

*Home
Economics
Education*

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HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION

Dedicated to our husbands, Burton and Richard

Preface

Home Economics Education was written primarily as a textbook for preservice home economics education students, but graduate students and inservice home economics teachers will find it a useful reference. The book provides an orientation to home economics, to teaching, and to vocational education. Its contents cover a range of subjects usually included in two or more undergraduate home economics education courses. Although the primary emphasis is on teaching home economics in the schools, home economics educators who function in non-school settings will find many chapters relevant to their concerns.

Content is organized into five broad categories. Part I provides an orientation to home economics and to personal and professional aspects of growth. Part II focuses on types and components of home economics education programs. The variety of target groups for home economics instruction is described in Part III. Part IV covers planning home economics education programs and developing specific strategies for implementation of the programs. Other factors that facilitate student learning are described in Part V.

Educators should not feel bound by the book's organization, but should feel free to move from one part to another as the need arises. For example, it may be useful to study the chapter on the adult learner in Part III along with the chapter on continuing education in Part II. We encourage users to select the sequence of chapters that best fits their concerns and interests.

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M. L. B.

B. D. M.

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PART I

Professional Concerns

Becoming a professional home economics educator involves learning about the field itself: the content as well as the historical aspects, present concerns, and proposed directions for the future. This process also involves developing a feeling of identity with the field and with the other persons in it. Although home economics teacher education programs do provide personal benefits for an individual, their principal aim is to enable participants to use their expertise to benefit others. This focus differentiates professional programs from those in general education.

The professional home economics educator is an individual as well as a teacher. A positive mental outlook contributes to a teacher's capacity to function effectively and interact with others in a nondefensive way. The teacher today needs many inner resources to meet the challenges of a demanding yet rewarding career.

The professional home economics educator is concerned about professional as well as personal growth. Joining with other home economists in professional associations provides the individual with opportunities for growth, and at the same time the field is strengthened through the input of new ideas.

CHAPTER 1

Philosophy of Home Economics

Home economics is an applied field that brings together knowledge from many different disciplines. Home economics generates knowledge as well as uses concepts from other fields and it applies this information to help individuals and families improve their lives. Other groups are also concerned with the family, but only home economics concentrates on bettering all aspects of family life. Some professions deal with the family as a whole, but merely as observers. Home economists are not content to observe life; they are dedicated to helping families better their situations.

Today's philosophy of home economics grows out of the philosophy held by the founders of the field. Although the problems facing families have changed, the basic mission remains that of helping individuals and families to improve their lives. The future will undoubtedly present society with new problems. How home economists meet them may determine the future of the field as well as the future well-being of families.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

If one date in history can be pinpointed as the beginning of home economics, it is 1899, when 11 people gathered in New York for a conference at Lake Placid. At this conference, the name *home economics* was adopted for this new field. Ten annual Lake Placid Conferences were held before the national organization, the American Home Economics Association (AHEA), emerged in 1909. The new organization was chartered on January 1, 1910.

No new field or national association springs full blown into the world, and home economics is no exception. Its history is closely tied to the development of education for women, the American ideal of public education for all, the growing idea that education should help improve people's lives, and the development of the physical sciences and technology. Budewig (1964) maintains that home economics did

not develop merely to provide something for females to study — some of the same forces that led to the women's movement led to the development of home economics.

Two women — Catharine Beecher and Ellen H. Richards — stand out as contenders for the title “Founder of Home Economics.” The first, Catharine Beecher, wrote *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* in 1841, the first home economics textbook recognized by a state department of education. Between 1827 and 1874, Catharine Beecher wrote 33 books. According to Biester (1959), nearly 96 percent of the content of 10 of these books related to home economics as the field was later defined. Biester pointed out the well-balanced presentation of content:

Approximately one-fifth of the total is devoted to family economics and home management; another fifth of the total space is concerned with family relations and child development; nearly one-quarter of the total information is concerned with foods and nutrition; slightly over one-fifth deals with the subject matter of housing, equipment, and home furnishing; health is discussed in about one-tenth of the content; and only a small percentage of the information concerns clothing, textiles, and related art. Miss Beecher wrote in an era when style changes were relatively infrequent and textile products were subject to more prolonged use than today. (p. 550)

In Beecher's day the time was not ripe for home economics as a discipline, although some schools had begun to include classes that related to domestic concerns during the late 1700s and the early 1800s. Those courses, however, were usually limited to one or two aspects of the field. Budewig (1964) indicates that she does not believe that the early dame schools, which taught sewing, or the cooking schools, which developed later, could actually be considered part of the field's development.

Although she acknowledged Catharine Beecher as the founder of home economics (Biester, 1959), Ellen H. Richards, with the help of many notable persons, was able to mobilize a multitude of forces to launch the field of home economics. One difficulty, it has been said, that home economics had in gaining recognition was that it had no Florence Nightingale. The authors do not accept this premise. In recent years there has been growing recognition of how remarkable Ellen Richards was.

Caroline L. Hunt's biography *The Life of Ellen H. Richards* (1958) describes her contributions to the development of home economics. Hunt was a friend of Ellen Richards who was also present at the first Lake Placid Conference. The statement that history is constantly being rewritten in terms of later developments and concerns is true in the case of Robert Clarke's *Ellen Swallow: The Woman Who Founded Ecology* (1973). Ellen Richards (née Swallow) fairly leaps from

the pages of Clarke's biography. Her battles and accomplishments as described by Clarke are vivid and exciting.

The bicentennial *Life Special Report*, "Remarkable American Women" (1976), includes Richards in the section "Women for Women: Pioneers in the Struggle for Equal Rights." The caption under a group portrait in which she is shown reads: "Ellen Swallow Richards — True grit among the vests at MIT." The story that follows said:

Jaws set and bright eyes front, Ellen Swallow Richards sat with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology chemistry faculty for this group portrait taken around 1900. It was a tribute to her grit that there was one maxiskirt among all those vests, because in Richards' youth a college-educated woman was viewed as warily and skeptically as some exotic reptile. She bucked this prejudice and became the first female graduate of MIT, its first woman faculty member and the first woman science consultant to industry. Richards made it possible for others to follow her by creating a program for woman science teachers at MIT. Her specialties have become contemporary bywords — ecology (which she founded as a science), water pollution and home economics. A consumer advocate before the phrase entered the language, she set up the nation's first nutritionally balanced school lunch program in 1894. A chauvinistic bureaucracy denied her a doctorate at MIT, but Smith College made her an honorary Doctor of Science the year before her death. (p. 98)

Ellen Richards believed that science could be used to improve people's health and well-being. She placed her faith in education but was instrumental in getting policies accepted and legislation passed. Having successfully established models for healthful and efficient home environments, she was also concerned with the larger environment that affected the home. She was concerned with the nutritive content of food as well as the problem of its adulteration. Richards practiced what she preached in her own home, which served as a laboratory for developing an improved living environment.

Ellen Richards was a dynamic leader who joined forces with other powerful leaders of the day and enlisted the aid of wealthy patrons, who helped finance many projects. She was also a master at delegating responsibility. Although she made no attempt to direct all concerns that later became important national movements, it can be no accident that she was involved in so many of these endeavors designed to improve life. Ellen Richards participated in enterprises that led to product testing and setting national standards for products, and one of her enduring interests was home study for women, which laid the groundwork for the home economics extension service programs. Ellen Richards was a force behind the New England Kitchen, an experiment designed to feed nutritious foods to poor people in Boston at low cost. The experiment failed, but it led to development of the school lunch program. A very successful experiment was the Rumford

Kitchen exhibit at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. At this educational exhibit nutritious lunches for visitors were sold at modest cost, and large crowds came to see food prepared scientifically. Menus carried the nutritive value as well as the cost of foods served.

Martha Van Rensselaer, another powerful woman, was present at the first Lake Placid Conference in 1899. In 1900 she went to Cornell University to develop the extension program for women. She was president of AHEA from 1914 to 1916 (Tate, 1973).

Isabel Bevier's name also appears on the roster of participants at the first Lake Placid Conference. In 1900 she went to the University of Illinois to reinstitute the home economics program, which had been dormant for 20 years. Bevier became the second president of AHEA.

It is interesting to note that males have been actively involved in home economics since its beginning. Although Richards was vitally concerned with education for females, she never envisioned that home economics would be synonymous with education for women. She was educated with men and spent most of her life working beside them.

Count Rumford, born in 1753, may have been the first person to apply science to the kitchen. It was in recognition of his work that the 1893 exhibit at the World's Fair was called the Rumford Kitchen. In 1857, Edward Youmans wrote *Household Science*, a scientific study of air, heat, food, and light. He also provided the definition of household science that was later recognized by home economists (Quigley, 1974).

The industrialist Edward Atkinson, an associate of Ellen Richards, supported many of her causes after he became interested in the quality of the food that mill workers ate for lunch. His invention of the Aladdin oven permitted Mrs. Richards to conduct cooking experiments that required controlled heat (Clarke, 1973).

W. O. Atwater is considered to be the father of nutrition in the United States. He developed the Atwater bomb calorimeter, conducted metabolism tests, and studied the chemical composition of foods. He became the first director of the Central Office of the Agricultural Experiment Stations when the Hatch Act was passed in 1887. At his request, Ellen Richards and Edward Atkinson wrote nutrition bulletins for the experiment stations (Quigley, 1974).

A note from *Illinois Teacher* (1977) describes the contributions of males in establishing home economics as a field:

The focus on the recent participation of males has tended to overshadow the substantial contributions men have made to the home economics movement in the period of its establishment and infancy. While all presidents of the American Home Economics Association have been women, men were well represented as pioneering office bearers. Benjamin R. Andrews was probably the most notable of these. He served as Treasurer 1909–1911, Secretary 1909–1912, Vice-President 1913–1916,

and was co-editor for the first three issues of the *Journal of Home Economics*.

Another noteworthy man was C. F. Langworthy. He served as Treasurer from 1913–1914, Vice-President from 1909–1912 (and again from 1918–1921) and was co-editor of the first three issues of the *Journal of Home Economics*. A prolific writer, Langworthy's chief interest was in food and nutrition, and he was widely recognized for his calorimeter experiments and early work in soybeans as food. Howard Knight, the AHEA Treasurer in 1912, was known for his interest in dietary studies and his work in agricultural experiment stations. William Morse Cale was Treasurer from 1914–1917 and was an author in accounting and auditing. H. Gale Turpin had the distinction of serving as Treasurer from 1917–1935. (p. 236)

Home economics grew rapidly after AHEA received its charter. Rapid growth brought a variety of programs in the public schools as well as in colleges and universities. Ellen Richards died in 1911, when AHEA was still in its infancy. She did not live to see the passage of two federal acts that were greatly to influence the development of home economics. The Smith-Lever Act, passed in 1914, created the Agricultural Extension Service, including home economics. The Smith-Hughes Act, passed in 1917, established home economics as a part of vocational education. This act was to have great impact on the future development of home economics in the public schools and on college preparatory programs for teachers.

There have been many changes in home economics since its founding, but Ellen H. Richards's creed still seems appropriate today.

Home Economics Stands For

The ideal home life for today unhampered by the traditions of the past.

The utilization of all the resources of modern science to improve the home life.

The freedom of the home from the dominance of things and their due subordination to ideals.

The simplicity of material surroundings which will most free the spirit for the more important and permanent interests of the home and society.

(Cited by Baldwin, 1949, p. 17)

HOME ECONOMICS TODAY

The concern of home economists for the quality of family life continues, but families have changed and their problems have changed, in large part because of rapid social and technological development. Today, as in the beginning, the field is blessed with dedicated leaders who can envision what might be accomplished through united action, but not all home economists have been able to