvement of students during

teaching; teaching to mastery; warm teacher personality; and decision making skills. Teachers in the present study shared the view that for effective teaching and learning, more student centred approaches should be used in home economics. Other characteristics described included: active participation of students throughout the lessons; teaching that showed an understanding of the nature of the students; teaching that progressed from what the students knew to the unknown (or new knowledge); and the need to make classroom activity relevant to the students' home environment. Furthermore, the teachers in the present study felt that for effective practice, motivation of students should be emphasised. These results support and validate the earlier studies.

The methods of teaching that teachers in the present study stated that they used frequently and were most relevant for effective practice were group work, discussion, teacher demonstration and student practice. Group work and discussion were perceived as effective because they enabled students to contribute towards the lesson as well as share with others what they knew about the lesson or topic. Teachers found demonstration to be useful because of the practical nature of the subject. Teachers stated that demonstration was used to show students how to do a new skill or activity prior to a practical lesson where the students would be expected to perform a task using the skill. The methods perceived as effective for teaching were those that encouraged teacher-student discourse, featured thoughtful discussion, and encouraged active participation of the student. This finding supports the results of the teacher effects research (Brophy & Good, 1986). Brophy & Good summarised the findings of the teacher effects research and noted that effective teachers did not merely maximise 'time on task', they also spent a greater amount of time on actively instructing their students. Their classrooms featured more time spent on interactive lessons; featuring more teacher student discourse and less time spent on independent seat work (1986, p. 352, 361).

Group work, discussion, student practice and demonstration were the methods viewed as important for effective practice. The teachers, however, stated that it was not always possible to teach in such a manner because of limited resources. For instance, no demonstration could

take place because there were no ingredients and this meant no follow-up practical activity for the students as well. For this reason, the lecture method was mentioned as another frequently used method of teaching. The teachers clearly stated that using the lecture method was not an effective way of teaching, but that as the situation was, they were usually faced with no other alternative. In fact, there were other teachers such as Dorothy who felt that they used the lecture method more frequently than any of the other methods. This shows a conflict between what the teachers perceived as good or competent practice and environmental limitations in the school setting.

Apart from using methods of teaching that involved students actively, management skills were perceived as another important skill for competent home economics teaching. The teachers felt that they were dealing constantly with management of their classes, the department and resources. Management skills were especially important in order to ensure maximum utilisation of the limited resources. One important management skill was planning. It was felt that the nature of the subject required that a teacher put more time in the planning of the lesson than teachers of other subjects. Firstly, because the lessons were taught in three continuous periods, which meant preparing for more activity than any ordinary lesson; secondly, because there was a general feeling that there was a lot that took place in a home economics lesson that required more prior planning by the teacher. Another management skill perceived as essential for the effective teaching of home economics was supervision. Teachers felt that due to the practical nature of the subject, the large class sizes and the limited resources, close supervision of classroom practices was essential. Despite the fact that all the teachers expressed concern for a need to maximise the use of limited resources, only one teacher mentioned management of departmental records as an important task that she used to maximise use of the limited resources as well as for accountability purposes.

Home economics teachers in this study perceived classroom management skills as important for effective teaching. Good & McCaslin (1992) summarised the findings of process product research in teaching for the past two decades and identified themes occurring in the

research surrounding effective teaching. Among other things, the themes identified included appropriate expectations and a sense of efficacy; classroom management and organisation; and curriculum pacing. These findings have some similarity to those in the present study. A teacher's ability to manage the class, department, as well as resources was perceived as a particularly important competence for home economics teaching.

The results of this study suggest that home economics teachers in Malawi perceived competence in communication skills as essential in order to promote a good classroom environment. This is in contrast to the findings of Yahnke (1994). Yahnke's study used descriptive statistics to examine competencies that school teachers and teacher educators perceived as important for beginning home economics teachers. The results showed that competence in communication skills was ranked as the least important skill (1994, p. 93). Because Yahnke was primarily interested in establishing important competencies for beginning teachers only, communication may not have been seen as a priority by the participants. The Malawian study viewed communication as important for effective teacher-student interaction and for the promotion of effective delivery of content.

The results have pointed also at certain teacher qualities as essential for competent teaching. These include: a teacher's interest in the subject, dedication and the need for home economics teachers to be role models of what they teach. To these teachers, the environmental conditions hindered effective and competent practice. Thus they felt what kept them motivated was their dedication and interest in the subject.

CONCLUSIONS

This study found that home economics in the school system in Malawi was faced with a number of problems which teachers perceived to be in conflict with effective practice. Environmental limitations within the school setting restricted teaching to certain practices which were not necessarily effective for teaching the subject as well as for meeting the end of year examination requirements. Should such practice continue, it was likely that teaching would be

reduced into drilling students to pass examinations without necessarily meeting the goals of home economics. There is need to find a balance between the curriculum and the resources found in the schools and the local environment.

The study noted that teachers in Malawi still maintained a domestic perspective of the subject. Although boys were allowed to take home economics, it was still not clear whether this approach would enable critical examination of the domestic sphere by both men and women, or whether it would only further perpetuate the negative views people held about the subject. The domestic approach as noted from the teaching practices in this study as well as from previous literature, perpetuates a technical approach to family issues. This is in conflict with current trends in the subject. There is need for home economics to communicate knowledge that can be used not only in the private domestic sphere but also in the public sphere.

Subject matter knowledge was perceived as an important competence for effective home economics teaching. For competent practice, the teachers felt that one had to be competent in all home economics content areas. Yet the integrated home economics syllabus was perceived as wide and diversified. It was noted that this made it difficult for each teacher to be competent in all the content areas.

Extensive practical skills mostly for the teaching of the food and nutrition and needlework areas were another important competence mentioned as necessary for effective home economics teaching. This study noted that this view emphasised a technical approach in the teaching of the subject as opposed to a practical problem solving approach which is advocated as being more appropriate by most educators in the subject.

Effective management skills were perceived as important for class management to ensure that learning was possible despite problems and limitations that were being experienced. Other competence areas perceived necessary for effective teaching were knowledge of the

students developmental and cognitive factors and classroom motivation skills. In addition, teachers noted that to be a good home economics teacher, one had to be interested in the subject and dedicated to the job. They backed their observations by stating that the subject was very demanding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study concur with many earlier studies which suggest that the nature of the environmental context has great bearing on the way teachers perceive their classroom practices. This study found that the environmental context had a number of problems which forced the teachers to teach in ways that the teachers did not consider effective. Because of these problems, this study noted that the teachers perceived competent practice not in terms of one's possession of cognitive capabilities, but in terms of one's ability to teach well within the limitations of the environment. This study did not set out to investigate teaching problems in home economics, but this emerged as an inevitable force during discussions. There is thus a pressing need for a study that would focus on these problems. This would help to examine the nature and extent of the problem as well as to suggest possible solutions.

The results of the study showed that teachers perceived competence in subject matter knowledge as critical for effective home economics teaching. For effective teaching, the teachers expressed the need to be competent in all home economics areas. This has implications on the nature of home economics programs that should be offered to teachers during teacher training. There is a great need to ensure that teachers acquire adequate content knowledge in all areas of the subject.

The present study focused on bringing about an understanding of the way home economics teachers perceive competent practice in the existing syllabuses. The results presented above revealed a number of issues of interest to home economics teaching. In addition, the results suggest the need for a study that focuses on an analysis of the existing

home economics syllabuses in relation to the current trends in the subject and to demands in education.

The study noted that teachers hold a domestic perspective of the subject. The aim of home economics was viewed as the preparation of girls for womanhood. Most of the practical activities used as classroom activities perpetuated this domestic perspective. Yet, the teachers were disturbed by the fact that the subject was perceived as low in status because of its association with domestic work. There is need to revisit the practices used in teaching of the subject. Furthermore, there is need for deliberate planning of home economics activities that can help boost the status of the subject as well as communicate an accurate meaning of the mission of home economics both to practitioners as well as to the public.

The results and conclusions of this study have implications for future educational research. As educators continue to examine what effective teachers should know and be able to do, the voice of the practitioner should be included in the examination. The aim of this study was to listen to the voice of home economics teachers and to identify what they perceived as competencies for effective practice. There is a great need for the establishment of an on-going link between teachers and the teacher education system in Malawi. This can enable practicing teachers to inform or communicate changes in the teaching system which can help to make teacher education more relevant. At the same time, this link can assist practicing teachers through provision of services such as in-service or general knowledge in various professional areas in the subject.

The constraints experienced in teaching as noted from this study demonstrates the effect of one of the many factors that affect teaching. Teachers have to take into consideration a lot of factors in order to come up with effective classroom experiences. There is need for more studies in this area in order to bring a complete awareness of the complexities of the teachers' teaching world.

Home economics has a lot to contribute towards the well-being of the Malawian family. Home economics deals with immediate issues of the family at the micro level which in turn have significant bearing at the macro or national level. The present study noted a number of issues and concerns that affected effective and competent teaching of the subject. There is need for continued research in this area to explore ways in which the subject can better meet the needs of the Malawian family. There is need for research that will help to create a home economics base that is not only relevant to the needs of the family, but also that which is "morally and socially defensible" (Baldwin, 1989) to be able meet the educational and social demands of the present day society. This is a challenge facing home economics teaching in the present day society not only in Malawi but throughout the world.

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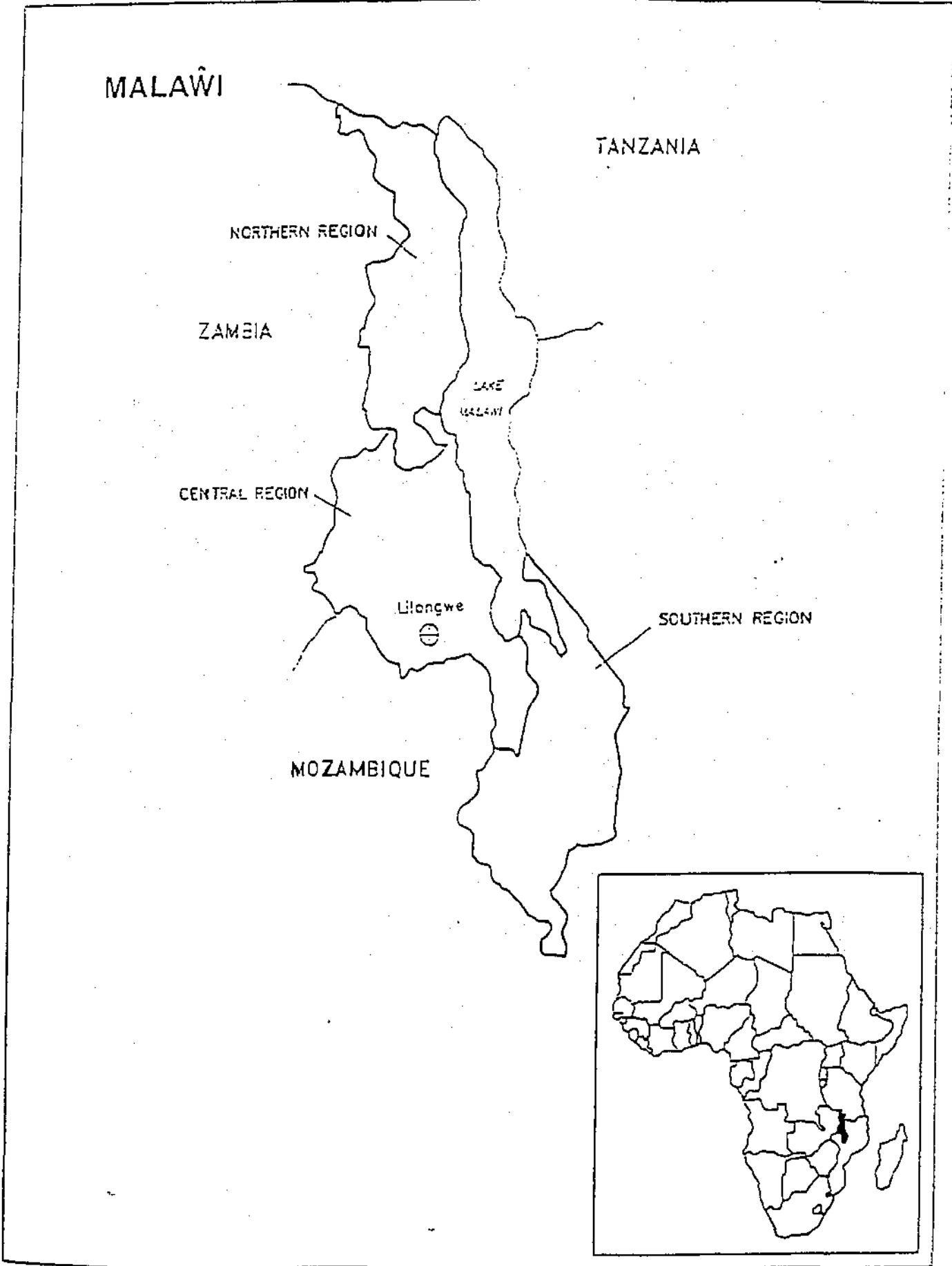
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APPENDIX A
MAP OF MALAWI



APPENDIX B

INTEGRATED HOME ECONOMICS

JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION SYLLABUS (YEARS I & II)

A. AIMS OF THE SYLLABUS

1. To improve family practices in the bringing-up of children, housing, food consumption, home management, hygiene and clothing.
2. To develop the aesthetic sense by encouraging and promoting creativity in various aspects of Home Economics using local design.
3. To develop basic skills in Home Economics.
4. To provide scope for the development of pupils' powers of analysis and evaluation of the principles underlying food preparation and household management.
5. To encourage the use and adaptation of simple commercial patterns.
6. To encourage the use of experimentation in the treatment and care of fabrics.
7. To develop the sense of achievement and pride gained through Home Economics education.
8. To encourage the correct use of equipment found in the home.

B. SCHEME OF THE EXAMINATION

The examination will consist of a 2 1/2 hour practical test and a 2 hour theory paper. The practical test will take the form of an assignment and will require a 1 1/4 hour written preparation period approximately a week prior to the actual practical examination. During the preparation period candidates will be required to plan how they will carry out the tests and to hand in a list of materials required.

On the day of the examination, the plans will be reissued and the candidates will be allowed 2 1/2 hours to carry out the practical work in the presence of an examiner.

During the preparation period reference books, recipe books etc. may be used.

C. THE SYLLABUS

1. Cookery and Nutrition
 - (i) Food and its functions; nutritive value of food.
 - (ii) Planning of balanced diet; choice and cost of food.
 - (iii) Methods of cooking foods used in cooking.
 - (iv) Cooking and serving balanced meals for the family.
 - (v) Diets for individual needs.
 - (vi) Beverages and snacks.
2. Hygiene
 - (i) Organisation of a kitchen; kitchen hygiene.
 - (ii) Prevention and eradication of household pests.
 - (iii) Disposal of rubbish.
 - (iv) Bathing and toilet facilities in rural and urban areas.
3. Housewifery
 - (i) Daily and occasional cleaning of all rooms in the home.

- (ii) Care of metals, wood, glass, china, etc. found in the home.
- (iii) Use and care of stoves, kitchen equipment, kitchen surfaces.
- (iv) Cleaning leather and plastics.
- 4. Laundry
 - (i) Laundering kitchen cloths, household linen, personal clothing, starching.
 - (ii) Storage of clothing and linen.
- 5. Child care
 - (i) Diet for expectant nursing mother.
 - (ii) Diet for baby and toddler.
 - (iii) Care of baby and toddler.
 - (iv) Making of improvised cot, bedding and clothing for the baby.
 - (v) Importance of clients.
- 6. First Aid in the Home
 - Treatment of common illnesses and minor accidents.
- 7. Kitchen Garden
 - (i) Preparation and care of vegetable gardens.
 - (ii) Use of compost.
 - (iii) Value of fresh vegetables in the diet.
- 8. Needlework
 - Use and care of small equipment and serving machines.
- 9. Patterns
 - (i) Use of home made patterns and commercial patterns.
 - (ii) Adaptation and alterations of the basic pattern.
- 10. Construction of Garments
 - Measurement, processes, stitches, order of work.
- 11. Embroidery
 - Simple stitcher including hemstitching and mitred corner.
- 12. Repair work and Fabrics
 - (i) Repair of household linen and personal garments.
 - (ii) Suitability of fabrics for different occasions and styles.
 - (iii) Origin, properties and use of fabrics.
- 13. Garments/Articles to make
 - (i) Cookery apron, any articles of table linen.
 - (ii) Nightdress and a pullover.

D. BOOKLIST

- 1. Textbooks
 - (i) Good cooking. M. Marshall, Malawi Book Service.
 - (ii) Cookery for schools. M. Neal, Blackie.
 - (iii) Needlework for Schools. M. Neal, Blackie.
 - (iv) Child Health in the Tropics. Jelliffee, D. B., Edward Arnold.
- 2. Reference Books
 - (i) Tables of Representative Values of Food Commonly Used in the Tropical Countries. Platt, B. S., Medical Research Council.
 - (ii) Home Management. Davidson, P., Batsword.
 - (iii) Food Tables of Malawi. Ministry of Health.
 - (iv) Better Management. A. King, Mill & Room.

- (v) Science in the Home Series
 - 1. Fabrics Laundry work. L. M. Gawthorpe, Hullon Ed. Pub.
 - 2. Food and Nutrition. L. M. Gawthorpe, Hullon Ed. Pub.
 - 3. The Home. L. M. Gawthorpe, Hullon Ed. Pub.
- (vi) Nutrition in Tropical Countries. Welbourne, H., Oxford University Press.
- (vii) Useful plants of Malawi. Williamson, J., Government Printer, Zomba.
- (viii) Food and its Function. Edward Arnold.
- (ix) Human Nutrition in Tropical Africa. F.A.O.
- (x) Cooking Explained. Hammond. B., Longmans.
- (xi) Washing Wisdom. Mills, K. J. Forbes Pub.
- (xii) Child Health in the Tropics. Jelliffe, D. B., Edward Arnold.
- (xiii) Embroidery for Africa. Hull, M.
- (xiv) Fabrics for Needlework. Methuen & Co.
- (xv) Fibres & Fabrics of Today. Thompson, H., Heinemann.
- (xvi) Needlework for Schools. Neal, M., Blackie.

APPENDIX C

INTEGRATED HOME ECONOMICS

MALAWI SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION SYLLABUS (FORMS III AND IV)

A. AIMS

This Syllabus:

1. seeks to improved family practices in the bringing up of children, housing, food consumption, home management, and hygiene;
2. seeks to develop the aesthetic sense by encouraging and promoting creativity in the various aspects of Home Economics;
3. allows for comparison and adaptation of available technology;
4. develops skills to a high standard;
5. provides scope for the development of the pupil's powers of analysis and evaluation of the principles underlying food preparation and household management.

NOTE: A minimum of FOUR 40-minutes periods per week should be allocated to this subject.

B. THE SYLLABUS

This syllabus is drawn up on the assumption that pupils will have covered the JC Home Economics syllabus.

The work should have a scientific basis and be correlated through experiments, tests, talks, and discussions with the companion subjects- Agriculture, Physical Science, Biology, Art, etc.

The working of all equipment should be fully understood and adequate practice should be given in its use. Pupils should be able to show manipulation skills with both mechanical and manual methods.

Throughout the course dishes and meals should be served attractively, suitably garnished and decorated.

FORM III

Term I

HOUSING

Types of houses, both urban and traditional, as they related to climate, comfort, cost, health, saving of labour, family size and needs.

Development of housing in Malawi - influence of social and economic factors.

Minimum requirements for a home.

Building Society loans, insurance, etc.

Choice of site of home.

Water supply, drainage, ventilation, lighting, rubbish disposal, sewage.

FOOD

Use of garden produce.

More detailed study of vitamins, minerals, protein, fats, and carbohydrates.

Simple physical and chemical changes brought about by the cooking of food.

The use, sources, and action of raising agents, e.g. yeast, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda, cream of tartar, and air.

sweet and savoury dishes to illustrate topics above.

SOFT

Choice, use, care, and laundering of cushion covers, bed-spreads, etc.

SOFT FURNISHINGS

Term II

KITCHEN

1. Urban - Choice, arrangement, and care of equipment to save time and labour

PLANNING

2. Rural- Improvement of working area, mud stoves, wood stoves, drying racks, placing and storage of essential equipment.

FAMILY MEALS

The preparation of meals as part of daily activity. Family Catering - purchase and selection of foods related to nutritional requirements of the family as a whole. Methods of preparing, cooking, and serving balanced meals, stressing the increased nutritional value from combinations of protein foods using varieties of the following -

Nsima: Using maize, millet, and cassava flour. Use of rice (*mpunga*).
Roots and tubers as staple foods - cassava, Sweet potatoes, yams, coco-yams.

Ndiwo: made from the following or combination of the following depending on location -

(a) Dark green leaves, both cultivated and wild, e.g. pumpkin, *bonongwe*, *limanda* (hibiscus), *lombo* (*taro*), *therere* (okra), using mulberry or fig leaves, dried leaves (*mfutso*), cassava.

(b) Pulses, e.g. haricot beans, cow, pigeon and field peas, groundnuts.

(c) Mushrooms and other edible fungi (*bowu*).

(d) Vegetables such as (*therere*) okra, luffa, paw-paw, (*nkhaka*) cucumber, tomatoes, brinjal (egg fruit), *maungu* (pumpkin).

(e) Meat from (1) domestic animals, e.g. cattle, goats, sheep, pigs:

(2) game and rodents, e.g. mbewa, gwape, deer, rabbit;

(3) insects and caterpillars, e.g. *dzombe* (locusts), *inswa* (termites), *nkhululu* (crickets), *nkhungu* (lake fly), *mphalabungu*, *kawichi*, *matondo* (caterpillars);

(4) poultry, e.g. chickens and ducks;

(5) fish - fresh and dried, e.g. chambo, mpende, kayawa, matemba usipa, shellfish.

(f) Milk (Mkaka), using rice, bananas, cassava, etc. Use of sour milk.

(g) Fresh fruits especially those with high Vitamin C content.

HOUSEHOLD CLEANING

Daily and weekly cleaning of rooms of house. Eradication of pests, e.g. flies, mosquitoes, cockroaches, ants, mice, and silver fish.

Hygienic requirements needed when keeping household pets. Essential cleaning equipment - choice, cost, use, care, and storage.

Cleaning materials - soap, soapless detergents, grease solvents, home-made abrasives, and metal cleaning agents. Care, preservation, and polishing of wooden furniture and fixtures.

HOUSEHOLD

Choice, price, quality, and composition; care and storage of household linen, laundering of towels, teal towels, dish cloths, dusters, etc.

FOOD STORAGE

Cupboards, meat safe, refrigerator. Choice, care, and improvisation of containers and equipment. Rural storage of maize, groundnuts, etc.

Term III

**HOUSEHOLD
CLEANING**

Bathing and toilet facilities in rural and urban areas. Daily, weekly, and special cleaning of bathing and toilet areas. Importance of hygiene especially in the prevention of diarrhoea, dysentery, and cholera.

**PERSONAL
CLEANING**

Daily bath, wash; care of skin, eyes, ears, teeth; care of hair and nails; regular cleaning of hairbrush and combs. Importance of good grooming and its effect on poise and personality.

LAUNDRY

Care of laundry equipment. Washing soaps, soapless detergents, and starch. Simple methods of removing stains; effect of dirt and perspiration. Bleaching by natural and commercial means. Boiling as a means of disinfection.

**DINING AND
SITTING
ROOM AREAS**

Choice of furniture, arrangement, and special care of rooms. Choice of table crockery, glassware, cutlery. Selection of fabrics suitable for table linen; repair and laundering of table linen. Care and use of plastic cloths. The use of flowers, plants, and leaves to make arrangements for different occasions. Choice and care of suitable flowers containers. Acting as a hostess.

MEALS

Using both Malawian and Western foods:

1. Formal meals and buffet meals, both hot and cold.
2. Snack meals - requirements of different people, freshness, quality, and quantity, e.g. bananas, as *zitumbuwa*, *mikate*, *futali*, green maize - roasted and boiled.
3. Meals for visitors, young people, festivities; use and preparation of fresh fruit in meal planning, e.g. bananas, pawpaw, mangoes, guavas, oranges, etc. Use of wild fruits, e.g. *masuku*, *mateme*, *maula*, *malambe* (baobab fruit).
4. One pot meals - use of pressure cooker.
5. Beverages- Sweet beer (thobwa), fresh fruit drinks, tea, coffee, and commercial beverages. Nutritive value of beverages.
6. Comparison and use of pre-packed and milled foods in meal preparation, in relation to uses of local foods; relationship between nutritive value and cost.

FORM IV**Term I****SWEEPING
AREAS**

Position of bedroom in relation to other areas of the house. Importance of adequate ventilation - airborne and contagious infection.

Choice and arrangement of bedroom furniture.

Special cleaning of wardrobes and cupboards.

Choice, care, and cost of bedding, e.g. sheets, pillowcases, bedspreads, blankets, mattresses, and mosquito nets. Laundering and storage of washable bedding and mosquito nets. Prevention and elimination of bedbugs, fleas, and mosquitoes.

**CARE OF
PERSONAL
CLOTHING**

Laundering of personal clothing- sponging and pressing of clothes which cannot be washed.

Theoretical study of dry cleaning - costs, underlying principles, commercial dry cleaning.

**MEAL
PLANNING**

Storage of personal clothing- care of woollen garments during hot weather.

Cleaning of shoes. Packing of clothing; care and storage of suitcases.

Varying income levels, sedentary and manual workers. Evaluation and estimation of meal combinations for good health including a simple introduction to calories.

Budgeting and simple household accounts.

Term II

CHILD CARE

Special needs of pregnant and nursing mothers and babies with special reference to:

1. nutrition,
2. clothing,
3. rest and exercise.

Topics should include:

1. The value of ante-natal, post-natal, maternity clinics, under-fives clinics.
2. Meals pregnant and nursing mothers.
3. Feeding of baby from birth.
4. Importance of breast feeding.
5. Artificial feeding - stressing the need for careful hygiene - dangers if diarrhoea.
6. Daily routine of nursing mother.
7. Mixed feeding and weaning - preparation of food (revise improved phala); teething.
8. Dietary requirements of the 1 to 5 age group -
 - (a) for nourishment and health growth,
 - (b) for alleviation of under-nourishment of infants, toddlers and children,
 - (c) for prevention of nutritional diseases - marasmus, kwashiorkor, anaemia, eye diseases (nutritional blindness).
9. Daily routine for under fives including need for constant supervision.
10. Growth and development of child - value of play - toys, games, building blocks, etc. - sleep, exercise, fresh air.
11. Early mental stimulation by encouraging curiosity and conversation.
12. Selection of fabrics and styles suitable for infants' and children's clothing according to season. Laundering and storage of infants' and children's clothing.

CHILDREN'S AILMENTS

Signs, symptoms, immunisation.

Care of small children suffering from more infectious diseases, e.g. chicken pox, measles, whooping cough, scabies, trachoma. Care of feverish child and during convalescence.

Term III

NOTE: *These topics may be taken at any convenient time during the year if time does not permit during Term III thus leaving Term III clear for revision and examinations.*

SIMPLE FIRST AID

Prevention of accidents in the home.

Treatment of burns, scalds, cuts, bruises, sprains, etc.

THE COMMUNITY

Community services - Red Cross, Ambulance, Dispensary, Mobile Clinics, Fire Brigade, etc.

Community Development and self-help work of Agricultural advisers and others.

FOOD PRESERVATION

Preservation of meat and vegetables.

Preservation of fruit by:

(a) drying, e.g. guava, banana.

(b) jam making, e.g. pineapple, tomato, guava.

(c) chutneys, e.g. green mango.

Making of peanut butter.

Theoretical study of:

1. Commercial canning - Malawi canneries.

2. Freezing as a method of food preservation.

NOTES:

(a) Mixed assignments will be carried out throughout the course linking all aspects of home management as closely as possible to a home setting. Home Economics blocks, flats, and equipment should be fully used and pupils should be familiar with a wide variety of equipment, stoves (stove management), fuels, methods, skills, etc., with due consideration for the saving of time, labour, and money.

(b) Project work.

During these two years pupils will be expected to make a study related to Home Economics and show the results for this study in the form of an illustrated booklet, or any other suitable form, e.g. study of milk, soap through the ages, furniture revolution, electricity, etc. Marks will be awarded for this project work in the final examination.

COOKERY AND NUTRITION

Food and its functions. Nutrition value of food.

A study of vitamins, minerals, protein, fats, and carbohydrates.

Planning balanced diets for the family and for categories of people with special needs.

Meals for special occasions.

Choice, cost, and use of local and traditional foods.

The use of prepacked and 'convenience' foods; comparison with traditional foods with special reference to nutritive value, flavour, cost, and saving of time and labour.

Budgeting and household accounts.

Methods of cooking foods, e.g. boiling, steaming, stewing, braising, frying, grilling, roasting, baking and pressure cooking.

Simple physical and chemical changes brought about by the cooking of food.

Raising agents - the use, source, and action of yeast, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda, cream of tartar, air.

Attractive service of food - the use of appropriate garnishes and decorations.

Saving time and labour during the preparation of food; the preparation of meals as part of daily activity.

The use and care of traditional and modern equipment in the kitchen.

Beverages - hot and cold.

Food storage - the care and management of food cupboards, meat safes, refrigerators, and food containers.

Rural storage of food.

Preservation of food by drying, bottling, jam and chutney making.

Principles underlying in preservation of food by canning, refrigerating, and freezing.

HYGIENE

Kitchen hygiene.
Prevention and eradication of household pests.
Need for hygiene when keeping domestic pets.
Water supply, drainage, rubbish disposal, sewage disposal.
Adequate ventilation, airborne and contagious infection.
Bathing and toilet facilities in rural and urban areas.
Importance of hygiene in the prevention of diarrhoea, dysentery, and cholera.
Personal hygiene - care of skin, eyes, ears and teeth.
Care of hair and nails.
Importance of good grooming.

HOUSING

Types of houses - urban and rural. Choice related to climate, comfort, cost, health, saving of labour, family size and needs, minimum requirements.
Development of housing in Malawi - influence of social and economic factors.
Adequate lighting in the home.
Building Society, loans, insurance, etc.
Kitchen planning - Choice and arrangement of equipment in urban and rural kitchens.
Improvement of working area and facilities in rural kitchens.

HOUSEWIFERY

Essential cleaning equipment - choice, cost, use, care and storage. Cleaning materials - soap, soapless detergents, grease solvents, homemade and commercial abrasives, metal-cleaning agents and polishes.
Polishes for furniture and floors.
Care - daily, occasionally, and special cleaning of all rooms in the house; kitchen, toilet and latrines, bathrooms or bath-house. Choice and care of metal, wood, glass, china, and plastic articles found in the home.
Choice and care of furniture and soft furnishings.
The use of flowers, plants and leaves to make arrangements for different occasions.
Choice and care of suitable containers for flowers and plants.
Acting as hostess.
Laying of tables, trays, etc., for different meals and occasions.

LAUNDRY WORK AND CARE OF PERSONAL CLOTHING

Choice, care and use of laundry equipment.
Washing agents - soap, soapless detergents, starch.
Simple methods of removing stains using common stain removal agents.
Effect of dirt and perspiration on fabrics.
Bleaching by means of commercial methods and natural means.
Boiling as a means of disinfection.
Choice, care and laundering of kitchen cloths, household linen and personal clothing.
Sponging and pressing of clothes which cannot be washed.
Theoretical study of principles underlying commercial dry cleaning.
Storage and care of personal clothing and household linen.
Cleaning of shoes.
Packing of clothing for journeys - care and storage of suitcases.
Simple repairs to household linen and personal clothing before laundering.

COMMUNITY STUDIES

Community services - Red Cross, Ambulance, Dispensary, Mobile Clinics, Fire Brigade, etc.
Community Development and self-help work of agricultural advisers and others.

CHILD CARE

Special needs of pregnant and nursing mothers and babies with special reference to (a) nutrition, (b) clothing and (c) rest and exercise.

Value of ante-natal, post-natal, maternity and under-fives clinics.

Feeding baby from birth.

Importance of breast feeding.

Artificial feeding - stressing need for careful hygiene - dangers of diarrhoea.

Daily routine of nursing mother.

Mixed feeding and weaning - preparation of food; suitable dishes using commercial and local foods.

Teething.

Dietary requirements of the 1 to 5 age group (stressing causes and dangers of malnutrition):

1. for nourishment and health growth;

2. for alleviation of under-nourishment of infants and children;

3. for prevention of nutritional diseases- marasmus, kwashiorkor, anaemia, eye diseases, etc.

Daily routine for under-fives, including need for constant supervision.

Growth and development of child - value of play, toys, games, sleep, exercise and fresh air, etc.

Early mental stimulation by encouraging curiosity and conversation. Selection of fabrics and styles suitable for infants' and children's clothing according to season.

Laundering and storage of babies' and children's clothing.

Signs and symptoms of children's ailments. Immunisation.

Care of small children suffering from the more common infectious disease, e.g. chicken-pox, measles, whooping cough, scabies, trachoma.

Care of feverish child and during convalescence.

Prevention of accidents in the home.

Treatment of burns, scalds, cuts, bruises, sprains, etc.

SIMPLE FIRST AID

NOTES:

(a) *Mixed assignments will be carried out throughout the course linking all aspects of home management as closely as possible to a home setting. Home Economics blocks, flats, and equipment should be fully used and pupils should be familiar with a wide variety of equipment, stoves (stove management), fuels, methods, skills, etc., with due consideration for the saving of time, labour, and money.*

(b) *Project work.*

During these two years pupils will be expected to make a study related to Home Economics and show the results for this study in the form of an illustrated booklet, or any other suitable form, e.g. study of milk, soap through the ages, furniture revolution, electricity, etc.

(c) *The school will be required to forward the completed projects to the Board to arrive not later than a set date in May. Marks will be awarded for this project work in the final examination.*

C. EXAMINATION IN HOME ECONOMICS

The examination will consist of one 2 1/2 hour practical test and one 2 hour theory paper. The practical test will take the form of a mixed assignment and will require a 1 1/4 hour written preparation period approximately three days prior to the actual examination. During the preparation period pupils will be required to plan how they will carry out the tests and to hand in a list of material required. On the day of the examination the plans of work will be reissued and the pupils will be allowed 2 1/2 hours to carry out the practical work in the presence of the examiner. During the preparation period and practical test, recipe books may be used.

The theory paper will consist of two sections and candidates will be required to answer some questions from both sections.

D. BOOK LIST

1. Cameron, A.G. *Food and its Function*. Pubs. Arnold.
2. Davidon, Phyllis. *Home Management*. Pubs. Batsword, 1973.
3. Grawthorpe, L.M. *Science in the Home Series: (a) Fabrics and Laundry work, (b) Food and Nutrition, (c) The Home*. Pubs. Hulton, 1966, 1967.
4. Hammond, B. *Cooking Explained*. Pubs. Longman, 1974.
5. King, A. *Better Home Management*. Pubs. Mills and Boon, 1970.
6. Koeone, Esther. *The African Housewife and Her Home*. Pubs. East African Literary Bureau.
7. Latham, M.C. *Human Nutrition in Tropical Africa*. Pubs. FAO.
8. Marshall. *Good Cooking*. Pubs. Malawi Book Service.
9. Mills, K.Y. *Washing Wisdom*. Pubs. Forbes, 1969.
10. O'Reilly, Enid. *Students' Cookery Book*. Pubs. O.U.P.
11. Platt, B.S. *Tables of Representative Values of Foods Commonly Used in Tropical Countries*. Pubs. Medical Research Council, 1962.
12. Ricketts, E. *Food, Health and You*. Pubs. Macmillan, 1966.
13. Selkirk and Fouche. *Domestic Science Textbook*. Pubs. Longmans.
14. Telfiffe, D.B. *Child Health in the Tropics*. Pubs. Arnold, 1974.
15. Welbourn, H. *Child Care*. Pubs. Mills and Boon.
16. Welbourn, H. *Nutrition in Tropical Africa*. Pubs. O.U.P.
17. Williamson, J. *Useful Plants of Malawi*. Pubs. Government Printer.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE

CRITICAL COMPETENCIES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING: PERCEPTIONS OF HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS

PART A: PERSONAL DETAILS

1. Name of school
2. Age of participant
3. Educational qualifications
4. How long have you been teaching home economics?

PART B: TEACHING SKILLS

5. How long is the total time slot for MSCE home economics per period/ per week?
6. Is this similar to all subjects? If not, how different?
7. What do you like about teaching home economics?
8. What don't you like about teaching home economics?
9. From your own teaching experience, what can you say are the aims and goals of secondary school home economics.
10. Would you mind describing the general teaching activities in a typical home economics lesson at MSCE level?
11. How would you describe your daily teaching tasks?
12. If you were asked to provide useful tips for effective teaching of home economics, what would you say under each of the following headings: (Hand out cards)
 - lesson planning,

- methods of teaching
- classroom relationship skills
- evaluation/assessment skills
- student motivation
- student discipline
- class order/organisation
- management of class/ resources/department

13. How do you go about getting all students interested in the learning?
14. Which teaching strategies do you like to use most often in your teaching?
15. Is there a special reason for this?
16. Are there other teaching activities, skills (or knowledge) that you use more often?
Reason for frequent use?
17. Can you recall one of your most interesting lessons in the past week? Would you like to tell me about it?

Probes:

What was the topic/sub concepts/student activities/ teachers activities.

what would you say contributed to the effectiveness of the lesson? Teaching skills used?

PART C: CONTENT SPECIFIC SKILLS

18. As you know, home economics has five main content areas:
- Food and nutrition
 - Clothing and textiles
 - Human development
 - Housing and environment
 - Family economics and resource management
- i) Comment on the way you find best to handle subject matter in order to ensure effective learning in each content area.

-are there any differences?

-special skills, knowledge or practices, necessary for effective delivery.

- ii) Would you say you have developed/ identified teaching styles, skills or practices that seem to work best for teaching some of these content areas.
If yes, can you share some of these.
19. As a home economics teacher, what would you say are some of your strengths that make you confident in teaching the subject?
20. (i) What is your other teaching subject?
(ii) Are there any differences between teaching home economics and teaching this other subject?
(iii) If yes, explain or describe the differences.
21. In general, what do you perceive as the critical competencies for effective teaching of the subject.

APPENDIX E

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

CRITICAL COMPETENCIES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING: PERCEPTIONS OF HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS.

1. NAME/NO OF TEACHER _____

2. DATE _____

3. TIME _____

4. CLASS _____

5. TOPIC _____

6. SUB CONCEPTS:

7. LESSON DEVELOPMENT

TIME	TEACHER ACTIVITIES	STUDENT ACTIVITIES	TEACHER'S COMMENTS

8. Please make any other general comments from this lesson's experiences in terms of teaching skills, knowledge or practices used in the lesson.

APPENDIX F

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY IN MALAWI

1/151 Eighth Avenue
Inglewood,
WA 6052.
Australia.
18th November, 1996.

The Secretary,
Ministry of Education and Culture,
Po Box 328,
Capital City, Lilongwe, 3.

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY INVOLVING TEACHERS.

As part of my dissertation I am conducting a study on 'critical teaching competencies'. The identified population for this study is secondary school Home Economics teachers. I write to request for your permission to interview secondary school teachers within the Blantyre and Lilongwe districts.

I am a Malawian citizen employed under the University of Malawi, Chancellor college. I am currently on study leave. I am doing my Master of Education degree at Edith Cowan University in Perth, Western Australia. The proposed data collection period is from the month of January to March 1997.

Attached is a copy of the proposal to show how the teachers will be involved in the study.

I would like to request for your written approval to be presented to heads of schools when I start the study. I will also be grateful if you could sign in the space provided below as an indication that I have been granted permission and access to do the study. Please forward your response to the above address.

Your unfailing assistance will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Esthery Dembo Kunkwenzu (Mrs)

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY INVOLVING
TEACHERS**

**TITLE : CRITICAL COMPETENCIES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING: PERCEPTIONS OF
HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS.**

Permission granted/not granted.

signature

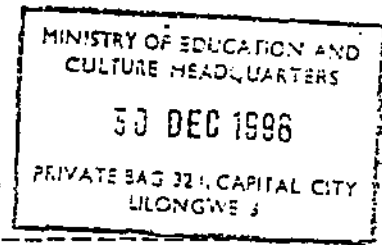
date and official stamp.

APPENDIX G

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY IN MALAWI

TITLE: CRITICAL COMPETENCIES FOR EFFECTIVE
TEACHING: PERCEPTIONS OF HOME ECONOMICS
TEACHERS.

Permission granted / ~~not granted~~.



signature

date and official stamp.

APPENDIX H

DATA- COLLECTION CALENDAR.

WEEK 1: 23/12/96 -27/12/96

Visits made to the ministry of education and culture to collect:

- (i) a clearance letter (official permission to conduct study in Malawi),
- (ii) documents on teacher placement.
- (iii) collecting Home economics syllabuses.

WEEK 2 & 3: 2/1/97- 10/1/97

- (i) Initial visit to all potential participants in the secondary schools in Lilongwe.
- (ii) Briefing the participants on study activities.

WEEK 4: FIRST INTERVIEW

13/1/97	Monica	Co-educational day secondary school
14/1/97	Margret	National girls secondary school
14/1/97	Matilda	Co-educational day secondary school

WEEK 5: FIRST INTERVIEW

20/1/97	Shelly	National girls secondary school
20/1/97	Kate	National girls secondary school
22/1/97	Brenda	National girls secondary school
22/1/97	Silvia	National girls secondary school
24/1/97	Naomi	Co-educational day secondary school

WEEK 6: FIRST INTERVIEW

27/1/97	Dorothy	Co-educational day secondary school
28/1/97	Kelly	Co-educational day secondary school
29/1/97	Susan	Teacher training college
29/1/97	Martha	Teacher training college

WEEK 6: SECOND INTERVIEW

29/1/97	Monica	Co-educational day secondary school
30/1/97	Silvia.	National girls secondary school
30/1/97	Brenda	National girls secondary school

WEEK 7: SECOND INTERVIEW

(class observation)

5/2/97	Matilda	Co-educational day secondary school
5/2/97	Kelly	Co-educational day secondary school
6/2/97	Shelly	National girls secondary school
6/2/97	Kate	National girls secondary school

WEEK 8: SECOND INTERVIEW

(class observation)

10/2/97	Margret	National girls secondary school
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WEEK 8:THIRD INTERVIEW

11/2/97	Margret	National girls secondary school
11/2/97	Susan	Teacher training college
11/2/97	Martha	Teacher training college

WEEK 9: SECOND INTERVIEW

(class observation)

17/2/97	Naomi	Co-educational day secondary school
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WEEK 9: THIRD INTERVIEW

(Review of teaching documents)

17/2/97	Naomi	Co-educational day secondary school
18/2/97	Silvia.	National girls secondary school
18/2/97	Brenda	National girls secondary school
19/2/97	Martha	Teacher training college
19/2/97	Susan	Teacher training college

WEEK 10: THIRD INTERVIEW

(Review of teaching documents)

24/2/97	Kate	National girls secondary school
24/2/97	Shelly	National girls secondary school
25/2/97	Dorothy	Co-educational day secondary school
25/2/97	Kelly	Co-educational day secondary school
26/2/97	Monica	Co-educational day secondary school
26/2/97	Matilda	Co-educational day secondary school

APPENDIX J

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear colleague,

I am undertaking a research on Home Economics teaching for my Master of education which I am presently completing at Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia.

As I have been teaching Home Economics for a few years in Malawi, I have always been interested in understanding how Home Economics teachers in Malawi may contribute to improving the teaching of the subject. I am particularly interested in finding out what home economics teachers perceive as being the critical competencies for effective teaching of our subject.

I would like to interview a number of teachers who are willing to participate in the study that I am doing. I am also planning to observe some lessons in order to have a clear understanding of the methodology used in the teaching of Home Economics.

If you are willing to participate, the following guide lines will apply:

- (1) Your participation is strictly on a voluntary basis, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.
- (2) You are assured that confidentiality will be respected.

Should you have any questions regarding this project or its procedures, please feel free to contact me at any time, at my mother's place, where I am residing for the study period (address provided below).

If you are willing and interested in participating in the study, please read the paragraphs on the next page and sign in the space provided.

Yours faithfully,

Esther Dembo Kunkwenzu.
c/o Mrs F. D. Dembo,
Box 206,
Ntcheu

Phone: 235404.

STATEMENT OF DISCLOSURE AND INFORMED CONSENT

Topic: Critical competencies for effective teaching: Perceptions of Home economics teachers.

The following is a brief summary of the types of activities I intend to undertake during the study:

1. Interviews:

Each participant will be interviewed three times. The interviews will be audio taped with the permission of the participant.

The first interview will be conducted using an interview guide. The purpose of this interview is to get an understanding of the nature of home economics teaching from the participants day to day teaching experiences. Special attention will be put on activities/skills/knowledge and/or practices that the participants view as being especially significant (critical) to home economics teaching.

The second interview will involve the participants discussing their written plans (eg lesson plans and schemes of work) with the researcher in order to explain and identify what they view as the teacher's critical competencies for achieving the intended learning.

A third further probe interview has been planned in order to enable the researcher to clarify with the participants data from earlier interviews, and/or make follow up on any emerging themes.

2. Lesson observations

Participants will be observed while teaching. I also hope to get the teachers feedback and reflections after the lesson.

I _____ have been informed about all aspects of the above research project and all the questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising I may withdraw at any time.

I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided that I am not identified.

Participant _____ Date.

Researcher _____ Date.