Pre-professionals’ perceptions of home economics in Finland

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Abstract

This article focuses on some new frameworks that have been under discussion in developing the university studies in the field of home economics or family and consumer sciences in Finland. The empirical data were derived from students’ contributions during their university studies in the degree programme for home economics teachers at the Master’s level. The aim of this research is to find out students’ present understanding of home economics and its challenges to complete its different functions. All students are at the level of advanced studies (mainly fourth year), and the number of students is 34. The data were collected by essays using SWOT analysis as a method. Students produced a very rich and multisided data that can be analysed in diverse ways and for many purposes. In general, one can say that most students have a very realistic and positive view of their studies. They can analyse them in diverse ways and reveal important qualifications. They are aware of the various challenges which face us in both the present and future societies. Students’ views are critical and they posed several questions outside the course material. They introduced examples from their working experiences and from studies in other departments and education institutes. The empowerment elements were recognized but these should be used more efficiently in attaining further progress in the field. New frameworks and approaches developed in Finland seems to be relevant in the current situations society finds itself.

Keywords Home economics/ family and consumer sciences, university studies, teacher education.

Introduction

Home economics/family and consumer sciences can be described in several ways. Its hundred-year history holds a variable resource base to analyse the field and to give different interpretations of it. Home economics is deeply grounded in society and its services will always remain fundamental. The field works for human basic needs such as food, shelter and care, and its ultimate goal is to improve the quality of everyday life for individuals, families and households in society. In different countries home economics is practised differently. In general, one can say that home economics professionals are working as experts on certain subject areas related to family and consumer issues, or by introducing more general expertise from everyday life based on an integrative approach to human action and a holistic understanding of family life. Both orientations are needed and they complement each other. Home economics professionals work for all sectors of society and this may cause a sense of separation and segmentation if the professionals do not hold any common body of knowledge or see the importance in maintaining the professional identity. The consequences may be serious and may result in difficulties in maintaining university programmes or other educational courses that support the field. At present it is an urgent question of whether or not our educational systems and services are the kind the present society needs and on what kind of vision we should base our practices. The main emphasis in this article is on home economics as an academic field and as a part of teacher education. The effort is to increase the discussion and awareness how to educate the future professionals.

In Finland we have a 110-year history in home economics teacher education, but about 20 years experience with home economics teacher education at university level; only half of this as an accredited disci-
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pline conferring the Master’s thesis or Doctoral degrees in home economics. It is important to mention that some specialized areas of home economics – that is, household economics and nutrition – have been at a university level since the 1940s, and this has guaranteed the ongoing momentum of some research activities. It is, however, important to notice the influences that the surrounding research community always has on research inputs in any field. In the Finnish case, for example, the research in the area of nutrition has been guided more by the requirements of the food sciences or those of the medical sciences than that of the home economics field, and it has directed research to areas of interest other than the family and consumer sciences.

During the past 10 years, we have undergone several evaluation processes that have led us to some effective reorganizations, forcing us to critically rethink the essence of our understanding of home economics/family and consumer sciences (Evaluation reports: University of Helsinki). In other words the requirements from inside the academic community have forced us to reconsider our philosophy and basic premises. During the same decade there has been a concerted effort to develop the education and school system of the country. The introduced framework seems suitable for our field, and we have been able to notice how excellently our new understanding of home economics can be integrated into that process. In general, the results of the Finnish education system have been recognized positively at international level (see OECD-PISA of Välijärvi et al.).

Teacher education is a profession developed in order to potentially empower a student for her/his profession. The aim of our teacher education is to produce educational and subject-related knowledge and educate home economics teachers for all levels of the school system. All teacher education programmes in Finland are at Master’s level and this guarantees a strong research orientation within the degree programme. Teacher education for home economics teachers is also organized according to the so-called integrating model. During the studies there is large degree of integration between the subject (home economics) and the pedagogical studies. There is also a possibility in the degree to select another school subject as a minor, or to use this choice to deepen one’s knowledge base in home economics or in education. Every year about 30 students take out a degree.

Home economics is and will be a compulsory school subject for boys and girls and there will also be a need for subject teacher education in home economics in the future. Besides the teacher qualification, the degree includes several possibilities orienting towards other areas of working life than that of schools. Home economics can be seen as a combination of personal development, healthy lifestyles, social responsibility, sustainable use of resources and cultural heritage. University courses are organized under the subject areas of nutrition education and food culture, consumer education, environmental education and family education, including the integrative knowledge base of home economics.

Aim of research

This research is a part of a larger research programme of Home Economics as a Discipline and a Science. The project includes a discussion about different approaches used in home economics in Finland and internationally. It includes a theoretical discussion based on the literature and empirical data have also been collected from home economics students and teachers. This article is based on one set of material collected from university students in the home economics teacher education programme. The aim is to find out their present understanding of home economics and its challenges to complete its different functions, that is, those on the level of the individual, society and academy.

The research questions are: (1) How do the students see their field according to the SWOT analysis? and (2) What type of developments do they pose for the future? There was also an implementation section. Students were asked to produce their own ‘action plan’ for the next few years. This part is not reported in this article but it has some influences on students’ perceptions.

Data and methods

Data were collected during a course entitled Theoretical Approaches to Home Economics. The course is part of advanced studies in home economics and students are in their third or fourth year. The purpose of the course
is to integrate the earlier subject-related studies and to introduce some international literature of the field. During the course, students work both individually and in small groups. The lecture part includes 26 h introduced by a professor in home economics. The data for this research were produced by the writing of an essay about their understanding of *what home economics is as a university subject* and by analysing home economics as a *part of the degree programme for home economics teachers*. In this phase they were asked to use the SWOT analysis during which one reveals ideas about strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O) and threats (T). SWOT analysis is known as a method to help a person or an organization to systematically consider some complex issues. It is widely used in strategic planning and in futures research. Students worked on this method and prepared these materials as home assignments; this part of the course was evaluated in the same way as all other units.

A total of 34 students (all female) produced 124 typewritten pages for the analysis. All students had some school experience as a home economics teacher and most also had some other work experience in the field of home economics, family and consumer sciences. The data were analysed by qualitative methods and further analysis will be made later in regard to many interesting details of the data.

**Results and discussion**

Students produced very rich and multisided data that can be analysed in diverse ways and for many purposes. In general, one can say that most students have a realistic and positive view of their studies. They can analyse them in diverse ways, and reveal important qualifications. They are aware of the various challenges that face us in both present and future societies. Students’ views are critical, posing several questions outside the course material. They introduced examples from their working experiences and from studies in other departments and educational institutes. The empowerment elements were present but were also introduced for use in gaining further progress in the field. Students saw that home economics not only gives them tools that are relevant in present situations, but has the potential to be used in directing the school and other educational settings towards more open learning environments in the future. Our approaches are relevant in the current situations society finds itself.

The main results according to a SWOT analysis are reported as follows. The data will be introduced according to the themes taken from the essays. The selected expressions are taken from students’ responses and translated from Finnish into English. The main question to be answered by the subsequent results is: *What are the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of Home Economics as a part of the home economics teacher-education degree?* Quotation marks are not used because they would interfere with the translation.

**Strengths**

Students generally feel that their degree is strong for many reasons. The main strengths can be classified by three points of view or levels reported in more detail below. What are the strengths which home economics bring (1) for your degree and by means of it to your personal development as a home economics specialist. The second point is (2) the subject or discipline as such and the qualities of our specialist knowledge. The third point is (3) the stage and the variety of our relation to society and policy issues.

(1) The role of home economics within the degree programme

It is a challenge to ensure that home economics is a major subject on equal terms with other subjects and students and leading to the Master’s degree or even Doctoral degree. It was not until 1998 that the qualification for subject teachers of skill-based subjects was raised to the same level as their colleagues. The Master’s degree was valued because of its strong research component. To have home economics within one’s degree was expressed as flexible, directing one to both one’s personal selections (minors, etc.) and allowing for many specializations in accordance with individual wishes.

Home economics is a subject that includes several elements for personal growth and professional development. Home economics within our teacher education degree earned from the Faculty of Education (Faculty of Behavioural Sciences from 2004) was appreciated for its strong emphasis on human and educational aspects.
Students agree that they desire expertise in human development and human action built into their subject studies. A critical and reflective way of acting is applicable to most situations we encounter. To be apprised of behavioural aspects and scientific thinking makes us better prepared to develop our work and to become oriented towards new directions for the future. Our multidisciplinary background and our inter- or transdisciplinary character inspires more confidence when we are able to base our work in an academic discipline and not merely on an area of teaching. It is thereby easier to shed the limited view of our expertise, based only on food preparation.

(2) For your subject – in Finnish ‘kotitalous’ or ‘kotitaloustiede’

Most discussion of strengths was addressed to either our subject or the discipline itself. Students were aware of the requirements that the university discipline brings to their studies, and is in fact the main purpose of the course considered. The opinions concerning the subject are divided into three categories that are closely related; concepts and theories, frameworks and orientation maps and important new contents or approaches.

Nearly all students discussed the importance of constructing concepts and also theory building. The academic discipline gives a logical structure for the subject and allows one to establish new concepts if necessary. An excellent example is demonstrated when our first doctoral dissertation\textsuperscript{20} introduced the concept of mastering everyday life (‘arjen hallinta’). This has been widely used in later research, curriculum work and in text books.

Much discussion was raised about the new frameworks or orientation maps we are using. They were understood as original, modern and suitable for current discussion. They deal with both the content and how to complete or generate action. Integration is an essential key element along with the new understanding of our scientific image. One important remark is that the home economics view (which is the heart of our discipline) helps us to bring theory and practice into real dialogue with one another. Some students, who are unwilling to work as teachers, noticed that this new orientation is applicable wherever one works. Many expressions were written in a way that indicates that they understand both the meaning of the history of our field, and the challenges of the future, while maintaining a concrete hold on their subject matter.

There are several examples written by students that tell us some important contents they expressed as valuable in their new understanding of the subject. ‘Home economics is strong because it understands people, their relations to other things and sees the whole’ might be one example of the expressions frequently included in the definitions of home economics, but not so often expressed as one area of our specialty. The other example is to pay attention to basic human needs. Very few of our professionals discuss these when speaking about food, shelter or care. The same includes global or future issues that several students expressed as the strengths of home economics. There are also many concrete examples about the content of the interdisciplinary approach and its background. Students emphasized that only after understanding the concept or the approach can one use it as a strength for their work.

(3) For our role in society (including consumers and households)

Our relation to society can vary a lot, depending on how we position ourselves and how we define our specialty. Throughout our history there are many examples of how we restrict our specialty within homes and do not see our relation to the different sectors of society. This does not, however, follow the ideas or aims of the present generation of students. They hope to be open to society, seeing the various strengths our field of home economics offers. They are aware that our human orientation includes both the consumer side and the citizenship side. We can also adopt new roles in building the links between different sectors of society and various scientific fields. Based on their interdisciplinary background and integrative nature, home economics professionals can easily take coordinative roles in community work and policy making. This is also the case within schools, while intensifying the partnership between teachers and parents.

Students widely discussed the prevalence of confusion concerning the position of households and families in society. In many official speeches this position is said to be important; with regards to economic and other decisions there is much to do to improve the position of
households and families. Students believe that having home economics as an academic discipline presents the requisite challenges needed to promote household and family issues in society in general and ultimately also in politics. This is why it is also important to bear a name that informs others of our main focus. In Finland we have succeeded in establishing a special Home Economics group in the Parliament that will celebrate its 10th anniversary this year. Together with the parliament members we have tried to promote several important issues to improve the position of households and families. One advantage of the discipline of home economics is that it always includes the individual level, that of the community (or family) and that of the society. This combination is not so common in other academic disciplines or specializations.

Teacher education has always offered us a good capacity and some expertise in communication, and many teachers work in this area through marketing units, the media, etc. These qualities have been connected to that of teacher education but not so much to the qualities our subject – home economics – brings. Based on a holistic view and an integrated understanding of everyday life, home economics professionals can hold new competences as networking specialists. These are the qualities that can be efficiently used in interdisciplinary research groups, inside schools and within other areas of society. One good example is our knowledge base concerning environmental issues, or sustainable development based on human ecological approaches.

Weaknesses

Students were able to see the strengths but also the weaknesses. These are primarily connected in some way to recent developments of the field as an academic discipline. We have not had enough time to firmly develop our studies in accordance with the directions which have been introduced, and inputs to research activities and postgraduate studies are still too modest. There are also several other reasons which slow down progress in the field. Most discussions on weaknesses deal with the integration of (1) theory and practice and that of the role of research. There are also many questions concerning the (2) contents of home economics as well as the (3) practices in the field or the (4) images the field possesses.

1) Interaction between theory and practice
The practical image is so strong within the home economics field that it will take a long time to get the practice and the theory into any real dialogue. Students feel uncomfortable with this issue. Most students think it unfortunate that there is negative competition between the theory and practice during many subject-related courses. They also notice the pressure from outside – it is not so easy to claim that our everyday issues are important as research topics. It seems that the integrative approach of the subject is unclear to some university teachers in the department, and there are problems with theories taken from other fields. They are unsupportive and might contribute confusions to concepts.

Students have a clear understanding about the role of research in their studies, but they are not supported enough in the research during all stages of their studies. Research is still much too separate a task conducted by researchers and not adopted by all teachers as an appropriate tool. Students expressed several weaknesses that have been discussed in promoting the doctoral studies at the faculty. These deal with the number of researchers, the possibilities for scientific publishing or publicity and effectiveness of research. We do not have a clear research programme in the department that introduces relevant research topics to students. There is also a tradition in the Faculty for students themselves to find the topic for their Master’s thesis, which inadvertently feeds back into the aforementioned weaknesses.

2) Understanding of the content
Students voiced concern over the content of home economics. It is a broad field and therefore difficult to set bounds. Sometimes it appears that nearly all information in the world is linked to household or family life. Breadth is thus a weakness in so far as one misses the clear understanding of our content as a whole. If the individual pieces are kept separate and are not integrated according to a suitable framework, one easily gets lost. The same applies to multidisciplinary approaches often emphasized in our research. If the separate issues are not integrated one cannot speak
about inter- or transdisciplinary approaches. The way one understands the content of the field ultimately culminates in the specialty one holds in it. An inability to define that specialty or expertise might lead to a lack of confidence. This issue concerned students both at secondary school and at university levels. In short, we must define our boundaries and sense of place, in order to keep our position, and in order to turn the misconceptions we hold in the right direction. Many outsiders have quite a limited view of our knowledge base, and therefore important expertise in the way of sustainable development or entrepreneurship is not recognized.

Home economics students view practical skills as a valuable resource base, and they become concerned if they do not have enough opportunity to practise these skills. Students respect traditional skills that are typical of Finnish culture and home economics professionals, but also emphasize that present and future societies bring several new requirements in the direction of which to develop our skills. However, discussion concerning the skills and capabilities needed has been too vague.

Home economics as a university discipline is still recently developed and many traditional understandings of the field are competing with new ideas, but, a new conceptual framework for home economics as an integrative subject is not known by some teachers; thus all university courses do not reflect or support these new ideas. One reason is the lack of teaching material both at national and international levels. Scientific thinking is frequently not adopted as a valuable tool for practical problem-solving situations. In many cases there prevails a division between science and practice.

(3) Practices in the field
Home economics professionals in Finland come with very different educational backgrounds because of several changes in the educational system and teacher qualifications during the last 30 years. At present, all new teachers pass a university degree, but the situation in the field is much more complex. This is both an advantage and disadvantage. Many students feel pressure concerning the prevailing role of a ‘real home economics teacher’. Their understanding of this role is different. Home economics teachers can adopt different roles and their expertise can also vary. Students emphasized that we should work more with other specialists, but our networks are too often limited in scope to other home economists. This also involves research and acting as a school teacher. We should develop our marketing skills – as our expertise is unknown to outsiders.

(4) Reliance (confidence) – identity and image
Our identity is somehow dependent on our practical skills, and our success in the future will be dependent on how we can renew our practices in a way that contains these practical components along with a strong research input. A focus of the discussion is the values of society and how household and family issues contribute to these values. Students clearly insist that there are numerous ways and details with which to spoil the image of one’s field, and that it is a duty of all professionals to actively improve it. With new university areas, such as this, there is always a degree of competition with the traditional fields. We must educate ourselves to defend our field and discipline in an appropriate manner. This is the most effective way to improve both our image and our disciplinary identity. Success in our efforts brings confidence. This applies, indeed, to both teaching and research.

Opportunities
Students see their future quite positively and emphasize the development that has occurred during the last years in Finnish society, but also within the university. Many important decisions support the development already begun in our field, which has strong possibilities to continue. Most opportunities that students identified deal with (1) our knowledge base and our new ways of thinking and acting. Based on our interdisciplinary character, some interesting (2) networking capabilities were revealed. Many new opportunities are based on the (3) needs of the society or (4) on the developments ongoing in educational arena.

(1) Our knowledge base and new ways of thinking and acting
Students regard themselves as a part of the process they wish to follow and to develop further. At the moment students have adopted an understanding of their discipline that is compact enough, and that permits much
variety, to be adopted in different situations. It is a question of both the knowledge base and the various frameworks we have adopted and developed during our history. It is also a question of whether or not our aim is clear enough. We are able to link together a variety of knowledge components and redirect them for the needs of households, families and consumers. The human component was understood as the main core element of our knowledge base. We are confronted with the challenge of helping our society to become more human-friendly. Within our subject area there are different useful combinations that can be used in promoting well-being on a personal level, on the community level and on the level of society or that of the global level. Our flexibility brings new opportunities. Students emphasize the need to rely on our subject and to seek the opportunities it has, based on its fundamental content issues (basic elements of human life) and process issues. There is a need to rethink both these areas. New direction is needed, especially concerning processes and their relation to subject issues. Our opportunities lie in our new ways of thinking and acting and also in the reason that our future society will have an extensive need for expertise in everyday life.

(2) Networking capabilities
Students emphasized that our challenge is our role of linking sciences and social sciences – between: theory and practice; consumers and producers; households and society; and homes and schools. With our knowledge base and mode of action, we can improve the interaction needed in many situations. Our multi- and interdisciplinary background and our links to all sectors of society support this function. Networking is a very relevant capability in the modern information society, and home economics education is one valuable tool to promote it. This idea applies to everyday life in households and families; homes are arenas for interaction and integration.

Networking was understood to provide an opportunity to renew our knowledge base. Students now see new opportunities for increasing both the amount and variation of research, as well as other kinds of cooperation. We can link our knowledge to that of women’s studies, cultural studies, youth studies, health promotion, etc. which feature similar approaches. We should be boldly building new networks in different directions along these and other lines. For home economics teachers, schools are excellent centres for different kinds of networking.

(3) The needs of the present and future society
We may now consider issues as discussed in earlier chapters from the perspective of society. Students’ opinions reflected their confidence in the future. Knowledge of home economics is needed and there are several signs in present society that point towards this development. One student wrote ‘In future societies the need for expertise in everyday life will be huge’ and another expressed it as: ‘we must rely on our subject . . . and to be patient . . . our time is near’. Behind these ideas there is a concern about the problems many families and youngsters meet today, and a concern that everyday skills no longer transfer from parents to children. This makes people uncertain and too strongly dependent on services. On the other hand, in working life there are signs that family life is getting more appreciation and attention.

(4) The educational system and its structures
Changes in the Finnish education system during the last 10 years support the trends of home economics education. Students observe that changes and new plans are challenging, and they expect that many weaknesses prevailing today can be transformed into strengths. Our degree structure is a good model for other subject teachers and the new European degree structure is understood as being able to give yet more flexibility for personal selections. Information technology is a great opportunity in all fields, but especially so in home economics because it consists of such a huge knowledge area. Our capability in communication was appreciated in this context. The same deals with the idea of life-long learning.

Threats
Students were generally realistic when recognizing threats. The threats they revealed can be divided into those that arise (1) from outside the field, and those whose origin is (2) inside the field. Many threats were linked to situations where we lose our position or are
not able to make a favourable progress. Most issues introduce possibilities and challenges to improve things provided we admit the situation and decide to work on it. In this sense one can see the situation which many students expressed; that is to say, too few professionals and experts who are responsible for too many things. It is this particular threat that is a general problem in small countries such as Finland.

(1) From outside
Many threats are structural and have a political origin. Many of these type of threats arise if we are unable to keep our position and witness further progress in ongoing processes. Change can sometimes be so rapid that it is nearly impossible to react to it. Most students feel that one of the biggest threats is the possibility of losing home economics as a compulsory subject. No suggestions in this direction can be seen for the present, but examples from other countries remind us of this possibility. Another threat comes from the directions within the context of developing a higher vocational education. It may be the case that home economics professions and education underpinning them will merge into a business or social field and the emphasis on home economics or family and consumer studies will merely hold a left over position. Our problems regarding in-service training was also listed as a threat because it has a large degree of influence on how rapidly new ideas will spread to the field. The importance of having the whole system functioning was also noted, meaning that home economics is present from basic education to universities, and within informal education as well.

Many threats are closely connected to changes in values and attitudes in society. Important questions in students’ selections concern how other fields react and the image our field can possess in relation to others. Competition will be much bigger because there is an increasing number of choices in one’s own country and abroad. More research is needed into the question of whether or not our field can attract more male students.

(2) From inside
Nearly all efforts inside our field include some aspects that might become threats if not completed properly. If we are unable to succeed in networking and in cooperation, or if the developments do not follow the line as planned. Two students mentioned that the biggest threat is home economics professionals themselves. Lack of research was a threat in many students’ minds, as was the poor quality of some single courses. They listed many details in our programme and our studies which constitute weaknesses, as discussed earlier; if we are not able to eventually turn them into strengths, many threats will occur as a result. If teacher education does not follow the requirements of society, and if the poor coordination between theory and practice prevails, favourable progress may become unfavourable. Students think it important to pay attention to the selection of research topics and the strategies taken to make research. Research should have relevance from a scientific point of view in order to enable the discipline to develop; but our research should also have relevance from the point of view of society and individual persons.

Students rely completely on the importance of their subject and if we fail to keep the field alive other fields will gain the best and most interesting aspects. They asked whether this was a threat or merely a challenge; in our field we have learnt that we have to defend our ideas and have a clear message. Not all professionals have paid enough attention to this requirement. It can be a threat. Students believe that our history can be a threat if we cannot see its role and the need to select some new directions. Therefore, if there are not enough professionals who see the future and who are brave enough to complete the necessary changes we will eventually confront several of these threats.

Summary and conclusions
As a conclusion and summary of the results reported here, one can be confident in our students’ ability to see the challenges home economics has as an important resource base for their future work. They have a good basic education and most of them have an excellent attitude towards their studies and to the field as a whole. Therefore, we can rely on their capabilities to push the progress further. There are, however, several problems to be solved and many dangers to be overcome. As such, it is primarily the issue concerning the unity of our field and the quality of our education and research which comes to the fore. It is also the issue concerning the degree confidence and support we obtain from outside.
From one point of view we are located at the centre of society; on the other hand we occupy a marginal position. Our specialty knowledge and our competency are partly the kind which is difficult to articulate and point out, but there is no reason to argue against the necessity of a home economics knowledge base for future societies. What we fail to develop will be developed by other professionals. The choice is ours. Our capabilities to keep the field vital and to work together with our colleagues and other specialists towards a common goal ought to be encouraged and reinforced. We are the individuals who link a variety of knowledge and redirect it for the needs of households, families and consumers. Our framework is thus the whole of society, whereby we also keep global issues in mind.

Consumer issues will become increasingly important in future society, whereas the consumer movement will become more fragmented. Understanding differences, being able to meet changes and making selections will all be important processes. Communication, learning and transferring knowledge from one situation to another are essential features. Processes such as integration, harmonization and balancing are urgently needed. According to this particular research, home economics/family and consumer scientists will have a role in representing the specialization that combines the human elements, including values, the basic practices of everyday life, and the services of society. Our specialty knowledge is based on seeing the whole, having an integrative knowledge base and understanding and being able to work with specialists from other fields. The field has a strong and valuable history but also carries several burdens that must be overcome.

According to students it is important to renew some parts of our image that have proved to be misleading. We are not only home economics teachers, but teachers with a defined qualification or specialization that allows us work across a wide spectrum of areas. One may identify oneself, for example, in the area of consumer education, or citizenship education, or family education, or environment education or nutrition and health education, as well as future education. But our specialization is also based on other components, such as communication, networking or caring. One must be able to define one’s specialization and to rely on it. It is our duty to bring our specialties to different sectors and areas of society. In our case, as a part of our university system, we can support our students to select their minors according to their interests while bearing in mind these future challenges.

According to our students’ perceptions, home economics as a profession can be seen as a tool to empower the consumer.22,23 However, its qualities are not yet used as efficiently as they could be. Many improvements must take place before the full potential of these empowerment components can be integrated into basic education at all levels. It is therefore not a question of any special subject or teacher, but rather a question as to educate human beings in the present and future society. Consumer issues are everywhere and one cannot deal them as a separate issue any more. These are my reasons for supporting the concept introduced by Sue McGregor and others of consumer citizenship instead of consumer issues. There is a strong human orientation included within it:26 a human being also has other ‘roles’ than those of a consumer or a citizen. This is one way in which we can create a more people-friendly and balanced society – both our society and our world. Home economics can be seen as a combination of human development, healthy lifestyles, the sustainable use of resources, social responsibility and cultural heritage. It combines the levels of the individual, the community and society, and it has both historical and future dimensions. These make up the qualifications, or basis for the framework that will challenge the empowerment of the consumer in the 21st century.

References