

Peer reviewed paper

Daring to lead: Global perceptions of the IFHE Position Statement

Home Economics in the 21st Century

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Abstract

At the 2008 IFHE World Congress the Position Statement—Home Economics in the 21st Century (hereafter referred to as ‘he21C’)—was launched. It sets out to locate the profession in the contemporary context by serving as a platform, looking ahead to viable, progressive and assertive visions of home economics for the twenty-first century and beyond. Like the theme of the HEIA National Conference ‘Daring to Dream’, this statement sharpens the focus of home economists to explore visions for preferred futures for all individuals and families, and to challenge discriminatory and prejudiced attitudes and practices that beset them as professionals, whilst offering defensible arguments to counter such persistent injustice. A clear definition forms part of the text. This definition highlights the social justice agenda adopted by IFHE—

yet, many members of the profession might be challenged by such positioning. This paper reports on the findings of a survey that investigated home economists’ perceptions of their subject discipline using extracts from the Position Statement as triggers. A large number of respondents from a range of countries participated in the study, providing invaluable global insights and pointing to the need for strategies to engage members of the profession on agendas such as advocated by both HEIA and IFHE assisting them to become catalysts rather than casualties of contemporary times.

Introduction

As outlined by Pendergast (2008), the process by which *he21C* was developed called together representatives of the home economics

profession from around the world. It took three years to journey through the various development and consultation phases before being launched in 2008. The purpose of the statement was to bring together the common elements of the field, while enabling scope for the necessary diversity for local contexts. *he21C* was acknowledged as a long overdue platform for home economists worldwide to utilise in various ways: in schools, universities, industry, business, government and other relevant sectors to provide a consistent and internationally affirmed perspective on the field. *he21C* was described as a living, organic document with the capacity to be modified rather than being a final position. It is a two-page document with five main sections, each briefly described below.

1. Home economics

This section defines home economics and identifies four dimensions or areas of practice.

2. Essential dimensions of home economics.

This section specifies and outlines three essential dimensions that all subjects, courses of study and professionals identifying as home economists must exhibit.

3. The name ‘home economics’

This section states that the preferred name of the field of study and profession is ‘home economics’ and that the IFHE makes a commitment to a rebranding strategy.

4. Impact of the profession

This section provides nine examples of the impact the field has had and has the potential to have.

5. Directions for the decade

This final section provides an overview of the approach to the decade ahead, stating that the focus is on future proofing, which describes the elusive process of trying to anticipate future developments so that action can be taken to minimise possible negative consequences and to seize opportunities.

The full text of *he21C* is available from the IFHE website (www.ifhe.org). Given the existence of this new platform for the profession and having participated in the process to develop it, the researchers were keen to explore its alignment with the beliefs of current members of the profession. This research initially began by exploring the views of two groups of home economics teachers regarding aspects of *he21C*. Both are located in contexts where education is under review, and both have a history of home economics being challenged and feted over the last century. The contexts of Scotland and Australia located in two IFHE regions (Europe and the Pacific) were selected because of the origins of the researchers. Following the successful presentation of this initial data set at the IFHE World Congress, home economics colleagues were invited to administer the same survey in their local context. A number have done so, and this paper includes an additional dataset

from Malta. Other datasets will be added to the analysis as they are received and analysed.

For this paper, a particular focus on selected findings and samples of textual responses related to home economics and the social justice agenda are reported. This is preceded by a review of selected literature investigating social justice and the role of teachers.

Literature review

Social justice is explicitly incorporated into the text of *he21C*. For instance, in the section about the impact of the profession, it states that ‘*[P]overty alleviation, gender equality and social justice concerns are a priority of Home Economics professionals, with many projects and initiatives conducted in such areas*’ (IFHE 2008, p.2). This is argued to be achieved through the transformative powers of the professionals in the field. A clear definition forms part of the text and, although implicit, highlights the social justice agenda adopted, viz:

Home economics is a field of study and a profession, situated in the human sciences that draws from a range of disciplines to achieve optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families and communities. Its historical origins place home economics in the context of the home and household, and this is extended in the 21st century to include the wider living environments as we better understand that the capacities, choices and priorities of individuals and families impact at all levels, ranging from

the household, to the local and also the global (glocal) community. Home economists are concerned with the empowerment and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, and of facilitating the development of attributes for lifelong learning for paid, unpaid and voluntary work; and living situations. Home economics professionals are advocates for individuals, families and communities (IFHE, 2008, p.1).

The concept of social justice is not defined in *he21C*, its meaning taken for granted given the familiarity most professional home economists have with this notion. This might, upon reflection, be an oversight. So, what is social justice and how do home economics practitioners achieve social justice through transformative powers?

What is social justice?

Social justice is a key concept in current educational policy and practice (Clark, 2006; Adams, Bell & Griffin 2007; Brown, 2004) and the debate is a rich vein of philosophical work. A precise definition is unhelpful as it imposes a boundary around a debate which is far from settled. Two common sentiments prevail that social justice is the formal expression of the feeling that the world does not treat all people fairly and that society should be made fairer (Johnson, 2008). One helpful recent contribution has suggested that social justice is the attempt to answer the question: ‘*How can we contribute to the creation of a more equitable, respectful and*

just society for everyone?' (Zajda, Majhanovich & Rust, 2006, p.13). While general agreement can be reached on its desirability, this is matched by a corresponding contestation about what it means in the formulation of policy and how it is exemplified in practice. Thus social justice can be viewed as concerning both process and goal.

Clark (2006) like Dewey (1916) and Kozal (2005) argues for fairness, sound reasoning and reasonableness in the way people are treated so that:

[w]here differences and inequalities in society have significant, serious and negative impact on the good of those constitutive of such a society, such as their material, psychological and interpersonal welfare are placed at a disadvantage, then social justice comes into contention as a guiding principle (p.276).

Griffiths (1998, p.5) suggests that social justice is '*...the good for the common interest*' and is taken to include the good of each as well as the good of all, acknowledging that one depends on the other. This good depends on there being a right or fair distribution of benefits and responsibilities. Equity theory proposes that perceptions of fairness are derived from individuals comparing their contributions with their subsequent rewards/outcomes (Adams, 1965). If an individual receives an outcome that they feel is based on their contribution then a sense of equity or distribution fairness is felt. Where the outcome is deemed not to

match the contribution then distributive inequity is experienced. This manifests itself in various ways, with poorer performance, decline in commitment and an increasing withdrawal (Schwarzald, Koslowsky & Shalit, 1992; Pfeffer & Langton, 1993).

Griffith's formulation is useful as it underpins a range of political views, it acknowledges improvement and is coherent with different sets of values because of the differing interpretation of terms such as 'good', and 'right'. Mechanistic application to situations is unhelpful, rather the formulation has to be contextualised and related to ethics, reason and human action. The significance of context is inclusive in nature, demonstrating a respect for history. In this regard, *he21C* makes a clear point about the importance of understanding and appreciating the origins and history of the profession, in order to ensure a preferred future, stating that:

...the International Federation of Home Economics has commenced its future-proofing strategy by focussing on questions of sustainability, advocacy and the active creation of preferred futures for home economics, relevant disciplinary fields, and the profession itself, while critically reflecting upon and being informed by its historical roots (IFHE 2008, p.2).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 60th anniversary (UNICEF, 2008) re-emphasizes the global conversation about human rights and the values that unite us as

one human family. Here, and in social justice research, the terms ‘freedom’ and ‘empowerment’ appear frequently (Griffiths, 1997) and emphasize the importance in altering power relations and to question who has the power and where it is exhibited and exercised, in order to improve justice. Sen (1999), a Nobel prize winner explains justice as:

...enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy ... expanding the freedoms we have reason to value [to become] fuller social persons exercising our own volitions and interacting with—and influencing—the world in which we live (p.14–15).

This places emphasis on a person’s agency and capability, not just happiness or functionality. In Sen’s view, justice is about *enabling* people to *engage* in the activities necessary to achieve what they want, which in essence is responsible citizenship, rather than simply to give them what they want. This view has relevance for the home economics profession. In *he21C*, two of the four dimensions of practice identified in the definition relate directly to this idea of developing agency through a study of the field, viz:

- *as a curriculum area that facilitates students to discover and further develop their own resources and capabilities to be used in their personal life, by directing their professional decisions and actions or preparing them for life*
- *as a societal arena to influence and develop policy to advocate for*

individuals, families and communities to achieve empowerment and wellbeing, to utilise transformative practices, and to facilitate sustainable futures (IFHE 2008, p.1).

Using these selected concepts of social justice and noting the explicit connections with *he21C*, it is appropriate now to consider the role of teachers, and in particular home economics teachers, in ensuring the process and the goal of social justice is achieved.

What is the role of school education and home economics teachers in the social justice agenda?

Sachs (2003) argues that in the current climate of accountability, rapid change, increased workload and dissatisfaction, teachers are being de-professionalised and this contributes to a ‘*crisis of legitimacy for the profession*’ (p.12). She offers two versions of teacher professionalism—‘old professionalism’ and ‘transformative teacher professionalism’. Old professionalism is based on the model of teacher work where teachers were experts, where knowledge and content were favoured over process, and where systems were relatively stable and unchallenged. It is characterised by being slow to change, conservative, self-interested and reactive, is no longer appropriate as it does not provide the intellectual or moral sustainability for today’s profession where being proactive, tactical and strategic is vital. This form of deficit thinking professionalism can run the risk of serving

particular interests to the neglect of others, insufficiently concerned with broad social and political issues. The alternative to the old professionalism is ‘transformative teacher professionalism’, and it includes several propellers: a public ethical code of practice; collaboration and collegiality; having an activist orientation; responsiveness to change; flexibility and progressivism; and being policy active and enquiry orientated. Bottery’s (1996) ethic of reflective integrity, where each professional recognizes the limits of personal perception and the need to incorporate many understandings of a situation, is another key propeller for such transformation. Combined, these propellers could demonstrate engagement, responsible citizenship and stewardship of home economics.

It is generally accepted that education has a pivotal role in preparing future citizens to embrace the richness and potentialities of diversity and difference in the creation of a socially just society. Those in school education currently face the demanding task of attempting to equip young people for future living and empowerment in a rapidly changing community. Family changes, globalisation, terrorism, technological advancement and the increasingly complex roles that people must adopt have been set against political and cultural paradigm shifts in attitudes and values. The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005–2014 (UNESCO, 2008) stresses the importance of teachers educating for sustainability with core themes including lifelong learning,

interdisciplinary education, partnerships, multicultural education and empowerment. Societal goals are identified as environmental stewardship, social equity, justice and tolerance, and quality of life for this generation and the next. This vision parallels the objectives of home economics and it is advocated (Pendergast, 2007) that opportunity for rebranding and repositioning the profession has therefore never been stronger (IFHE 2008). To be part of this globally is personally empowering (the process) and could be empowering for the profession (the goal). Part of this journey is about reflecting on current beliefs and principles. It is vital that the profession engages in, embraces (perhaps radically) new imaginaries and widens participation in professional dialogue at local and international levels, to reflect interactional justice concerns as part of its social justice agenda and ultimately to create stability for the field. In order to commence this process, this study investigated the views home economics teacher professionals have of the importance of *he21C*.

Methodology

Instrument

The survey comprised two sections, the first with four (4) open-ended questions of a general nature. The second section had nine (9) extracts taken verbatim from the text of the Position Statement (see Table 3). Extracts were selected that are pivotal to the statement and provided some clear directions on some of the contentious issues in the profession, such as

those related to the name. Respondents completed a Likert scale response to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with the extracts, and had the opportunity to add extended comments. During piloting, statement validity was ascertained.

Analysis

All open-ended response data was entered electronically into a data base and content analysis was conducted to develop categories of responses. Using frequency as a method of determining the strength of the category, frequency graphs were created. Examples of verbatim text were selected to represent the category. All Likert scale responses were analysed statistically to extract descriptive statistical information.

Respondents and survey administration

The survey was administered in three cultural contexts—Scotland, Australia (specifically Queensland), and Malta. Each was a convenience population based on the country of origin of the researchers. In Scotland it was administered to all delegates at the 2007 national home economics conference. There were 220 responses, representing an 87% response rate. It was assumed that participants' voluntary attendance at a professional development event predisposed them to comment willingly on their field of study. Six questionnaire responses were excluded as these delegates were not qualified, practising home economics teachers; the remaining delegates chose not to respond. Views expressed are considered nationally representative as, of the

32 local authorities who administer Scottish education, only two of these were without home economics teacher representation. In Australia the same survey was administered to a sample of teachers attending a conference in July 2007. While the conference organisers were unwilling to distribute the survey to all delegates, a request to complete the survey, which was placed in a convenient location at the conference, was provided through a general announcement. 44 surveys were completed, representing approximately a 25% response rate. In Malta, the survey was sent by postal service with a letter inviting participants to participate. 93 surveys were sent, with 54 completed surveys returned. This represents a 57% response rate.

Limitations

The number of Australian and Maltese responses is less than the Scottish responses and reduces comparison validity. This paper is confined to a discussion of teachers' perceptions of home economics as a field of study. It is of course important to complement these analyses with an exploration of curriculum documents, observation of educational practices and student experiences. The ambition of this paper is to contribute to the further development of such analysis.

Results

Following are selected results from the study. These results have been selected because they are relevant to the topic of this paper, which is encapsulated as the social justice agenda of the

profession, now and in the future. Results are presented in two sections (A & B), reflecting the structure of the survey instrument.

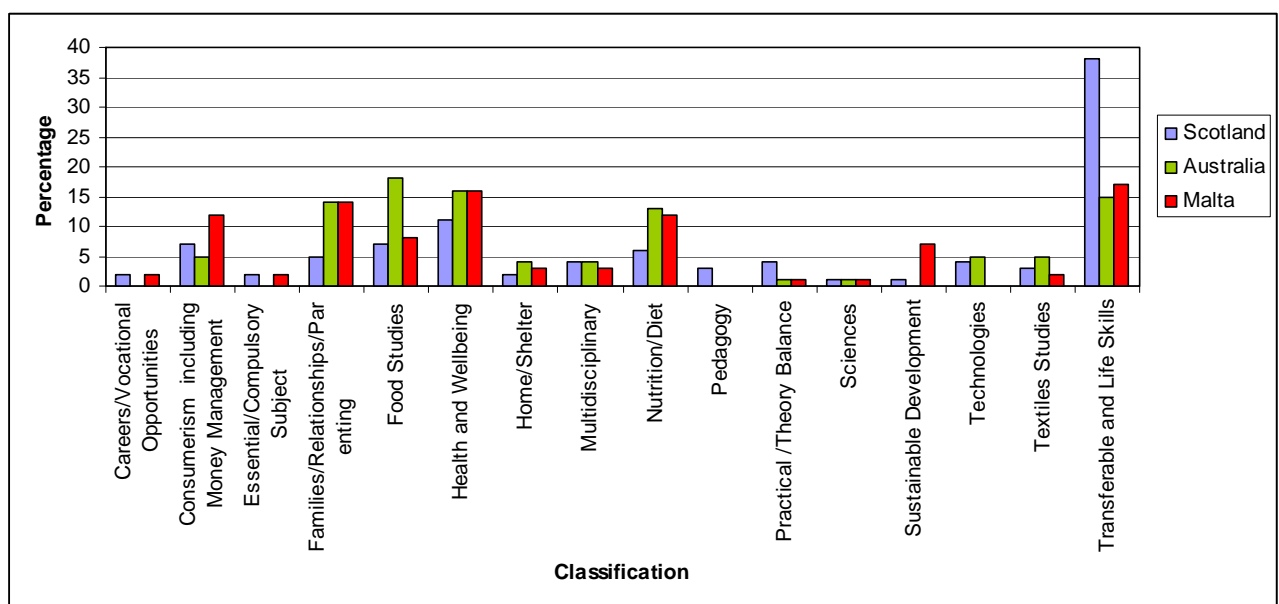
Section A

Question 1: What is the subject home economics?

Response type: Open-ended

Figure 1 shows the diversity of categories reported by teachers in response to the question ‘*what is the subject home economics?*’

Figure 1: The subject home economics: comparison of responses from Scottish, Australian and Maltese teachers



The three most common responses of Scottish teachers were ‘Transferable and Life Skills’, ‘Health and Wellbeing’ and ‘Food Studies’. Australian teachers’ most common responses were the same, but in a different order, namely ‘Food Studies’, ‘Health and Wellbeing’, and ‘Transferable and Life Skills’. For the Maltese respondents, the most common categories were: ‘Transferable and Life Skills’; ‘Health and Wellbeing’; and ‘Families/Relationships/Parenting’. For all teacher cohorts, ‘Nutrition/Diet’ and ‘Families/Relationships/Parenting’ were also identified

as key aspects of home economics. Teachers wanted the subject to develop well-rounded, confident and balanced individuals who could embrace ‘*social diversity*’ (Australia) and a changing world as global citizens:

‘... with the skills to make the most of opportunities available and to create those not available’ (Scotland) and *‘become active members of society’* (Australia)

‘[H]ome Economics is a subject that is always evolving and it lends itself to the changing needs of society’ (Malta).

Comments within this classification highlighted a range of transferable skills such as decision making, analysis, thinking, communication, citizenship, evaluation and enterprise. The terms ‘empowerment’ and ‘enhancement’ were threaded throughout the responses, exemplified by the comment that the subject will:

‘...enable young people to take responsibility for their health and lifestyle with the confidence to take part and contribute and be successful in their own life, passing on these skills to their family and others in their community’ (Scotland).

It is worth highlighting the standout data from this question, which is the strength of the response from the Scottish cohort, with almost 40% of respondents identifying ‘Transferable and Life Skills’ to describe home economics.

Section A

Question 2: What three wishes do you have for home economics learners?

Response type: Open-ended

When asked what three wishes they had for learners in home economics, Australian teachers (27%) mirrored their Scottish counterparts (37%) by again naming ‘Transferable and Life Skills’ and their contribution to an individual’s learning profile (see Table 1). The four capacities of the

recently introduced curriculum guidelines (Scotland)—successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society—featured in just under one third of Scottish responses within this classification. Both teacher cohorts included several generic competences for individual and family benefit, and helping young people to become effective contributors to society, thereby recognising home economics and its ‘...relevance and importance for the community’ (Scotland).

There were sixteen categories developed from the responses. Australian teachers mirror their Scottish and Maltese counterparts by naming ‘Transferable and Life Skills’ most commonly, but their second choice was almost as great (‘Health and Wellbeing’) whereas the Scottish second (also ‘Health and Wellbeing’) was less than half as large as the first response and the Maltese second (also ‘Health and Wellbeing’) was less than a quarter of the percentage response for the first. Respect for self and others, and the environment featured prominently within ‘Health and Wellbeing’. Closely linked to this classification was ‘Food Studies/Diet and Nutrition’.

Table 1: Three wishes for learners in home economics: Comparison of responses from Scottish, Australian and Maltese teachers

| Categories of 'Wish' responses | Number of Responses n = 220 Scotland | % on total 631 Scotland | Number of Responses n=44 Australia | % on total 112 Australia | Number of Responses n=44 Malta | % on total 125 Malta |
|--|--|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Addressing curriculum aspects | 8 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| Challenging/Experiential pedagogy | 19 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Consumerism | 18 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 6 |
| External influences | 24 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Food studies, diet and nutrition | 60 | 10 | 21 | 19 | 4 | 3 |
| Health and wellbeing | 73 | 12 | 29 | 26 | 15 | 12 |
| Knowledge enhancement | 12 | 2 | 8 | 7 | 10 | 8 |
| Progression into subject related courses/careers | 31 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 6 |
| Removal of negative subject perceptions | 18 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Securing enjoyment/fun/fulfilment | 95 | 15 | 13 | 12 | 2 | 2 |
| Subject achievement | 35 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Technologies | 12 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Textile studies | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Transferable and life skills | 220 | 34 | 30 | 27 | 62 | 50 |

Overall, several socially just and ethical practices were articulated in response to this question- *'concern about the welfare of others'* (Australia); promoting *'values of caring for another generation'* (Australia); developing *'deep thinkers about basic living issues'* (Australia); *'to become worthwhile human beings'* (Australia); *'to become agents of change within our society'* (Malta). One teacher, in acknowledging and valuing the

disparate lived experiences of students, wished them to see home economics as a uniting feature by:

'[U]nderstanding that the subject matter affects everyone's lives no matter the circumstances, religion or race' (Scotland).

Some of the least frequently reported responses are classified under specific subject knowledge

and skills areas. Others relate to challenging and experiential pedagogy; successful learning and achievement; the removal of negative subject perceptions and reduction of external influences such as unsympathetic timetabling and imposed economic restrictions, and removal of negative subject perceptions. These highlight the issue of inequitable learning conditions for a minority of respondents.

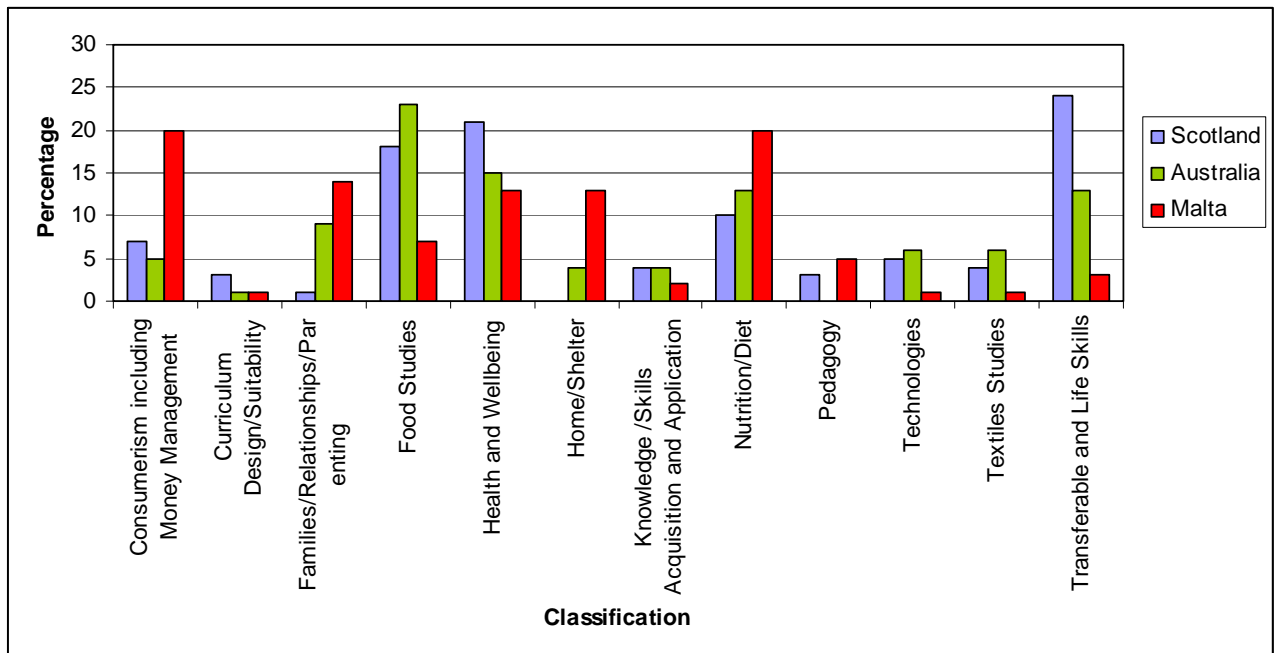
Response type: Open-ended

When asked to identify the key elements of home economics in secondary schools some similarities and differences were reported. There were three distinct Scottish forerunners in this question, ‘Food Studies’, ‘Health and Wellbeing’ and ‘Transferable and Life Skills’. Australians had one leader, ‘Food Studies’ while Maltese teachers chose ‘Consumerism’, including ‘Money Management’ and ‘Nutrition/Diet’ as their leaders.

Section A

Question 3: What are the key elements of home economics in secondary schools?

Figure 2: The key elements of home economics in secondary schools: Comparison of responses from Scottish, Australian and Maltese teachers



Section A

Question 4: Are there aspects of home economics which require to be given less prominence in secondary schools?

Response type: Open-ended

Australian and Scottish teachers in this study overwhelmingly believe there should be no

change to the curriculum. Twenty-four per cent (24%) of Maltese teachers also did not see a need for change. Many respondents noted that their syllabus had changed from time to time and therefore change was less of a priority.

Table 2: Changes suggested for home economics in secondary schools: Comparison of responses from Scottish, Australian and Maltese teachers

| | Number of responses = 220 Scotland | % on total 152 Scotland | Number of responses = 44 Australia | % on total 39 Australia | Number of responses = 44 Malta | % on total 57 Malta |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Assessment | 34 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Career Guidance | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Consumerism | 5 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 4 |
| Course Choice | 6 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 12 | 21 |
| Home/Shelter | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 7 |
| Negative Subject Perceptions | 10 | 7 | 5 | 13 | 1 | 2 |
| No change | 53 | 35 | 17 | 44 | 14 | 24 |
| Practical/Theory Balance | 10 | 7 | 6 | 15 | 0 | 0 |
| Technologies | 15 | 10 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Textiles Studies | 14 | 9 | 5 | 13 | 8 | 14 |
| Health & Nutrition | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 14 |
| Family & relationships | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 7 |

Section B

The second part of the survey invited respondents to provide a score representing their degree of dis/agreement with the extract taken directly from *he21C*, and to add

comments if they chose. Table 3 provides the extracts taken verbatim from the document.

Table 3: Extracts from the Position Statement

| Extract Number | Extract |
|-----------------------|--|
| E1 | Home economics is a field of study and a profession, situated in the human sciences that draws from a range of disciplines to achieve optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families and communities. |
| E2 | Its historical origins place home economics in the context of the home and household, and this is extended in the 21st century to include the wider living environments as we better understand that the capacities, choices and priorities of individuals and families impact at all levels, ranging from the household to the local and also the global community. |
| E3 | Home economists are concerned with the empowerment and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, and of facilitating the development of attributes for lifelong learning for paid, unpaid and voluntary work; and living situations. Home economics professionals are advocates for individuals, families and communities. |
| E4 | The content (disciplinary bases) from which studies of home economics draw is dependent upon the context, but might include: food, nutrition and health; textiles and clothing; shelter and housing; consumerism and consumer science; household management; design and technology; food science and hospitality; human development and family studies; education and community services and much more. |
| E5 | The capacity to draw from such disciplinary diversity is a strength of the profession, allowing for the development of specific interpretations of the field, as relevant to the context. |
| E6 | <p>Home economics can be clarified by four dimensions or areas of practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. as an academic discipline to educate new scholars, to conduct research and to create new knowledge and ways of thinking for professionals and for society. b. as an arena for everyday living in households, families and communities for developing human growth potential and human necessities or basic needs to be met. c. as a curriculum area that facilitates students to discover and further develop their own resources and capabilities to be used in their personal life, by directing their professional decisions and actions or preparing them for life. d. as a social arena to influence and develop policy to advocate for individuals, families and communities to achieve empowerment and wellbeing, to utilise transformative practices, and to facilitate sustainable futures. |

| Extract Number | Extract |
|----------------|---|
| E7 | The profession is constantly evolving, and there will always be new ways of performing the profession, This is an important characteristic of the profession, linking with the 21st century requirement for all people to be ‘expert novices’, that is, good at learning new things, given that society is constantly and rapidly changing with new and emergent issues and challenges. |
| E8 | The preferred name of the field of study and profession is ‘Home Economics’. |
| E9 | The profession is committed to re-branding and repositioning, not renaming the profession. |

Figure3: Combined positive responses for all extracts: Comparison of responses from Scottish, Australian and Maltese teachers

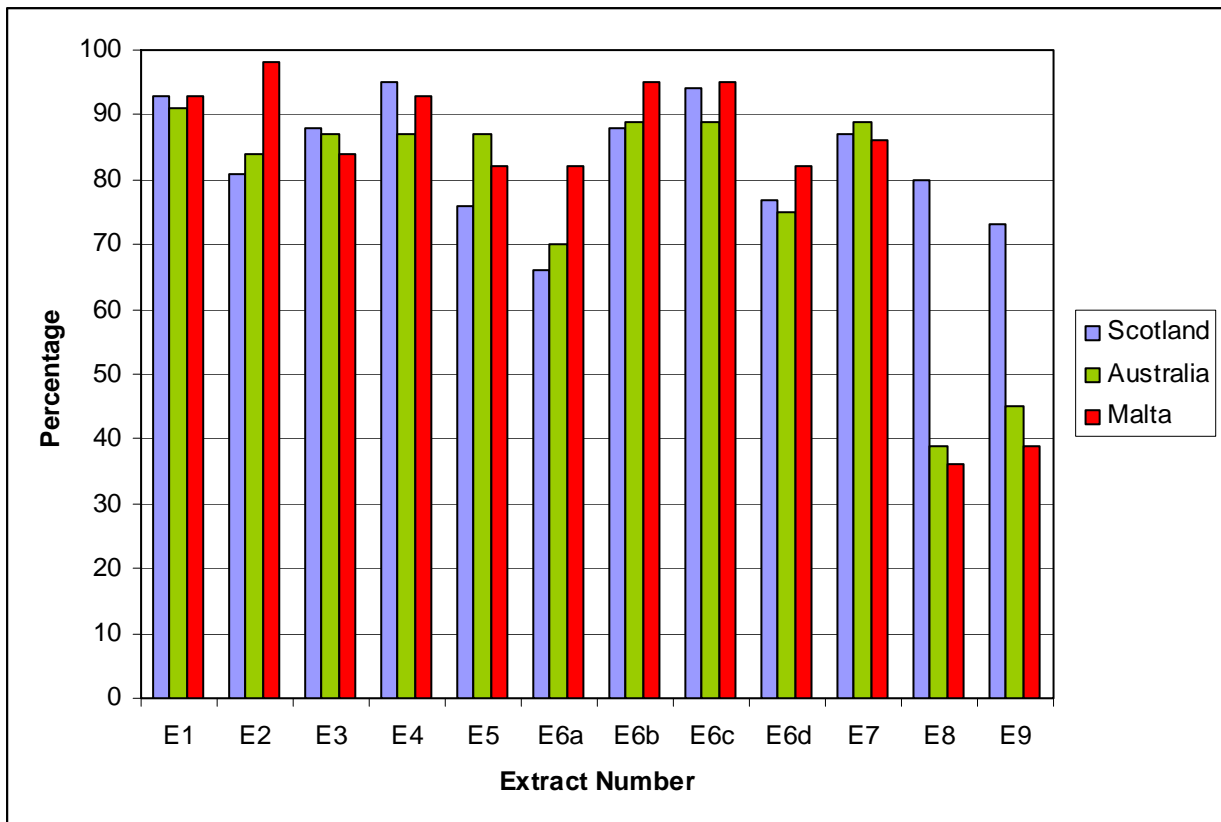


Figure 3 illustrates the percentage of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed with the extracts taken from the Position Statement, the majority agreeing with most of the extracts and thereby finding common ground in its scope, parameters, and purpose. The extract with most

agreement (94%) for Scottish respondents is extract 4, the breadth of content for home economics; for Australian respondents (91%) it is extract 1, the definition of home economics. For Maltese respondents it is extract 2 (98%), the historical origins of the profession. While

there is overall a strong degree of alignment between the respondents, in the area of the name and the re-branding strategy (E8, E9), there is a notable difference with Australian and Maltese respondents indicating considerably less support than their Scottish counterparts. In responding to extracts 6a, (one of the dimensions of home economics as an academic discipline) and 6d (as a social arena related to policy initiation and development), the majority of respondents agreed with the sentiments; however for all cohorts, this illustrates a small but measurable decline in comparison to extracts E1–E5, E6b, E6c and E7. A significant minority of respondents (from 20%–27%) neither agreed nor disagreed with extracts 6a and 6d.

A closer analysis of the specific extracts, along with comments from the open response/comments section that followed each extract where respondents could add comments or explain their choice, provides greater insights into the statistical findings in relation to social justice. The following is reported:

Extracts 1, 2 & 3

The overwhelming majority (93% Scotland and Malta, 91% Australia) of respondents agreed with the home economics definition offered in extract 1 and the multidisciplinary nature of the field. One respondent questioned whether those outside the field recognised this range. For extract 2, the overwhelming majority of respondents agreed (98% Malta, 81% Scotland, 84% Australia) with relating the field to the wider living environments of

individuals and families. Some suggested that global issues required much higher prominence, as much to assist future global citizens, as to rid the subject of outdated and intransigent perceptions associated with cooking and sewing. Another pondered on the changes to family structures and work patterns and suggested more emphasis on the home: *‘especially when we are dealing with ... so many fractured families’*. For all countries this quote seems pertinent *‘keep the subject up to date ... but the roots must not be forgotten’*.

There was a sense from the comments, that in highlighting the wellbeing and empowerment of individuals, families and communities, extract 3 portrayed an inclusive, sensitive and caring approach, independent of ability levels and that these values were favoured by the majority of respondents (88% Scotland, 87% Australia, 84% Malta). Some suggested that family as a concept is undergoing change, is having to deal with a range of pressures and its importance to society should not be undervalued. One teacher commented:

With such fundamental changes affecting family life, it is so important to maintain these values, which HE upholds.

A strong thread in the teachers’ talk was advocacy for ‘family’ and the need to ensure greater recognition of the importance of family is achieved through emphasis in the curriculum, with the underpinning message that paid, unpaid and voluntary work each contribute to the betterment of society.

Extracts 4 & 5

Respondents also agreed with extracts 4 and 5 outlining the content of home economics (95% Scotland, 93% Malta, 87% Australia), with fewer comments made in comparison to other extracts. Curriculum breadth and depth was welcomed to allow students to: *'progress academically'*. While agreeing, some indicated that such a long and varied list of content may suggest vagueness and as a result, *'in schools this has been reduced and marginalised with other disciplines taking parts of home economics over'*. In extract 5, while 76% of Scottish respondents, 82% of Maltese respondents and 87% of Australian respondents appraised the discipline's diversity positively, comments expressed some reservation and uncertainty, for example:

Whilst this may be strength, it can also be a downfall if we pick and mix too much it may really lack specific direction (Scotland).

...sometimes it's difficult to find the exact place that it sits in the curriculum (Australia).

and

The problem is that it is quite difficult for the teachers to convey such a message to the students. I find it quite common with students who know a concept and when they come to apply it within a specific context they are unable (Malta)

However, this was balanced by views expressed regarding strength in diversity, the ability to make continued and further strong

contributions to cross-curricular themes as they emerge while also:

...developing the whole person. This is a real strength, which draws students to this subject (Australia).

Extract 6

This extract had four subsections. The researchers were keen to find out from respondents their degree of agreement with the quite disparate aspects that have been brought together as the four dimensions of practice, viz: academic discipline; arena for everyday living; curriculum area; social arena to influence and develop policy (see Table 3).

Of the four dimensions offering clarification of home economics, there was a high degree of concordance from respondents (Maltese 95%, Scottish 88%, Australian 89% agreed/strongly agreed) for the dimension concerning home economics as an arena for everyday living and for the dimension as a curriculum area (Maltese 95%, Scottish 94%, Australian 89% agreed/strongly agreed). Comments reiterated the importance of life skills and the necessary repositioning of home economics as a core component of the curriculum.

Nearly two-thirds of all Australian and Scottish respondents agreed/strongly agreed with the academic discipline dimension, with almost one third of all respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing (27% Scotland, 30% Australia). Supporting comments identified facets of the existing home economics curriculum suggesting there should be a

sustained drive for the academic dimension of the discipline, as exemplified in one teacher's comment:

We fought long and hard for the academic recognition of HE, many teachers seem to have forgotten this (Scotland).

One Australian respondent commented:

I believe we need to educate and recruit new people who are properly qualified in our area. I am concerned about some of the people being trained in our area.

Maltese respondents were more committed to this extract, with 82% in agreement.

The fourth dimension—as a social arena to influence and develop policy—had high levels of agreement by the majority of respondents (82% Maltese, 77% Scottish and 75% Australian respondents agreed/strongly agreed). Those who agreed commented that this should be a priority for the profession, especially in Scotland with a recent, newly elected parliament where there may be the opportunity to influence and redirect thinking at that level. With the demise of the national association for home economists in the UK it was suggested that it is: *'not so prominent as it may have been'*. One Scottish teacher commented that:

if you have knowledge in a certain field, you inevitably use it to influence your interaction with others in all encounters.

The *policy* dimension and the *academic* dimension share a small decline in majority

agreement when compared to the other two dimensions. This could be explained by comments typical of the Maltese respondents, who recognise the challenge in this task in the following characteristic comments:

Yes we are aware of discriminated groups, low educational achievement, poverty, ill health etc (Malta).

but

This proves to be rather difficult (Malta).

Although it is possible, students find it difficult to influence people around them—although they feel very happy when they do so (Malta).

and

As HE teachers, I don't believe we have this power as yet (Malta).

As teacher respondents, the *curriculum* and *everyday living* dimensions may be closer to their lived world. The percentage of respondents who disagreed with any of the four dimensions is small, ranging from 0–7%.

Extracts 7, 8 & 9

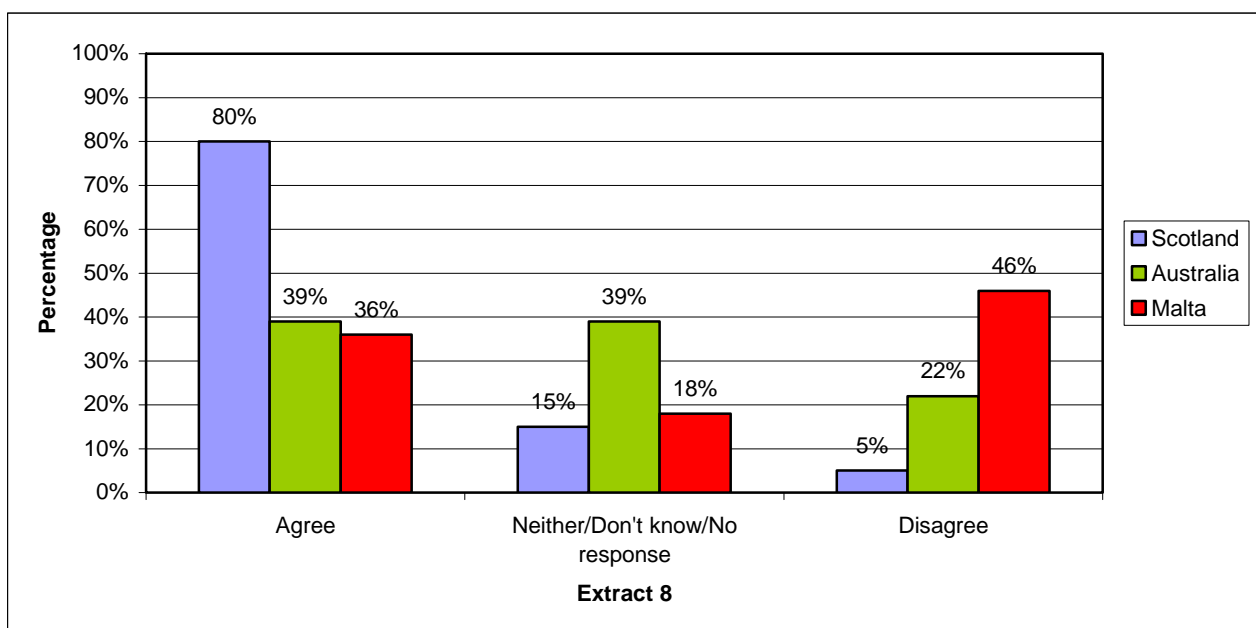
Almost 90% of all respondents agreed/strongly agreed with the contemporary nature of home economics (extract 7) and several comments highlighted and supported the continuing professional development needs of teachers. Regarding the extract *'the preferred name of the field of study and profession is home economics'*, there was a marked cultural difference in responses where 80% in Scotland yet only 36% in Malta and 39% in Australia agreed/strongly agreed. An equal percent

(39%) of Australian respondents neither agreed nor disagreed suggesting a split response for the retention of the name. Twenty-two per cent (22%) of Australians disagreed, while only 5% in Scotland disagreed. A huge 46% of Maltese respondents disagreed with this extract.

For the extract on re-branding and repositioning, there was also a marked cultural difference in responses where 73% in Scotland and a far less 45% in Australia agreed/strongly

agreed. Just 39% of Maltese respondents agreed. Thirty-nine per cent (39%) of Australian and 34% of Maltese respondents neither agreed nor disagreed and likewise, while the number was 19% for Scottish respondents. 16% of Australians disagreed, while only 8% in Scotland disagreed. A large 27% of Maltese did not agree with this extract.

Figure 4: Responses to the preferred name being home economics: Comparison of responses from Scottish, Australian and Maltese teachers



Discussion

As home economics teachers look to their professional organisations for leadership, the Position Statement may be a tool that offers cohesion by privileging the goals of empowerment and social justice as the purpose of home economics practice, thereby building a unified base for the professional community.

Herein lies the potential for the Position Statement to serve as a catalyst for reculturing, a process which 'creates a climate of trust in which teachers can pool resources, deal with complex and unanticipated problems, and celebrate success' (Hargreaves, 1995, p.17). This is possible because there are explicit goals

and clear objectives. In return, the profession generates a membership aware of its responsibilities, which can then challenge discriminatory and prejudiced attitudes and practices, one being the public perception of the contribution that it can make to the social and cultural fabric of society. The professional community is then acting responsibly for social justice as it inhabits the experience rather than merely suffers it. If Sach's (2003) five principles of engagement can be utilised—continued learning, participation, collaboration, cooperation and activism—then the opportunity for transformative practice may evolve with active participation and responsibility. This demonstrates Sach's (2003) 'New Professionalism' and can help teachers to 'shed the shackles of the past' while accommodating a transformative attitude towards the future. Home economics teachers, with raised consciousness, can then become agents of change for developing the vision that reflects the new political and cultural paradigms.

If teachers want to become stronger professionally, they need to open themselves up and become accessible. While transformative professionalism involves individual attributes, it is also a collective strategy. Isolation and individualism is dispensed with and collaborative work, professional dialogue is undertaken. Such a voice is not about being in competition but about '*developing greater richness of sound, with new themes and harmonies woven in the old*' (Griffiths, 1997, p.14). It is up to us with

all our differences to work together for a wider, better conception of home economics and its place in our lives. In many respects there are already strong pockets of teachers whose professional practice and philosophy are indicative of transformative professionalism. Some teachers fall between the two; others' local situations may demand that they work in the old manner of professionalism. This is not about towing the party line, but trying to serve the best interests of all those interested and to present effectively in your own constituency or locality but also in the broader arena. Transformative professionalism is activist in its orientation and its aim is to improve the status and conditions of professionals wherever they work. Its essence is that it is concerned with mutual engagement around a joint enterprise. It is about responsibility to the profession.

Without the prompt of the word 'justice' in the questionnaire, the majority of teachers identified transferable and life skills, health, families and relationships as being core to home economics in Section A, suggesting empowerment and the means to achieve it. Several socially just and ethical practices were identified, suggesting that home economics plays a constructive role in helping students develop an understanding of justice. Home economics contributes to giving young people a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility towards and with others. Importantly, the key excerpts used as triggers in this study related to the four dimensions of practice, viz: academic

discipline; arena for everyday living; curriculum area; and social arena to influence and develop policy (see Table 3). For all three data sets there was a relatively high degree of agreement. Notably, there were differences when results were compared for the three countries with respect to two main areas: the name of the profession; and the commitment of the IFHE to repositioning and rebranding the profession. This is the area of challenge for professional organisations. It seems that home economists accept the role of the profession as developing capacities for transformative practice to achieve socially just society. What they don't accept is the name of the profession or the need for repositioning and reshaping perceptions of it.

Conclusion

This study provides many reasons for hope and action in the contemporary world of home economics. In several countries around the world the survey instrument is currently being administered to build a more comprehensive global understanding of how professionals relate to the key concepts detailed in the position statement. When a better understanding of this is known, the profession can strategically and proactively move forward to future-proof the profession, particularly in areas where there is less agreement with the direction agreed at a global level in the position statement. The overarching message in *he21C* is to actively seek to position home economics as a transformative profession with one of the key priorities being developing an

awareness of and capacities to enhance a socially just society. By adopting this perspective, the profession positions itself as a catalyst rather than a casualty of contemporary times.

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