



## FUNCTIONAL HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION

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*How shall we teach Home Economics so that it will function to a greater extent in improving the home and the community?*

It has been said that no education is worth the name if it does not result in some favorable changes taking place in the life of the learner and of the community in which he lives. Functional home economics education is therefore one that finds practical application in the life of the student and of his community.

*How can this be brought about?*

The administrative arrangements conditioning instruction should be changed so that there may be a more effective dovetailing of effort between the school and the home. The school must lose its walls and its fences, as it were, so that the teacher can reach out into the community and make the influence of her teaching affect favorably the life of the people served by the school. This means that the school program should include instruction periods that are spent in the home and the community. Class time is therefore not classroom time only; it should include the time devoted to such activities as visiting homes and helping the people in the community to learn better ways of living. Elementary and high school edu-

cation should therefore be closely integrated with adult education in order to make education in home economics truly functional.

School programs should be so made as to include in the total program of the teachers adequate time for the implementation in the home of the things that the students learn in school. Obviously this would need reducing to some extent the book learning that is now given to students so that the more practical aspects of home economics may find adequate application in community living. It would therefore appear that only the basic principles of home economics should be taught to the students and a great deal of the laboratory work should be carried on in the homes. Need it be emphasized that a few things well learned and applied in practical home activities are far more important than the learning of theories that are never applied?

And now let us go to some of the details. Let us take as an illustration what might be done with respect to one of the most important phases of home economics,—the subject of nutrition. Our students learn many theories on nutrition which are applied only in a limited way in the practice activities of home economics instruction. The time in school devoted

to laboratory work in this subject is so inadequate that the students have only a mere sampling of the practical application of nutrition. Would it not be better if the students could conduct a survey of the kind of foods obtaining in the home of the community, analyze these foods with respect to their nutritional values, then conduct meetings of parents living in the community, explain to them what good nutrition is, and help them plan and work out sample menus which improve health. Needless to say, in conjunction with the plan to improve the food that the people eat, there should also be a campaign for more intensive food production so as to make available to the people the right kind of food materials that contribute to health. These campaigns should be continuous and persistent until there is ample evidence that the people of the community have become conscious of nutrition principles and of correct nutrition habits.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the attitude of teachers should be developed favorable to the program, that they must change their outlook from devotion to mere classroom instruction to that of community education, that it is not the students alone that should be educated in the principles and correct practices of nutrition, but the whole community must get this kind of education. For it also goes without saying that much of what is being taught in school is undone in the home, for the reason that the home is not well prepared and does not have the attitude favorable to accepting and practicing the basic principles of correct nut-

rition. Just as important, therefore, is the need for organizing the community in such a manner that the ideas on nutrition are kept constantly in the forefront of community thinking. This is something that cannot be realized in spasmodic drives during garden days, or clean-up week, or mother's day. It is something that paining. As suggested in the pre-needs constant and persistent cam-ceding paragraphs, the campaign for better nutrition practices must be made a part of the curriculum; it should be a legal and official part of the teacher's load.

*What are the things we are not doing now which should be done? What are we doing that may need some modifying?*

Let us cut out a great deal of the theoretical aspects of home economics instruction. If we do not agree that there are such theoretical aspects, let us reduce what is now considered as mere booklearning and increase the practical aspects of home economics. We may be able to defend successfully the idea that there is no overlapping of subject-matter in home economics, but I believe most of us would agree that there are certain principles which are taken up again and again in graduated emphasis. Let us reduce this kind of emphasis and concentrate on the practical application of a few basic principles. Let us select salient needs that are so obvious in community living and make a concentrated attack on those needs. Let us get thoroughly acquainted with the urgent needs of community living, accept

the reality of these things, and meet the needs of the people by attacking the problems where they exist in the community itself, not in the classrooms. Let us teach the people to appraise what they have now, improve the materials and conditions presently obtaining in the community, and keep on building upon the initial gains until desirable conditions and practices are attained at reasonable extent and standards.

Let us not forget that economic conditions greatly determine the kind of results we can expect from education. Let us suit our techniques to the economic conditions obtaining in the community. We should make the most of what native materials and conditions can offer to implement our program; that is our starting point. The gap between classroom instruction and prevailing community conditions is so great that it seems strange we have not opened our eyes earlier to the great need of building on and from what we have, rather than superimposing high standards upon a structure that is incongruous with those standards. The teaching of home decoration the way we are doing it now, for example, looks like a great incongruity is a situation where the home cannot even afford to buy a decent piece of furniture, not to say, decent clothing to protect the body from the inclemencies of the weather. Let us not forget that our problems in connection with the teaching of home economics are found not in the homes of the substantial middle class, for these can adequately take care of their

need; rather, our problems are in the barong-barongs and in the rural homes where there is so much want, not only in average enlightenment but also in the very means of providing the wherewithal of living. In these homes, the pattern of life is that of a hand-to-mouth existence. How may we adjust our home economics instruction so as to affect favorably these "untouchables"? Analyze the kind of subject-matter of home economics that the average pupil and student acquires in school, and you will find a great disparity existing between these and the needs of these people.

Perhaps it is not too audacious to emphasize the fact that home economics must take unto itself, along with the other legitimate fields of the subjects, the task of helping increase the economic productivity of the masses, without which education can make but very little progress. There should be a greater awareness of the possibility of teaching both students and adults the ways and means of adding substantially to the family income, without which home economics education must inevitably remain theoretical. And for that matter any other phase of education cannot progress much without the economic and material foundation that makes education possible. Home economics education must gear itself to economic production; hence the need for emphasizing instruction and training in such occupations as homecrafts handloom weaving, floriculture, home gardening, poultry and pig raising,

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