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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE HOME SCIENCE SYLLABUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DELHI WITH RESPECT TO VOCATIONAL EFFICIENCY

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ABSTRACT

The study is an effort to assess the orientation of the present syllabus of Home Science being followed at undergraduate level in the University of Delhi, towards preparing students for the world of work. The strategy followed included critical analysis of Home Science syllabus with respect to vocational efficiency through inductive textual analysis. Alumni of the Home Science Department of the University of Delhi were interviewed to obtain real time feedback with reference to vocational efficiency of the syllabus and shortcomings contained therein. The findings of the study revealed that the present syllabus of Home Science at undergraduate level in the University of Delhi is adequately equipped to impart disciplinary knowledge in all the five domains of Home science. However, in terms of entrepreneurial and professional skills, there are many shortcomings. The course is presently preparing graduates in the theoretical and practical aspects of domain knowledge only.

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INTRODUCTION

Home Science was introduced in the Indian education system during the British Rule, between 1920 and 1940 and was referred to as Domestic Science. The princely state of Baroda was one of the first states to introduce Home Science in Schools in Maharani Girls High School. After independence in 1947, many changes were brought about in its curriculum. In the sixties Home Science and related subjects were fused together at the school level. A stream was developed at the higher secondary level in Gujarat and some other states. But courses were not offered at the college level at that time. Hence many institutions faced problems of providing further opportunities for students who completed Home Science at the secondary level. In 1932, Home Science was started at the college level at in Lady Irwin College at New Delhi. Since then outstanding Home Science Colleges were started at Madras, Coimbatore, Ludhiana, Mumbai New Delhi, Udaipur, Tirupati and various other states all over India. With the changing social and economic environment, managing a home requires the efforts of all the family members. Today, more and more women are working-whether they go to an office or work from home. Therefore, gender based stereotype roles do not hold relevance any longer. Today, you can learn to manage your own resources better by studying various areas of Home Science. Since its introduction as a subject of study, the aims and objectives of teaching Home Science at various levels has greatly evolved. From being a subject to impart the science and art of home making, it has now become a subject to empower learners by imparting skills and knowledge to enable them to be active participant in social as well as national development. Home Science is basically a vocational subject and in recent years is has been recognized to be so. With the change in objectives, the curriculum and hence the syllabus for Home Science has also been updated on regular intervals at all levels. The syllabus of Home Science at undergraduate level in University of Delhi was revised in 2015 to include necessary changes according to CBCS. The revised Scheme of Examination and Course of Reading for Home Science have outlined the following objectives:

- To understand and appreciate the role of interdisciplinary sciences in the development and well-being of individuals, families and communities
- To learn about sciences and technologies that enhance quality of life of people
- To acquire professional and entrepreneurial skills for economic empowerment of the student in particular, and the community in general
- To develop professional skills in food, nutrition, textiles, housing, product making, communication technologies and human development
- To take science from laboratory to the people

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Need and Rationale of the Study

A student pursuing a particular course of study expects to achieve certain intellectual abilities, and skills in order to acquire certain knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes during and after the completion of the course may go for higher studies or take up a job which is related to the intellectual and other qualities developed in the previous course. In the whole process of teaching, learning and evaluation teachers, students, examiners, administrators and employers are guided by the document called 'syllabus'. Therefore, the syllabus should provide clear guidance and describe in detail the requirements of the course and specify the role of each person in the process viz., teaching, learning and evaluation. Syllabus is part of curriculum that reflects its orientation, vision and aims. Syllabus is a document which contains course content, evaluation methods; resources to use during the course, etc that are translated from the curriculum broadly.

The present study examines the revised Home Science syllabus being followed in the University of Delhi in the light of its following two objectives:

- To acquire professional and entrepreneurial skills for economic empowerment of the student in particular, and the community in general
- To develop professional skills in food, nutrition, textiles, housing, product making, communication technologies and human development

The study will help identify the deficiencies in the present course of Home Science at undergraduate level with regard to catering to development of professional and vocational skills

Review of related literature

Bhagwat, N. and Singh, D. (2016) The present study conducted on Home-Science Extension Education Curriculum in SNDT-Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University is titled as "Appraisal of Home-Science Extension Education Curriculum: SWOT Analysis of SNDT University". The paper presents case study as SWOT analysis of the university's 'Extension Education' syllabus offered at degree and post graduate level. For the present study, syllabi offered at Undergraduate and Post Graduate degrees for specialization of 'Extension Education' in 11 different Universities and colleges throughout the country as well as with 'Proposed Syllabus of B.Sc. Home Science-Choice Based Credit System, UGC (2015)' were examined and compared with the UG and PG level syllabus of SNDT Women's University, Mumbai. A SWOT Analysis was done studying the strengths, weaknesses as well as the internal and external factors that are favourable and unfavourable and conclusions were drawn on the basis of those presumptions. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the syllabi of SNDTU has been elaborated in the article and on comparison with other selected syllabi, it was revealed in the study that the syllabi offered for 'Home-science Extension Education' at under-graduate and post- graduate level courses has more strengths and opportunities in relation to weaknesses and threats.

Chatterjee (2015). Article, titled as "Home Science- Goes Way Beyond the Four Walls of Home" reported about the improvisations in the subject area of Home Science to be relevant in changing times. The report discusses the historical background of the subject under the heading "Then and Now" and how it was sniggered at for being a subject that only dealt with domestic chores. It is reported in the article that as more women became career-oriented, experts revamped the program to reflect the changing times; "Earlier, a student was taught subjects like cooking and child care to help her integrate the family and community. Today the syllabus includes government schemes to aid her role in national development. No other discipline has reinvented itself as much as Home Science". An excerpt from reporter's interview with Prof Uma Joshi, President of the Home Science Association of India (HSAI), has been quoted stating that students are interested in various field of Home Science.

Operational Definition of Key Terms

- Critical Study: Analysis undertaken to analyse the strength and weaknesses of a given course area with respect to the laid down criteria..
- Home Science: A practical science, which makes the student to lead his/her family life successfully and solve social and economic problems**.**
- Vocational Efficiency: Worth of education manifested through skilled performance of a task pertaining to an occupation; indicates productivity through performance in paid or self employment

Research Questions

Q1. What are the curricular provisions to develop vocational efficiency among Home Science graduates?
Q2. What are the major factors that influence employers' perception towards Home Science graduates?
Q3. What is the level of awareness of prospective candidates regarding employment opportunities for Home Science graduates?
Q4. What are the present employment avenues in the five sub-categories of Home Science?
Q5. What is the perception of employers towards skill development of Home Science graduates in comparison to graduates in more specialized courses?
Q6. How do employed Home Science graduates perceive their career growth?
Q7. What are the recent curricular changes or developments in Home Science to cater to the vocational needs of students at undergraduate level?

Objectives of the Study

- To study the Home Science syllabus at undergraduate level
- To critically examine the Home Science syllabus at undergraduate level with respect to vocational efficiency
- To suggest ways to improve the existing Home Science syllabus at undergraduate level

Research Design

The present study lies in the realm of descriptive research. The study primarily included textual analysis of the Home Science syllabus of the University of Delhi at undergraduate level to scrutinize it with respect to the laid down objectives. The study employed analytic induction to analyze the material at hand.

Sample of the study

Sample	Size	Characteristic	Technique
Alumni	20	The sample having completed UG program between 2010-15 and currently vocationally employed in areas of Home Science,	Purposive Sampling Since the units of samples were not available at one place or time, only available and willing respondents were selected for the study
Scheme of examination and course of study at UG level		Scheme of examination and course of study of Home Science at UG level for B.Sc. (Hons). 2015.	Purposive Sampling The document selected fulfils the purpose as specified in the objective of the study.

Delimitation of the Study

The study was limited to views and experiences of Home Science graduates of educational institutes of University of Delhi.

Findings

Findings of Critical Analysis of Syllabus for B.Sc. (Hons) Home Science

- The detail of subjects under Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses (AECC) is not mentioned in the syllabus.
- The theory component in each course type has been given weightage over the practicum making the syllabus theory oriented..
- Course objectives and learning outcome statements are entirely missing from the syllabus. Topic statements are also ambiguous in the regard.
- The syllabus is deficient both in terms of assignments and learning outcomes.
- In first four semesters, students can opt for one GE per semester as per their interest and the skill enhancement courses and discipline specific subjects are offered afterwards. The arrangement reflects that effort has been made to lay equal emphasis on each course type but in the process, time allotted to DSE has been reduced comprising the idea of specialisation in one of the domains.
- The subjects under SEC, many are theory based and in subjects based on practicum, theory based topic statements are included.
- The subjects under GE in all five domains are detailed and adequately equipped to generate students' interest in the subject area intended but, subjects under SEC and DSE are not specialized in the same degree.
- The subjects under the four course types are mostly progressively aligned but in terms of topic to be covered, repetition is found. If attainment of higher level of learning within the area is the rationale, it is not evident.
- Elements for explicit professional development included are limited.
- The elements to indicate the method to acquire knowledge and skills by students are in built in most of the topic statements and in some subjects mentioned separately under "Learning Experiences", seem to fulfil the deficiency of course objectives but, in fact, these reflect lack of planning and vision while formulating the syllabus.
- The inconsistency within the syllabus is highlighted by the fact that number of practical sessions for practicum has not been stated in majority of subjects despite carrying weightage of two credits. The same is true for some theory topic statements also.
- The topic statement also lack in appropriate descriptive verbs that lend themselves to assessment and evaluation. It seems that the syllabus only prescribes the topics and areas to be covered under each domain. This aspect is in direct opposition to syllabus' feature of being descriptive in nature.
- Percentage wise distribution lacks in the syllabus which creates ambiguity for students with respect to amount of time and effort to be put in different components.

Findings of the interview conducted on alumni members of Home Science Department, University of Delhi to examine their views on the syllabus they studied:

- 60% of the interviewees said that Home Science syllabus at Undergraduate level equips students with vocational skills that are transferable while 40% of the interviewees said the syllabus equips students with only vocational skills of sufficient range
- 80% of the interviewees were aware of the Choice Based Credit System and semester system being implemented at UG level, while 20% of interviewees were aware of changes with respect to course content in syllabus.
- 10% of the interviewees said that Home Science syllabus at Undergraduate level lets students come to know about the foundation skills or the employability skills required to successfully engage in vocational activities.
- 55% of the interviewees said that Home Science syllabus at Undergraduate level helps in holistic development of students' personality as it equips students with life skills as well as knowledge that is used in daily life at every stage of life
- 30% of the interviewees said that Home Science syllabus at UG level is adequately equipped to make students conversant in theoretical knowledge of each specialization and Home Science as whole.
- 5% of interviewees said that UG programme in subject area of Home Science enables students to gain employment or become entrepreneurs.
- Only 15% interviewees said that UG programme in Home Science at university of Delhi provides for employable graduates in specific areas related to Home Science.
- 35% and 40% of the interviewees respectively are of the opinion that UG programme in Home Science at university of Delhi provides for employable graduates with capability to deliver high order performance and simple graduates by equipping them with life skills and general competence as expected at graduate level.
- Only 10% of interviewees responded that the UG programme provides for future entrepreneurs to the industry.
- 20% of the interviewees said that they feel that the Home Science syllabus at UG level needs to made more

relevant according to needs of students in vocational aspects.

- 20% of the interviewees said that the evaluation system, especially with regard to practical component should be achievement and learning based to shift the focus from file preparation to acquiring and mastery of the skills.
- 35% of the interviewees suggested that internships in specialization specific areas should be introduced as integral part of the programme.
- 25% of the interviewees suggested that course content of Home Science UG programme should be made specialised enabling students to gain in-depth knowledge in each area of specialization so as to increase their employability after graduation.
- 5% of respondents felt that they could not give their response on effectiveness course after changes were made as they were of aware of the changes or updates done in the in Home Science syllabus at undergraduate level. The other 35% of the interviewees said that components that are now irrelevant, are still part of syllabus as the course component during annual mode was only altered to fit in the semester mode and topics taught are more or less same.
- There is equal divide in the opinion of interviewees on efficiency of current evaluation system at undergraduate level to assess vocational skills acquired by students.
- 30% of the interviewees find alumni meets helpful as they are provided with a common platform to share ideas, experiences and develop contacts to upgrade their professional skills while 70% of the interviewees said that they hardly find alumni meets relevant as they are not focused on up gradation of professional skills of participants.
- All of the interviewees said that there is no provision for campus placements at the end of the undergraduate programme

Educational Implications

The educational implications, based on the findings of the study are

- The detail of subjects under Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses (AECC) is not mentioned in the syllabus, rendering the subjects rudimentary.
- The deficiency of the syllabus in terms of absence of objectives and ambiguity of topic statements leads to confusion regarding what students actually need to learn or which skill to acquire and the mastery level to successfully complete the course of study. On part of teachers, developing plans for lectures or practicum becomes an unguided and directionless activity. It also renders the syllabus teacher oriented.
- The theory component in each course type has been given weightage over the practicum making the syllabus theory oriented. The practicum in each subject is more equipped in terms of professional skills and core competencies, but due to less weightage, it may be treated as secondary.
- Absence of objectives reflects lack of planning and awareness regarding the professional and entrepreneurial skills to be acquired as well as the level of learning intended to be achieved.
- Since the syllabus is deficient both in terms of assignments and learning outcomes. There is no scope for aligning assignments and presentation of students learning to specific course outcomes.
- Absence of course objectives in addition to ambiguity regarding assignments make the evaluation process examination based and centred on theoretical knowledge of subject whereas CBCS was designed to make course of study more learner centred. If students are not aware with respect to evaluation criteria, their performance and hence outcome of the course is affected seriously.
- The need to make informed choice on students' part becomes crucial as DSE are offered in last two semesters. It is essential that students' choice of subjects head in at least one major domain of Home Science. Guidelines regarding the choice of subjects from pool of each course type should be detailed in the syllabus.
- The domains for the scope of improvement in current Home Science syllabus at UG level with respect to entrepreneurial needs, include:

    - Relevance of course content in each area of specialization of Home Science
    - Orientation of the UG programme towards specific specialization Home Science
    - Introduction of internships programs
    - Shift of focus to learning and achievement based evaluation

- The Home Science syllabus at undergraduate level needs to be upgraded, besides the systemic changes, in accordance with the vocational needs of the students in order to fulfil its status of being a vocational area of study and to validate its aim to equip students with entrepreneurial skills. It is important to cater to vocational need of students as this course of study caters to female students, who in general in the Indian social context, are in acute need of vocational support in order to mainstream them as stakeholders in national development.
- The Home Science syllabus at UG level lacks in employability skills. Range of transferable vocational skills that make students enable students to gain employment or start their own business venture after UG program should be identified and catalogued on the basis of market demand through internship programmes.
- Alumni members are vital in providing pivotal perspective with regard to course curriculum being in accordance to recent market demands and the scope of improvement at elemental level. For this, scope of involving alumni members in revision of course content should be developed in order to utilize this section of stakeholder in the system as a resource.
- Assessment of vocational and practical skills is an important component in any vocational course of study. There is need to increase its credit part in the evaluation system and lay more emphasis on acquiring of skills rather than file work.
- Continuous up gradation of professional skills is the need of hour for individuals, especially for those getting employed after graduation in order to face competition

from fresh candidates every year. Alumni meets can be a platform to cater to this need as utilization of existing resources is economical in comparison to developing new ones.

- Campus placement drives are integral part of study programmes of vocational subjects as the central objective is to make student gainfully employed at the end of the course. Absence of provision for campus placements at the end of the undergraduate programme indicates casual attitude toward the vocational orientation of Home Science as a subject. Developing system for campus placement at the end of the course is of utmost importance as it will provide real time feedback with regard to scope of improvement at systemic as well as pedagogic level.

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