

## Report on Master's Thesis:

# **Beliefs of Home Economics Teachers in British Columbia Concerning Courses for Grade 12 Students**

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You may remember receiving a questionnaire in November 1963 through which I was attempting to discover the beliefs of British Columbia home economics teachers concerning classes for Grade 12 students. One was mailed to each of the 384 home economics teachers of the province, but a rather disappointing 35 percent were returned in usable form. Whether they had had experience teaching boys and/or co-educational classes, and regardless of the level at which they were teaching, it was assumed that all teachers would have an opinion on a class for Grade 12 students. Failing this, it was assumed that teachers would be stimulated to form an opinion after receiving the questionnaire.

Since the level under study was specifically Grade 12, perhaps only senior high school teachers should have been asked to participate in the study. Sixty-three percent of the senior high school teachers in the province did return questionnaires, so there was evidence of marked co-operation on the part of the people who do work with Grade 12 students.

I cannot recall details after such a long period of time, so the following summary is organized under the main headings given in the questionnaire:

### Who Should Take Such a Class and How Should it be Organized?

In descending order of preference, respondents indicated that a Grade 12 home economics class should be for girls (54%), co-educational (23%), boys and girls in separate classes (17%), and for boys only (2%), no answer (4%). By far the greater number believed that such a class should be for girls only, and a minority indicated that the class should be for boys only. When analyzing the data concerning respondents' beliefs about the importance of home economics in the school curriculum, 51 percent of the teachers believed that home economics courses should be required of all students. Further, when evaluating data on their beliefs concerning who should take home economics, 51 percent indicated that home economics should be for girls primarily. It may be concluded that a minority of the teachers, when faced directly with the issue, indicate that home economics classes should be for boys. When confronted with general beliefs, however, it appears that approximately one-half of them believe in home economics for boys.

On the assumption that the curriculum were to include a required Grade 12 class for boys, respondents were asked for an indication of their beliefs regarding such a class. Teachers believed that the class should be elective (83%), be required (12%), not be considered (5%). In general, the respondents did not favor a compulsory class for boys.

Respondents were asked to give an opinion regarding some further details about a boys' Grade 12 class. They believed such a class should include laboratory experiences (82%), be of one year's duration (449/0), be of one semester's duration (109/0), be coeducational (9%), and be a non-laboratory C lass (5%). Respondents favored a class of one year's duration in which laboratory experiences would be included.

### Beliefs of Home Economics Teachers About Home Economics

An 85 percent or higher acceptance of the beliefs was considered to be a high rate of approval for reviewing teachers' beliefs. Most of the respondents believed that it was the home economics teachers' responsibility to emphasize more than foods and nutrition and clothing construction in their classes. They believed it their duty to encourage an interest in home economics careers, interpret their program to the school and community, and exemplify the home economics profession.

Regarding the importance of home economics in the school curriculum, respondents believed that organized educational experiences contribute to improving and strengthening family life. When dealing with values to be fostered in home economics, they believed that their teaching should help students establish values, and assist them in understanding the needs and development of individuals. Respondents believed home

economics to be a comprehensive discipline and that emphasis should be given to all of the major areas within the discipline.

When dealing with beliefs concerning the home economics curriculum, participants in the study believed that schools should be providing students with opportunities to help them in their personal, social and family life. They believed, further, that an-effective home economics program includes experiences which are important to students in their home and family living.

#### Beliefs of Home Economics Teachers About Organization of a Grade 12 Class

Somewhat less than 85 percent, but a good majority nevertheless, believed that family living should be taught in the school as well as in the home (80%). They believed, too, that the organization of a co-educational class in home economics needs to be different from that of a girls' class (82%).

#### Beliefs of Home Economics Teachers About -How Much Present Trends in Life Today Should Influence Teaching a Home' Economics Grade 12 Class

Respondents indicated a lack of awareness of the social problems in today's society. A relatively high percentage, (6-12%) indicated that the trends toward a "fun" culture, poor mental health, increased need for adult education and the increased divorce rate should have no influence in teaching home economics. Some of the respondents (5-10%) indicated a lack of involvement in community affairs when increased joining of organizations, increased longevity, reduction of outside help in the home, and shorter working hours were considered to have no influence on teaching a Grade 12 home economics class.

On the basis of these two factors namely, the apparent lack of awareness of social problems and of involvement in community affairs, it could probably be concluded that home economics teachers need to keep going to school, or in other ways keep in touch with the newer trends and facts which have a direct relationship with their field. Some also need to a degree, at least, to become involved in community affairs.

In general, it may be stated that many respondents felt that present trends should have at least much or some influence in their teaching.

#### Conclusions

There are several specific conclusions which may be drawn from this study. Following are three I wish to emphasize at this time:

I. British Columbia Home Economics teachers show greater belief in a broad homemaking program than is indicated by the scope of their present curriculum.

Twenty-seven of the 64 goals for child development, management, housing and home furnishings, and relationships were accepted by 66 percent or more of the respondents as most important for a girls' Grade 12 class. (It is important to note that these are goals dealing with areas of home economics other than food preparation and clothing construction.)

2. From the way in which many of the respondents checked the questionnaire, it appeared that they did not understand the changing concept of the masculine-feminine role.

There were several examples which support this conclusion. When asked to rate trends of the times, the trend concerning changing attitudes towards roles of men and women was accepted by just barely one-half of the teachers as having much influence in teaching home economics.

When evaluating the importance of goals for a girls' Grade 12 class, respondents again indicated a lack of knowledge regarding this trend. They gave a substantially higher acceptance for girls' than for boys' classes the goal dealing with helping children to learn good eating habits.

When perusing the management goals, two stand out which also indicate some confusion. Rated low for boys' classes were the goals dealing with the problems of the working mother, and the simplification of housekeeping routines.

Among the goals for housing and home furnishings, it may be seen that respondents gave a low rating for girls to the goal dealing with refinishing and repairing furniture and making simple repairs on household equipment. They rated this goal much higher for boys.

On the basis of these examples it may be concluded that there is either lack of knowledge or some confusion among 136 British Columbia home economics teachers regarding the changing masculine-feminine role.

3. Apparently home economics teachers who have not taught boys are somewhat apprehensive about doing so and would therefore prefer to teach girls.

Part of this concern may be because they are prepared to teach girls. Many home economics teachers believed that boys need at least some education for home and family living. Some of the respondents who had taught boys, or whose boys had taken a home economics class, wrote comments on the questionnaire indicating their enthusiasm for boys in home economics classes.

In view of the recognized need on the part of teenagers for organized experiences to improve personal and family living, I would like to suggest that an experimental elective course be implemented in which only willing students would participate. After such a course had proved itself to be of value to students, and students in general were electing it voluntarily, and after teachers were taught how to teach this type of class, steps could be taken to make it a required course. The types of classes, whether boys', girls' or co-education, could and probably should be decided by individual teachers after suggestions and direction have been sought, from their respective administrations and communities.

I wish to thank all the teachers, both junior and senior secondary, who participated in this study. I am also grateful for the good wishes and encouraging comments included by many of the respondents on the questionnaires.