

CHANGE OF DIRECTION OF HOME ECONOMICS SUBJECT

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Abstract: Education in Latvia is also influenced by the rapid changes in the globalisation of the world, transformation of socially political attitudes, boom of information technologies and other factors. The changes in education paradigms are closely connected with the change of values in education. One of the manifestations of the education paradigm is transition from the traditional society to the knowledge society. In knowledge society, people play the leading role. The changing education paradigms have determined the need for new education programmes. The home economics subject is one of those that are included in the list of subjects for programmes of primary education. The changes in education paradigms have affected also this subject. The aim of the research is to study the changes in the content of the home economics subject in practice, emphasizing the self-reflection of pupils. The main conclusions: home economics programmes have previously included different topics, emphasizing the political viewpoints and education tasks of those times; today the pupil's understanding about the safety and quality conditions of the living environment is emphasized in home economics, thus acquiring the experience of creative activity. The research data testifies to the fact that changes in the analysis of the home economics subject can be observed among the groups of the respondents.

Keywords: paradigm, programme, Home Economics subject.

Introduction

The 21st century can be characterised by rapid changes in politics, economics, national economy, as well as education in Latvia. Within the different social systems and at all times, education has always been, is and will remain the most important, essential, persistent and relevant development factor and value that does not provide the result or profit directly, but ensures appearance of it in a certain period of time through new ideas, tasks, new attitudes and competences of every next generation (Zīds, 2007). Analysing the problems and opportunities of the changes in education, M.Fulans emphasizes that the changes should focus on all public institutions and their interaction, while education has a special task – to step forth and assist in retaining the correct orientation (Fulans, 1997). To increase our human capital and fully make use of other – cultural, natural or economic – resources, a change in education paradigm is necessary (Latvijas ilgtspējīgas attīstības stratēģija līdz 2030.gadam, 2010). *Paradigm* – a set of different items, phenomena grouped according to a certain principle, feature, elements of which are interrelated within a vertical and horizontal plane (Pedagoģijas terminu vārdnīca, 2000, 118). The scientist I.Beļickis relates the concept of paradigm with the changes of values in education, emphasizing that the humane paradigm in education is the scientific view of the world as regards education (Beļickis, 2000). Analysing paradigms in education research, K.Niglas emphasizes that paradigm is very closely connected with philosophical level (Niglas, 2001). I.Katane considers that the education paradigm reflects the dominating views of society about the education mission, its aims and tasks in a specific time and education area, but the contradictions and problems of the modern education should be studied and solved on the basis of the ecological approach. The modern education environment is typical of different education paradigms (Katane, 2007b; Katane, 2007a). O.Zīds accents that the common paradigm of the 21st century is learning to think systematically, find ones own role in the society both as a consumer and a new product leader, be a partner that is open and interested in the society, as well as responsible and compliant (Zīds, 2007).

A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning was signed in Brussels in 2000, accenting that people play the leading role in the knowledge society. The human ability to efficiently and wisely create and apply knowledge in continuously changing conditions is valued most. To fully develop this ability, people need to wish and to be able to shape their lives, i. e., become active citizens. Education and training

throughout the whole life – that is the best way towards being able to survive the challenge of changes (Mūžizglītības memorands, 2000).

In the Latvian National Development Plan, human is proposed to be the one to ensure the growth of the state: “Our chief resources that can enable the whole society and each individual to reach the standard of living that developed countries have attained are the people’s knowledge and wisdom, as well as their ability to use them efficiently and purposefully (Latvian National Development plan 2007-2013, 2006, 8).

Such Latvian scientists as B.Rivža and M.Krūzmētra state that the 21st century requires a human that has not only acquired knowledge, but also is able to think and act creatively, i. e., to use the acquired knowledge creatively, and able to adapt to the rapid changes in economics, politics, culture, at the same time capable of creating such changes (Rivža, Krūzmētra, 2007, 7).

Analysing the education processes, points out the three main paradigms or three basic approaches to education:

- 1) socially public;
- 2) personal;
- 3) socially personal (Meņšikovs, 2007).

The socially public approach is typical of the public and societal interests and needs prioritized in respect of pupil’s interests and needs. Such an approach is promoted by several conditions and reasons. It existed and continues to exist in societies with a strict centralised national regime; there are two variants of such an approach: authoritarian and manipulative. The authoritarian manner has been used in lots of schools in the world by education organizers and teachers since the beginning of the learning process until now. In such conditions, teachers become authoritative personalities, and the children upbringing by them are subject to this perspective as well. The essence of the manipulative approach is the special organization of teaching and upbringing. Teachers wish to hide their ruling over children the make their influence and affect on children invisible. They do it because they wish to overcome the pupils’ resistance to teaching and upbringing, thus increasing education efficiency.

The personal approach is characterised by the dominance of the personality’s interests and needs of pupils over the societal and public interests. Efficient education is impossible without active participation of personality that is not suppressed; the pupils should act willingly. Two orientations of the personal approach should be mentioned: free upbringing and personal approach with the pedagogical support.

The third paradigm is the socially personal approach. In this case the social orientation of education is retained without which gradual cultural, meaning also societal, development lags behind. However the education system in general and each school separately form the main conditions and opportunities for a free, valuable and peculiar personal development of pupils. The socially personal approach lets pupils criticize teachers and organizers.

The transition from the traditional to the knowledge society is one of the main manifestations of the education paradigm. It leads to different discussions, justifications and arguments. Analysing the understanding of the traditional and knowledge society, the scientist T.Koķe states that the difference in the perception of freedom in the context of education and upbringing is especially topical (Koķe, 2007). In the traditional society it relates to getting rid of limitations, while in the knowledge society freedom is guaranteed by the human ability to be able to act on the basis of different competences. The material basis of the knowledge society, in turn, is the knowledge-based economical development that expands the possibilities to protect and strengthen the level of welfare of the society.

Traditional society schools accent subjects, evaluate pupils’ achievements in the knowledge context, accept isolation of education degrees, allow dominance of a strict hierarchical structure and limited liability (Koķe, 2007). The ability to ensure a high degree of innovation and promote a high level of participation is the way towards the knowledge society.

Qualitative and creativity-oriented education that is available throughout the whole life is a need typical of the 21st century – it allows to respond to the global competition and demographic challenges, as well as is one of the preconditions for the change of the economics model (Latvijas ilgtspējīgas attīstības stratēģija līdz 2030.gadam, 2010).

The changing education paradigms have determined the need for new education programmes. Analysing the improvement of education programmes, D.Prets indicates that usually an education programme is considered a driving force that assists in finding the aim of life. The most important task of education programmes, in turn, is liberation, thus ensuring pupils with as many as possible options to choose (Prets, 2000). A.Broks mentions that today we need: new education content, new methods, new education employees and appropriate financial and materially technical resources. (Broks, 2000.)

The home economics subject is one of those that are included in the list of subjects for programmes of primary education. The changes in education paradigms have affected also this subject. The aim of the research is to study the changes in the content of the home economics subject in practice, emphasizing the self-reflection of pupils. In the home economics subject, pupils acquire knowledge and skills typical of creativity oriented education. However each individual determines his or her own ability and wish to act, using the acquired and improved competences in home economics.

Materials and methods

A pedagogical research was carried out to investigate the changes in the content of the home economics subject in practice. The research was carried out in the city of Jelgava in 2011-2012; pupils of schools of Jelgava, the youth and adults were the ones to participate in the research. The respondents were grouped into three groups: a) pupils acquiring home economics at the moment, i.e., forms 5-9, b) the youth having acquired home economics in about 2000, c) adults having acquired home economics until 1970. Totally, there were 130 respondents. The following research methods were used: investigation of Home Economics programme, questionnaires, observation and discussions. The results have been summarized and the relevant ones are presented graphically using calculations of percentage. The materiality level is determined using Yetes' p-value (Preacher 2001).

The pedagogical research focused on the personal viewpoints of the respondents about home economics during their school years and reflection after several years. Practical life-based conclusions and relation to home economics at school. Observation of changes in home economics content.

Results and discussion

Analysing the home economics programmes in the perspective of years/time, changes not only in the name of the subject, but also in the structure, content and methods can be observed (Līce, 2003a; Līce, 2003b). The topics cover a wide variety. The main accent is put on handicraft, self-service, nutrition, housing maintenance, clothing and differently structuring them, including also accounting (1925-1940), practical workshops (1955-1957), engineering elements, electro-technical work (1960-1980), etc.

The author has elaborated a comparative table regarding the content of programmes, accenting topics related to textiles (Table 1).

The research in home economics programmes reveal that the basic teaching topics included in home economics programmes related to textiles are as follows: textile technologies, treatment of closing, composition (mentioned in options), later ethnography, national applied arts, weaving, textiles in apartment (mentioned as a subtopic). Each topic is influenced by the level of welfare of the particular period of time. For, example, in 20-30ties, manual washing, boiling, rinsing, bluing, drying, rolling of clothing and boiling of soap was accented in treatment of closing and underwear. In 70-80ties – washing of outdoor closing and removal of stains at home and in drycleaner's, washing detergents and equipment, washing machines. From a simple mending of holes to a creative usage of holes as defects for decorating purposes. There are differences observed in the essence of acquiring topics, from a mechanical fulfilment of a practical activity (e. g., prick embroidery) to a wise comprehensive personal development of pupils (creative activity, relation with the living environment, work analysis, self-expression opportunities, etc.). Today acquisition of textile technologies is emphasised together with the human free willingness, choice and understanding. In home economics, the understanding of the pupil about the safety and quality conditions of the human living environment, the ability to creatively involve and solve problems related to that, the ability to gain experience in creative activity is emphasized. The today's importance of home economics is accented also within the World Home Economics Day on March 21 (IFHE, 2012).

Table 1

Content of programmes of the subject Home Economics
(handicraft, household, practical classes, work training)

Period	Years	Subject	Textile related topics	Other topics
During the times of independence of Latvia	1921	Handicraft	Textile technologies: knitting, crochet, embroidery, sewing. Mending and darning.	
	1925	Handicraft	Textile technologies: knitting, crochet, embroidery, sewing. Mending and darning.	
		Home economics	Treatment of kitchen closing and underclosing. Choice of closing and underwear. Treatment of closing.	Arrangement of kitchen. Diet. Cooking. Cleaning of living premises. Soap boiling. Accounting.
	1928, 1930	Handicraft	Textile technologies: knitting, crochet, embroidery, sewing. Mending. Composition (in notes).	
		Home economics	Choice of closing and underwear. Treatment of closing. Treatment of clothing.	Arrangement of kitchen, tidiness. Diet. Cooking. Table laying and etiquette. Cleaning of living premises. Accounting.
	1935, 1938	Handicraft	Textile technologies: knitting, crochet, embroidery, sewing. Mending. Ribbon weaving. Composition (in notes). Ethnography (in notes).	
		Household	Treatment of closing. Choice and purchase of clothing. Treatment of clothing. Apartment decoration.	Arrangement of kitchen, tidiness. Diet. Cooking. Laying table. Cleaning apartments. Accounting.
	1941	Handicraft	Textile technologies: knitting, crochet, embroidery, sewing. Mending. Composition (in notes).	
During Soviet times		Household	Treatment of closing. Choice of clothing. Treatment of clothing.	Arrangement of kitchen, tidiness. Diet. Cooking. Laying table. Cleaning apartment. Accounting.
	1955, 1957	Practical classes in workshops		
	60-70ties	Practical classes. Classes for girls.	Textile technologies: knitting, embroidery, sewing. Composition. Ethnography. Treatment of closing and underwear. Textiles for premises.	Arrangement of kitchen, tidiness. Diet. Cooking. Table laying, etiquette, serving of food. Decorating of living premises, tidiness. Electric heating devices.
	70-80ties	Work training. Home economics	Textile technologies: Knotting, crochet, embroidery, sewing. Material science. National applied arts. Ethnography, composition (in notes). Treatment and cleaning of outdoor closing. Treatment of closing and underwear. Textiles in apartment.	Kitchen and kitchen furniture. Diet. Cooking. Preparation of menu. Table laying, etiquette. Decorative plants, treatment. Apartment decorating, neighbourhood. Engineering elements. Electronic works.

For all of the years, according to the political views and education tasks the home economics subject has been related to real life, it has not existed on its own, but it has existed from the acquisition of self-service skills to a responsible lifestyle, sustainability and improvement of quality of life. Different activities that today can be defined as lifelong learning, have been present always. The Home Economics Seminary of Kaučminde (later called Home Economics Institute of Latvia) has played a vital role in ensuring home economics education quality. The establishment and active operation of the International Federation of Home Economics (IFHE) has served as an important accent on an international, emphasizing the today's topicality and importance of home economics in the practical everyday activities.

Home Economics can be clarified by four dimensions or areas of practice:

- 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;
- as an arena for every day living in households, families and communities for developing human growth potential and human necessities or basic needs to be met;
- 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 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 utilize transformative practices, and to facilitate sustainable future (IFHE, 2008).

The author is interested in the improvement of the home economics subject for forms 5-9 (today's precise name *Home Economics and Technologies (with the option to choose textiles)*). The research respondents were split in three groups acquiring home economics at different time periods: group 1 – pupils acquiring home economics now, group 2 – the youth acquiring home economics in about 2000, group 3 – adults acquiring home economics until 1970.

The research data shows that respondents of all groups have positive memories as regards home economics (80% pupils; 70% youth; 60% adults). Neutral memories are typical of 5% respondents from group 2 and 13% from group 3 that have acquired home economics some time ago. Option "unpleasant" has been chosen by none of the respondents. Comparing the responses of the three groups of respondents, it can be concluded that respondents from group 1 and group 3 have provided similar positive answers, but those from group 2 – reserved. (Figure 1).

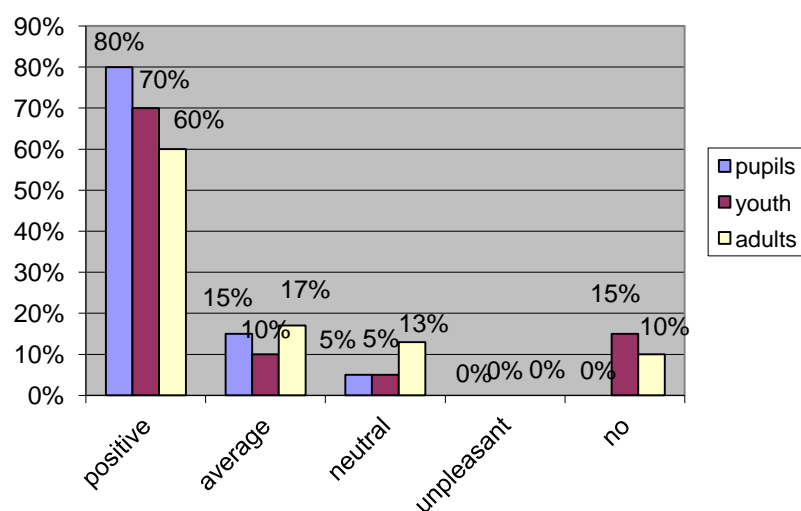


Figure 1. Respondents have memories as regards home economics

Respondents from schools have liked the subject of home economics (82% – group 1, 90% – group 2, 66% – group 3). Only 4% of group 1 and 10% of group 3 partly dislike the subject.

In fact, 93% of group 1, 85% of group 2 and 67% of group 3 have stated that it is possible to work creatively during the home economics classes. The position "partly" has been chosen by 7% of group 1, 12% of group 2 and 10% of group 3. The position "impossible" has been chosen by none of the

respondents. Checking with χ^2 criterion with Yates correction there are differences between the groups in creative activities (Yates' p-value 0.06).

In turn, 78% of group 1, 80% of group 2 and 60% of group 3 marked the possibility to acquire textile technology skills.

At the same time, 85% of group 1, 88% of group 2 and 57% of group 3 indicated to the possibility to acquire cooking skills. "Impossible" was chosen by 15% of the respondents of group 3.

Respondents from group 3 remember the works created by themselves most (82%), from group 2 – works created by themselves, organization of classes and the teacher's personality, but group 1 – works created by themselves, classroom and the working environment during the classes.

As regards "What do you like most in home economics?" the respondents mostly indicate to the possibility to act creatively and create things for themselves. Respondents from group 1 indicate to "specific organization of classes".

Respondents indicate to topics they remember to be learning. The summary of the topics reveals that respondents from group 3 emphasize handicraft, cooking, table laying, electronic works. Respondents from group 2 – handicraft, sewing, cooking, decoration of home, treatment of clothing.

A certainly positive statement was gained by respondents of all groups as regards the question, whether the knowledge and skills acquired in home economics classes are useful in life (92% group 1, 85% group 2, 47% group 3). "Partly" was indicated by 12% of group 2 and 30% of group 3 (Figure 2). Checking with χ^2 criterion with Yates correction there are essential differences between the groups in the usefulness of knowledge and skills for live (Yates' p-value = 0.046).

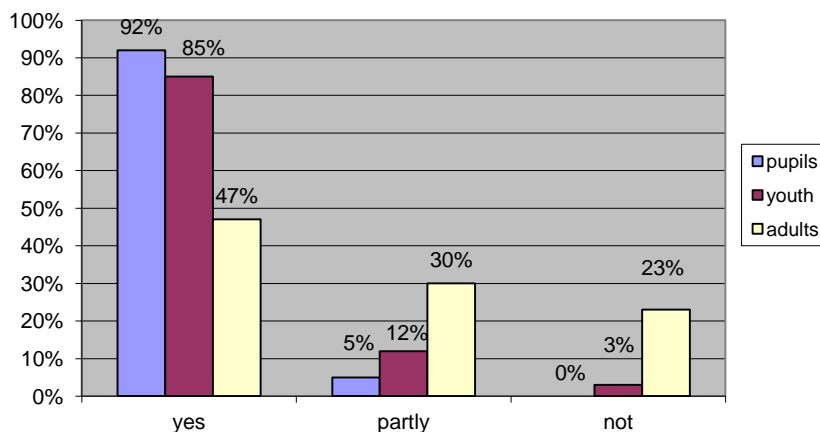


Figure 2. The usefulness of knowledge and skills for live

The viewpoint of the respondents about whether home economics classes should be included in the education programme also in future is confirming towards future. Yes, (100%) – that is the viewpoint of respondents of all groups.

In discussions, respondents from group 3 (adults that have acquired home economics until 1970) reveal that they face matters related to acquiring home economics (children, grandchildren are learning). They are happy that in comparison to their school years now there are creative methodical approaches to this subject, as well as the exposition of content topics has changed. Suggestions from some of the respondents – to pay attention more to the „modern”, „topical”, instead of just classical and traditional.

Conclusions

- Home economics programmes have included different topics, emphasising the political views and education tasks of those particular times. Each topic was influenced by the level of welfare of that time, e.g., from a simple mending of holes to a creative usage of holes as defects for decorating purposes.

- Today the understanding of the pupil about the safety and quality conditions of the human living environment, the ability to creatively involve and solve problems related to that, the ability to gain experience in creative activity is emphasized in home economics.
- Respondents of all groups have positive memories as regards home economics (80% pupils; 70% youth; 60% adults).
- Creative activity within home economics classes is recognized by: 93% of today's pupils, 85% of the youth that learned home economics in about 2000, 67% of adults that learned home economics until 1970, confirming that possibilities for creative activity are increasing.
- Respondents most remember the works created by themselves, organization of classes, the teacher's personality, classroom and the working environment during the classes.
- Usage of the acquired skills in life is indicated by: 92% of today's pupils, 85% of the youth that learned home economics in about 2000, 47% of adults that learned home economics until 1970, confirming that the usefulness of the acquired skills is increasing.
- The research data testifies to the fact that changes in the analysis of the home economics subject can be observed among the groups of the respondents.

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