

## **University-Level Methods Courses for Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher Education**

**Sue L.T. McGregor**  
Seabright, Nova Scotia

*This paper profiles one of two university-level, pre-service teacher (PST) education methods courses that filled an observed gap in existing family and consumer sciences (FCS) and home economics teacher education textbooks. Following completion of a course focused on basic professional philosophy, lesson planning, and assessment, students participated in a second course concerned with higher-level, more abstract knowledge dealing with educational philosophies, curriculum development approaches (models), course outline planning, and the development of modules and units. Together, both courses accommodated the seven basic knowledge bases that prepared PSTs to teach. This discussion is provided as inspiration for redesigning university-level curricula that socialize PSTs into FCS education.*

### **Introduction**

Higher education degree programs socialize lay people into the--family and consumer sciences (FCS)<sup>1</sup>--profession (McGregor, 2011). One such program is FCS teacher education focused on pre-service teachers (PSTs) with no prior teaching experience (Borg, 2006). College students are gradually introduced into their future teaching role beginning as an observer and ending with increasing professional competency as an educator (Virginia Wesleyan University, n.d.). Success at teaching (and perceptions of said ability) is dependent on PSTs having access to “the knowledge needed to teach” (Darling-Hammond, 2000, p. 168). Therefore, “the extent and quality of teacher education matters for teachers’ effectiveness” (Darling-Hammond, 2000, p. 166).

Many textbooks have been written about how to prepare PSTs to become effective FCS educators (e.g., Alexander, Holland, & Rambo, 2018; Blakenship & Moerchen, 1979; Chamberlain & Kelly, 1981; Cross, 1973; Fleck, 1980; Hall & Paolucci, 1970; Hatcher & Halchin, 1973; Hitch & Youatt, 1995; Spafford, 1935). At issue herein is their lack of chapters on FCS philosophy (the exception being Alexander et al., 2018); educational philosophy; curriculum development approaches and theories; and course outline, module and unit planning and development. Textbooks have focused, instead, on the more pragmatic, on-the-ground micro aspects of teaching: lesson planning (including goals and objectives), instructional strategies, questioning, and assessment and evaluation.

When I used to teach home economics (FCS) teacher education methods courses at the

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<sup>1</sup> The ideas herein also pertain to home economics, family studies, human ecology, home sciences, and other names used for the profession around the world. Although the practice being recounted was by a Canadian home economist, the term FCS was used to respect the American name change in 1994.

university level, I could not find a teacher education textbook that included all these topics. This paper shares what I developed over a 20-year time frame in the absence of this instructional resource. During that educational enterprise, I developed two university-level FCS teacher education methods courses, one focused on the more immediate micro aspects of teaching and the other on the macro, philosophical, and pedagogical dimensions.

As a caveat, due to space limitations, this paper focuses on the latter, but readers are invited to contact the author for information about the former. As a further caveat, this paper reports a Canadian experience with full appreciation that FCS education in the United States is part of career and technical education or general teacher education. These institutional arrangements may compromise what American FCS readers will find applicable, but international perspectives play a role in advancing home economics education and so are respectfully tendered for consideration in this paper.

The intent of my two courses was to socialize FCS PSTs to the idea that teaching is *much more* than being in front of the students and marking their assignments afterwards. Teaching involves contextual knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and educational and FCS professional philosophy and theory as well as subject-matter content (Shulman, 1986, 1987). A comprehensive and philosophically and intellectually rigorous orientation to teacher education will inspire and sustain FCS teachers more than just the how-to approach that anchors most existing textbooks.

**Table 1**

*Home Economics and FCS Teacher Education Textbooks (1930s-2010s)*

<b>1930s</b>		
Spafford (1935)	<i>Fundamentals in Teaching Home Economics</i>	John Wiley & Sons
<b>1970s</b>		
Hall and Paolucci (1970)	<i>Teaching Home Economics</i>	John Wiley & Sons
Hatcher and Halchin (1973)	<i>The Teaching of Home Economics</i>	Houghton Mifflin
Blakenship and Moerchen (1979)	<i>Home Economics Education</i>	Houghton Mifflin
<b>1980s</b>		
Fleck (1980)	<i>Toward Better Teaching of Home Economics</i>	Macmillan
Chamberlain and Kelly (1981)	<i>Creative Home Economics Instruction</i>	McGraw-Hill
<b>1990s</b>		
Hitch and Youatt (1995)	<i>Communicating Family and Consumer Sciences</i>	Goodheart-Wilcox

<b>2010s</b>		
Alexander, Holland, and Rambo (2018)	<i>Teaching Family and Consumer Sciences in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century</i>	Curriculum Center for FCS

Philosophy and theory both ground and guide behaviour and provide a sustainable context for teaching regardless of subject matter. Understanding educational philosophies helps PSTs gain insights into their own teaching philosophy. The same holds for knowledge of educational theories, models and curriculum approaches. The core elements of a teacher’s philosophy (personal, professional, and educational) can influence the courses s/he designs, what is taught and how, and the learning environments created (Beatty, Leigh, & Dean, 2009). The approach herein augments the existing FCS teacher education textbooks (see Table 1) and serves as inspiration for redesigning university-level curricula that socialize PSTs into FCS education.

### **Practice Context**

My approach unfolded over 20 years while teaching two, 12-week courses in a Bachelor of Education (BED) degree program at a Canadian university. Students were expected to come to the program with FCS-related content obtained in earlier degree programs (e.g., foods, clothing, family studies, child development, consumerism, housing). This two-year BED did not integrate education with content (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The university’s BED degree did follow the triadic norm of mixing (a) foundational courses and (b) methods courses (e.g., science, family studies, English, mathematics) with (c) a teaching practicum under the mentorship of a cooperating teacher (Akarsu & Kaya, 2012).

### **Seven Knowledge Bases**

Both courses were designed to help FCS PSTs (a) apply their evolving philosophical and theoretical conceptions of teaching in the real world and (b) develop their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Put simply, teachers with PCK will have gained knowledge about pedagogy (the science and theory of teaching) so they can teach content and subject matter (Shulman, 1987). It is one thing to know about a subject but quite another to teach others about it (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

PCK manifests when PSTs can alter both content knowledge (subject-matter) and pedagogical knowledge (i.e., what, how and why to teach) and then integrate these into a structure and approach that makes learning meaningful to students. With PCK, pre-service teachers can effectively teach grade-level content respecting students’ learning styles (Akarsu & Kaya, 2012; Cochran, 1999; Shulman, 1986, 1987). Actually, PCK is now recognized as on equal footing with six other knowledge bases (see Table 2) that PSTs need to know about when teaching per Shulman’s (1987) seminal work (see also Gess-Newsome, 1999; Morine-Dersheimer & Kent, 1999).

The two courses I developed respected all seven knowledge components with the aforementioned caveat that the BED program did not teach FCS-related subject-matter content. Research supports this course-design decision with Darling-Hammond (2000) commenting that

“measures of pedagogical knowledge . . . are more frequently found to influence teaching performance and often exert even stronger effects than subject-matter knowledge” (p 167). That being said, FCS PSTs did receive the opportunity to develop lessons, modules, units, and courses around areas where they might feel unprepared content wise. A nutrition student might choose to do a lesson on childcare. A family studies graduate could design a course on clothing and textiles.

**Table 2**

*Seven Basic Knowledge Bases for Teaching* (adapted from Shulman, 1987)

<b>Knowledge Base</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Content</i>	Content unique to disciplines and subdisciplines
<i>Curricular</i>	State-approved plus other curricula, programs, materials and resources related to content to be taught; also, curriculum development theory and approaches/models
<i>Philosophical</i>	Educational philosophies that determine beliefs about the aims of education shaped by the perceived relationship among education, learning and society - transcends subject matter
<i>General Pedagogical</i>	Broad principles of classroom management, learning environment organization and communication, instructional strategies, assessment and evaluation, and personal pedagogical knowledge gained from experience and fuelled by beliefs and reflection - transcends subject matter
<i>Learners</i>	Individual learners and learning style theories
<i>Educational Contexts</i>	State and school board governance and financing, community and cultural characteristics, laws and educational policies, educational research
<i>Pedagogical Content</i>	Each teacher’s personal and professional understanding of and expertise in melding subject matter content with ‘how to teach’ informed by the six other types of knowledge

Appreciating that teachers’ performance is influenced by the interaction between content knowledge and pedagogical skills (Darling-Hammond, 2000), per Table 2, the first methods course focused on (a) content knowledge, (b) general pedagogical knowledge that transcends any subject and (c) knowledge of learners. The second course (discussed in this paper) dealt with (a)

PCK, (b) curriculum knowledge, (c) philosophical knowledge, and (d) knowledge of educational contexts (to a small extent). It also taught FCS PSTs how to design a course from scratch, which includes developing modules and associated units with an appreciation of instructional resources. This course instilled professional autonomy, educational expertise and accountability, because it was grounded in philosophy (McGregor, 2012).

### **FCS University-Level Teaching Methods Course**

After completing the first methods course, the PSTs progressed to a second course concerned with higher-level, more abstract knowledge. It dealt with educational philosophies, curriculum development approaches, course outline planning, and the development of modules and units (see Figure 1). This course served two purposes. It provided the PSTs with the (a) more immediate, pragmatic skill set of developing courses, modules and units as well as the (b) more abstract skill of appreciating the power and role of philosophy, models and theory in education especially when developing curricula.

#### **Figure 1**

*Course Objectives, Modules and Units for FCS Methods Course*

<p><b>COURSE OBJECTIVES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Understand the basic <b>educational philosophies</b>, over 10 <b>curriculum orientation</b> perspectives, and over 10 <b>kinds of curriculum</b></li><li>2. Gain detailed understanding of steps involved in <b>curriculum development</b> (includes philosophical rationale, scope and sequence), and each of <b>implementation</b> (technical top down) and <b>enactment</b> (nontechnical bottom up) approaches</li><li>3. Understand and apply theory related to <b>developing curriculum products: course outlines, modules, and units</b> (lesson plan development was in the previous course)</li></ol> <p><b>LEARNING MODULES AND UNITS</b></p> <p><b>MODULE ONE: <i>Educational Philosophies, Curriculum Orientations and Development</i></b></p> <p><b>Unit 1</b> (Course Objective 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop a critical understanding of both educational philosophies and curriculum orientations. “<i>What is the curriculum? What is knowledge? What should students be learning? Who should decide what should be taught? How are such decisions to be made?</i>”</li></ul> <p><b>Unit 2</b> (Course Objective 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gain a deep appreciation of the processes, strategies, and approaches to designing (developing) new curricula and redesigning existing curricula.</li></ul> <p><b>MODULE TWO: <i>Developing Curriculum Products: Course Outlines, Modules, and Units</i></b></p> <p><b>Unit 1</b> (Course Objective 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Effectively design a complete course from the provincial family studies curriculum</li></ul> <p><b>Unit 2</b> (Course Objective 3)</p>
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- From the above course, choose one module and successfully create its supportive units

### **Educational Philosophies**

An educational philosophy reflects assumptions about and shapes perceptions of (a) the purpose of education and a particular educational program; (b) what content is of value; (c) how students learn; (d) what material, methods and resources to use; and (e) how (when and by whom) learning should be assessed (McGregor, 2019; Ornstein, 1991; Sowell, 2000). The FCS PSTs were exposed to key educational philosophies that can inform curricular design and teaching pedagogy: cognitive process, perennialism, essentialism, academic rationalism, curriculum as technology, social reconstructivism, social adaptation, progressive, existentialism, personal-global, and humanistic (personal relevance, holistic). These fall along a continuum of teacher- versus student-centered learning (Oliva, 2001; Parkay & Hass, 2001; Sowell, 2000). For an assignment, students read instructor-shared documents about educational philosophies and created a comprehensive summary chart.

After gaining preliminary knowledge of the various philosophies, students collaboratively examined various curricula for evidence of which philosophy was at play. Provincial and territorial state-approved curricula as well as examples from other sources were investigated. This type of information is most evident in the curriculum document's rationale and philosophy section. Otherwise, students looked for key words used to explain the curriculum, words that were indicative of specific philosophies (e.g., outcomes, child-centered, mastery, employment, social action). This exercise also sensitized the PSTs to the power of language in curriculum documents. Words reveal philosophies, ideologies, assumptions, premises, beliefs and values of and about education and learning, both latent and manifest. It is common for multiple philosophies to be combined in one curriculum. Table 3 illustrates this exercise with the main philosophies identified.

**Table 3**

*Curriculum Educational Philosophies (examples from Sowell, 2000)*

#### **Academic Rationalism and a hint of Progressive**

“In the *Kansas Curricular Standards for Social Studies*, the primary purpose of the program outcomes and their accompanying standards and benchmarks are to help students . . . to develop proficiencies needed for employment . . . and develop the skills and attitudes needed to cope with contemporary society” (Sowell, 2000, p. 295). This learning will depend on the principles of (a) integrating knowledge and (b) making learning authentic and relevant to students' lives.

#### **Academic Rationalism and Cognitive Learning**

The Fort Worth middle school Science II curriculum “will focus on academic achievement of all students and will ensure that every graduate possesses the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to pursue post-secondary education and/or obtain meaningful work” (Sowell, 2000,

p. 301). This will be achieved via the scientific method, laboratory experiences and thinking critically and creatively.

**Progressive and Social Adaptation**

The Epsom Central School’s English language arts curriculum “will strive to develop and stimulate the individuals’ intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth, so that the individual can readily adapt to our ever-changing society [through the] mastery of the basic skills of learning [and with] self expression” (Sowell, 2000, p. 306).

**Humanistic (holistic) and Personal Global**

The Stoughton High foreign language Spanish IV curriculum will “foster the widest opportunities for the intellectual strengthening and personal maturation of every student [so he/she can] participate effectively in society [and gain increased awareness of] the fragile interdependence of man and his [sic] planet” (Sowell, 2000, p. 312).

**Curriculum Development Approaches**

The FCS PSTs then learned about the two most basic approaches for developing a curriculum: (a) the implementation, technical approach (top down) and (b) the enactment, nontechnical approach (bottom up) (Sowell, 2000). Although they were encouraged to understand the technical approach, because it would be their reality when they entered the teaching profession, they were invited to appreciate the beauty of the enactment approach, which involves teachers and students in its creation. As a caveat, other BED courses exposed the FCS PSTs to curriculum theories (e.g., value-, process-, structure- and content-oriented theories) (see Glatthorn, Boschee, Whitehead, & Boschee, 2011).

***Technical Implementation***

The *technical* approach is so named, because it assumes a rationale and systematic approach to designing an outcome-based, teacher-centered, objective, context-neutral curriculum created by a nonteacher-populated committee. It is handed down to teachers to use with little say in its development. Implementing a curriculum created and imposed by a higher education authority or government agency is the most popular approach to curriculum development. Educators have nominal (often invited only) input into its development. There is an off chance of being selected to sit on the curriculum-design committee as a content expert specialist and even less chance of pilot testing it before its official launch. This approach tends to be informed by the academic rationalism, essentialism, perennialism, and cognitive process educational philosophies (Sowell, 2000).

***Nontechnical Enactment***

Much rarer is the enactment or nontechnical approach to developing a curriculum. This approach reflects the tenets of progressive (child centered), holistic, global, and social reconstructivist educational philosophies where learners and teachers, to varying degrees, co-create the learning experience. Instead of a committee, teachers are the main authors and architects of the curriculum working in a community of learners. Teachers are “the major source

of curriculum knowledge because they know their students and teaching contexts. They also know when the curriculum needs revision” (Sowell, 2000, p. 9). Outcomes are not predetermined but emerge as the curriculum is enacted with teachers drawing from the elements in Table 2 to develop a curriculum for their context. Instead of using a preconceived, prescribed curriculum, the enacted curriculum “comes into being” (Sowell, 2000, p. 15) as it is developed by students and teachers in a given context.

The FCS PSTs were not expected to design a top-down curriculum from scratch in this course, but samples of FCS- and home economics-related curriculum documents were explored collaboratively, so they could discern the typical organizational format used to communicate its intent and contents. For the technical approach, this ranged from (but is not limited to) title, rationale, philosophy, goals, objectives and outcomes to topics, scope and sequence, materials, instructional strategies, resources, and assessment and evaluation (Sowell, 2000).

### **Course Syllabus Design**

The FCS PSTs were then required to design a course outline (syllabus) from scratch. A curriculum is prescriptive; a course outline is descriptive. Although often interchanged, a course syllabus (a planning tool) is technically more detailed than a course outline. That said, both terms are used interchangeably herein as is the common convention. The syllabus contains three main features: (a) information about the course (name and description, goals and objectives, topics, readings [organized into modules and units], assignments and evaluation scheme, meeting times and places, and instructor contact); (b) what is expected of the students (attendance, course policies and procedures, late or missed work, technology, inclusion and accessibility, classroom rules and etiquette); and (c) school policies (Bain, 2004; Gannon, 2018; Posner & Rudnitsky, 2001).

Again, over the years, I developed a course outline model for their use (see Appendix A). This was supplemented with Posner and Rudnitsky’s (2001) approach to developing a course from scratch. As an independent assignment, the PSTs were expected to read and summarize this approach and then use it, as well as Appendix A, when developing their syllabus. Posner and Rudnitsky (2001) provided a 36-step process to create a course outline: (a) get oriented (includes gaining familiarity with state curricula, available textbooks, others’ outlines, and standards and outcome documents); (b) set a direction (map out a draft, tentative plan); (c) develop a course rationale; (d) develop then refine the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) (goals); (e) cluster ILOs to form units (their term for modules); (f) organize the units (includes scope and sequence); and (g) develop general teaching and instructional strategies (plan the learning environment). A detailed summary of their approach is available on request (see McGregor, 2019, for more on course rationales).

### **Modules and Units**

As an assignment, the FCS PSTs were then required to choose one module (with its specific units) from their recently designed course and develop it in detail. A recurring challenge was explaining how module and unit differ, because they are often conflated creating much confusion. A unit is an individual thing regarded as single and complete. A module is a set of

units that can be used to construct a more complex structure (Anderson, 2014), in this case, a course. The PSTs were taught the principle that a module is the larger entity comprising smaller units, which are subdivisions of the module. To mitigate confusion, they were advised to focus on discerning these two course organizational elements (i.e., a large structure with smaller structures nested in it) instead of worrying about what they are called.

Appendix B showcases the model I developed over time to help the PSTs with this aspect of course outline development. Posner and Rudnitsky (2001) clarified that there is no rule for how big a module (or unit) should be (e.g., number of ILOs, objectives, sessions or classes). Educators are to take guidance from the principles of (a) coherence (i.e., logical agreement among parts) and (b) scope to decide its size. Respectively, a manageable, coherent module is set up so students can see it as a set of learnings (units) that relate to each other. To that end, the subject matter should be broken into parts that can then be joined with other parts, so students can see the whole picture (including how the modules fit together to complete the course objectives). For an example, see Figure 1.

Scope refers both to what is considered relevant to achieving the learning goals and the extent to which the module or unit deals with this specific content; in other words, what to teach at what detail (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2000). In principle, educators should have as many modules and units as necessary to address the course rationale and cover all the course ILOs, goals and objectives (Posner & Rudnitsky, 2001).

### **Conclusion**

This paper shared an overview of one of two university-level FCS teacher education methods courses. It was designed to augment existing FCS teacher education textbooks (see Table 1) and serve as inspiration for redesigning university-level curricula that socialize PSTs into FCS education. Such courses would balance the so-called how-to micro aspects of teaching with a macro-level philosophically and intellectually rigorous orientation to being a FCS educator. FCS practitioners are encouraged to approach publishing companies about preparing and releasing a more comprehensive FCS teacher education methods textbook that respects the comprehensiveness needed when new teachers enter the real world.

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#### **About the Author**

Sue L. T. McGregor, professor emerita at Mount St. Vincent University, is a researcher, policy analyst and principal consultant with McGregor Consulting Group in Seabright, Nova Scotia, Canada.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Course Outline Model**

- Provide basic information (school's name, instructor's name and contact information, course name, grade level, classroom number, course Moodle URL if relevant)
- Identify any prerequisites (so students can access their readiness for the course)
- Provide course rationale and course description (i.e., justify content and show how course fits into the curriculum or a larger program)
- State both course goals (end point) and general student learning objectives (steps to get there)
- Clarify logic used to organize the course, sometimes called the course's conceptual framework (e.g., this could be a textbook's table of contents, moving from theory to application, from abstract to concrete, increased levels of complexity)
- Describe intended teaching approach (e.g., lecture, labs, field trips, role playing, games)
- Specify texts and readings (where located) and whether mandatory or optional. Try to have a range of readings (e.g., texts, articles, web pages, popular press)
- Identify items students need for course (e.g., computers, lab coats, binders)
- Provide an evaluation scheme. List assignments, tests, exams and such with dates and weights or value (%). Explain grading practices and scales/rubrics. Give students some sense of workload (e.g., time, level of difficulty) required to complete course components
- Specify any other course requirements aside from class attendance (e.g., field trips, service learning, community engagement)
- Set out the course modules and units in detail (e.g., a schedule of classes) with dates for each class including topics, readings, deadlines, holidays, due dates, drop dates (display using chart or table)
- Clarify how the modules and units fit together as a whole, so that students can "see" the course in its entirety
- Outline course (and likely some school) policies (e.g., attendance, late assignments, makeups) including expected behaviour before, during and after class

## Appendix B Module and Unit Model

- Each **module** (usually 2-3 per modules course) is organized around a theme, issue or problem representing the key building blocks of the course. The module can correspond to a chapter topic in a textbook or ideas from standards/outcomes for the area of study.
- Give each module a title reflecting the broad topic being covered.
- Review provincial (state) guidelines and approved textbooks for age-appropriate content and tasks for this area of study. Then, clearly indicate the course *goal(s)* and intended (student) learning *objectives* (ILOs) to be reached in each module. For each goal, provide a rationale statement that describes why students are learning this particular content.
- Decide on the sequence of the modules (the order they will be taught) using tips from textbooks or curricular documents for how to cluster them.
- Then, break each module down into manageable **units**, usually 2-3 units per module, with 1-2 lesson plans per unit, deciding on their sequence as well.
- Identify the resources and materials that are necessary to implement the modules and units. Gather facts and documents from a *variety of perspectives* about the themes. Create a filing system, one file for each module, and file the information as you find it (paper or virtual such as Pinterest). When satisfied that you have the scope and depth that you need to teach the topic, create a narrative (like a term paper) for each module (theme or topic) (about five pages long, single spaced) and convert into PowerPoints, handouts et cetera, *if you are ready to distill it this far*. This will become the content you later teach in each lesson. This is a live document, a work in progress.
- Now that you know better *what is going to be taught*, decide on the time frame required for each module and unit. For modules, divide the number of weeks for the course by the number of modules to get an estimate (12 weeks/4 modules = 3 weeks for each module). Decide how many classes (days - lessons) are required for each unit within each module.
- Next, create a day-by-day timeline of each unit's activities and lessons. To do this, try figuring out the number of classes per week. Using the information pulled together so far, *block out a series of daily lessons* that are representative of important elements of the unit and progressive in nature – a flow chart works here. When more detail is needed, follow guidelines previously provided for developing detailed lesson plans.
- Assess learning at end of each module (at the end of the 3-4 weeks). *If* the module has a culminating activity that represents assessment of the module's learning goals, this activity should be clearly described in the course outline. Do the same for the units, if relevant.