

Role of Teachers' and Students' Attitudes towards the Teaching and Learning of Home Science in Secondary school: Case Study of Nandi County

Sang Hellen* Simiyu Aggrey and Kafu Patrick

Moi University, Educational Communication and Technology Department, P.O. 3900Eldoret.
E-mail sanghellen@gmail.com

* Author for correspondence and reprint requests

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The present study conducted following discovery of important facts about the teaching and learning of Home Science in secondary schools in Nandi District, Kenya. The research revealed that teaching and learning of Home Science is apparently gender biased. Mainly both ferrule students and female teachers dominate it. The present study has revealed that a large proportion 402 (98) of the students offering this subject in Nandi District secondary schools are female and an equally large proportion 20 (95.2) of teachers are women.

Nearly all the teachers teaching Home Science in secondary schools in Nandi District are professionally trained and qualified to teach the subject although the deployment is somehow poor. Some schools are well staffed in the subject while others are not. This seems to indicate that the subject is not uniformly taught and, therefore, it would appear that schools are producing students with varied competences in the Home Science subject. Generally, both teachers and students in Nandi secondary schools have positive attitude towards the teaching and learning of Home Science as demonstrated by a large proportion 80 (95.3) of the teachers and a similar proportion 341 (83.4) of students who feel that Home Science is a very useful subject.

Key words: Attitude, Home Science, Nandi District

Introduction

It has been established that attitude plays an important role in learning and teaching. Acceptability of a particular subject will depend, in part, on learners' attitude towards it and the manner it is taught. Gagne (1976) defines attitudes as those dispositions that influence the choice of a person's action towards classes of things, events or persons. Although Home Science has much to offer in education, home and family life, it is still a despised discipline. The findings of this study are, therefore, expected to lead to recommendation of ways of changing the attitudes of both teachers and students towards the subject and hence enhance the place of this subject in the school curriculum. The findings of this study are likely to stimulate further research in different districts and are also likely to benefit the Ministry of Education in reviewing Home Science syllabus. This will make it manageable within the allocated time.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on two theories namely, the interaction theory of Mead (1943) and Sheriffs (1965) theory on attitudes. These two theories were preferred because they seem to have relevance to the study as it deals with attitudes. First to be examined is Mead's theory. According to this theory, an infant is born without any concept of itself, any attitude or value systems. The infant's self concept towards other objects develops as a result of interaction with its significant others. The latter are objects or individuals that the infant identifies itself with including the parents, peers and the school teachers. These tendencies are usually not inborn but learnt. Therefore, they can be changed. A child who receives positive perception and expectation from her significant others develops a positive self concept which in turn influences motivation and achievement in any task, it has been found that large units of behavior are learnt through watching and imitation especially in children. This is especially so in African tradition, a blacksmith child was likely to take on his father's trade. In school children will tend to choose subjects that are identified with their sex role. Home Science is identified with female roles, and therefore, is likely to attract mostly female students' attitudes towards a subject may, therefore, be influenced by the significant others. The way parents and teachers perceive Home Science may influence students' attitudes towards it. Psychological studies that have been earned out in Kenya: Psychologists have also suggested that most people are likely to acquire many of their attitudes at Home, with parents affecting one's attitudes and performance by encouragement, expectation of achievement and their own attitudes. Attitude towards Home Science can be learnt from the people students interact with.

The second theory was based on Sheriff (1965) who contends that attitudes are inferred from characteristic and consistent modes of behavior towards something, class of objects, persons, events and issues over a time span. To say that a person has certain attitude towards an object, a person or way of living, means that one has a yardstick for evaluating these things as desirable, good or bad, important or not important. In this study Home Science as a subject is considered as the object which students' and teachers' attitudes were inferred from. Therefore there is need to address the question, do the teachers and students of Home Science see it desirable to learn and teach Home Science in secondary schools.

Home Science, is a broad subject. It involves both theory and practical work. The present study focuses specifically on the attitudes of teachers and students towards the teaching and learning of Home Science.

Research Design and Methodology

Descriptive search method was used in this study.

Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling method was used to select schools. That is, all schools that offer Home Science were selected and stratified sampling was used to select form three students. The respondent strata were made up of students who take Home Science and those who do not take it. Purposive sampling method was used to select male-students for the study. This was because there were few boys taking Home Science. Head-teachers and all Home Science teachers from

the sampled schools were included. Random sampling method was used to select non- Home Science teachers.

Data Collection procedures

Permission to conduct the present study was sought from the Office of the President (O.P). Then letters of authority to conduct the research in the district were obtained from the district commissioner and the district education officer respectively. This was done before the researcher went to the field. Through the department of educational communication and technology (ECT) Moi University, introductory letters were prepared and sent to schools in time informing the head-teachers of the intended visits. Data collection was conducted between April and June, 2000.

Instruments for Data collection

To collect the required data, two types of instruments were employed. These were the questionnaires and interview schedules.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data collected. The descriptive statistics were used to calculate percentages, means and frequencies while inferential statistics of the Chi-square (χ) and the One-way factor of analysis of variance (ANOVA) were preferred to establish the relationships between selected independent variables and dependent variables and the differences within and between groups of respondents on selected variables were employed respectively.

Suitability of the subject for both male and female students

One item in the students questionnaire and two in the teachers questionnaire respectively were administered to determine the feelings of both teachers and students on the suitability of the subject to both male and female students. Although no subject is designed specifically for one particular sex, Home Science has been said to be more feminist as it deals with areas related to household chores. This information is summarized in Table 1. The analysis showed that 11 (1.9) teachers felt that the subject was more suited to the girls than boys, 7 (8.3) had no opinion while 67 (78.8) disagreed with the statement. This is an indication that the teachers did not have a bias on which student category is best suited study the subject. This may be also an indication that teachers have a feeling that the subject cuts across both student sexes in spite of its being dominated by girls, Further, the teachers seem to appreciate the value of the subject as being useful to the males too.

To obtain students views on the suitability of the subject, an item was designed and administered to them. The item sought information on their views regarding the offering of Home Science to girls only. Twenty-seven (6.6) of the students agreed that Home Science should be offered to girls only, 18 (4.4) had no opinion and an overwhelming number, 365 (88.9) felt that Home Science is suitable for both boys and girls. Table 2 gives the details of these findings. These findings corroborate the teachers' views on the same matter. It is clear that students

consider Home Science as an important curriculum area for all students to pursue because of the encouraging trends in the job market.

Table 1: Teachers views on the popularity of Home Science among students

Opinion	Respondents		Grand Total
	Male	Females	
Agree	20(44.4)	21 (53.8)	41 (48.8)
Undecided	10(22.2)	4(10.2)	14(16.7)
Disagree	15(33.3)	14(36)	29(34.5)
Total	45(100)	39(100)	84(100)

Table 2: Students' views regarding Suitability of Home Science to girls only

Opinion	Respondents		Total
	Male	Female	
Agree	11 (13.3)	16 (4.9)	27 (6.6)
Undecided	6 (6,2)	12(3.7)	18(4.4)
Disagree	66(79.5)	299 (9 1.4)	365 (88.9)
Total	83 (100)	327(100)	410(100)

When the above data was subjected to the chi-square (χ^2) analysis a significant relationship at the alpha significant level of 0.05 was observed between male and female students as shown below

Table 3. Variable interest offering Home Science to girls only on gender basis

	N	%	DF	P.V	C.V	P
Age	27C	6.6	4	16.560	14.870	002
Undecided	18	4.4				
Disagree	365	88.9				
Total	4.0	100				S

As seen in the results above gender appeared to have had influence on students' responses. An item was designed and included in the teachers' questionnaire to elicit information on the suitability of teaching Home Science in rural schools. Table 4.23 summarizes this information. The analysis clearly shows that 30 (34.8) of the teachers feel that the subject should not be taught in the rural schools as opposed to 52 (61.8) of them who felt that the subject should be taught. However, only 2 (2.4) had no opinion on the issue. The findings that 52 (61.8) of the teachers

thought that the subject should be taught in rural schools may be attributed to these teachers' appreciation of the value of Home Science to the learners irrespective of their location.

Table 4. Teachers' views on the Teaching of Home Science in Rural Schools

Opinion	Respondents		Total
	Male	Female	
Agree	35(77.8)	17(43.6)	52(61.8)
Undecided	1 (2.2)	1 (2.6)	2 (2.4)
Disagree	9(20)	21(6.8)	30 (35.8)
Total	45(100)	39(100)	84(100)

The study established that female teachers and female students dominate the subject. This seems to be consistent with the general belief by Kasuku (1984) that the subject is female oriented, a fact that is demonstrated by a very small proportion of 1 male teacher (4.8) and 8 (20.3) male students found teaching or taking this subject in Nandi secondary schools, respectively.

It would appear that what Wanga (1985), Sigot (1987) and Otunga (1993) said about the teaching of Home Science in secondary schools is still true. That is, very few men seem to have positive attitude towards the subject. It is also consistent with Meads' (1934) view that very few men are willing to choose an occupation that is traditionally defined as feminine.

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