

Enhancing the Team Development of Home Economics Teachers in Chinese Higher Education: An Industry-Education Integration Perspective

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Abstract

The relaxation of China's three-child policy and the elderly population have greatly heightened the demand for home economics services, thereby intensifying the scarcity of professional caregivers. To alleviate this problem, higher education institutions have been given the important mission of training high-quality professionals. This study examines the challenges of establishing effective home economics teaching teams in Chinese vocational institutions. Within the framework of industry-education integration, this study explores the barriers to the formation of effective home economics teaching teams in Chinese vocational institutions from three viewpoints: teacher professionalism, educational philosophy, and team structure. It also suggests solutions that involve the integration of industry and education, including the enhancement of professional skills, the modification of teaching methodologies, the reconfiguration of the teaching staff, and the augmentation of instructors' competence and self-assurance. This study provides valuable insights for educational policymakers and institutional leaders to help them align talent development with the evolving needs of China's home economics service industry.

Keywords: Home Economics, Teacher Team Building, Higher Education Institutions, Industry-Education Integration

Introduction

With the liberalization of the three-child policy and the rapid aging of China's population, China's demand for housekeeping services continues to rise, putting unprecedented pressure on the supply and quality of labor for housekeeping services. The 2022–2023 China Domestic Service Industry Development Analysis Report released by AiMedia Consulting shows that the domestic service market size has surged from 40.1 billion yuan in 2015 to 146.6 billion yuan in 2021, and there are currently more than 30 million domestic service workers active in the domestic service industry. This significant growth highlights the huge gap between social

demand and current workforce capabilities, particularly in terms of professionalism and specialized training.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council (2022) issued the "Outline of Strategic Planning for Expanding Domestic Demand (2022-2035)," which proposed to promote the quality and expansion of home economics services. In February 2019, the executive meeting of the State Council pointed out that qualified colleges and universities should open home economics-related universities and that support should be provided for leading enterprises in home economics services to establish vocational colleges focused on these services to further promote the quality and expansion of domestic services. These policy directions highlight the growing recognition that cultivating high-quality, professionally trained personnel is fundamental to improving service levels and addressing labor shortages in the home economics industry.

However, despite the growth in the number of home economics programs supported by the policy, institutions of higher education still have a number of problems in building a faculty that meets development needs. These problems include gaps between the academic backgrounds of educators and the realities of the industry's requirements, teaching frameworks that do not keep pace with the times, and insufficient support for faculty growth from teaching institutions. Addressing these challenges is critical not only for the sustainability of the home economics program but also for the achievement of broader societal goals such as gender equality, elder care, child care, and family well-being.

The significance of this study is to systematically analyze the structural, practical and professional barriers that hinder the development of the faculty of Home Economics courses and to propose a set of practical strategies based on the concept of industry-teaching integration to improve the professionalism of the faculty, the effectiveness of teaching and institutional cooperation. Ultimately, this study will help to achieve the task of training a new generation of home economics professionals, i.e., to train home economics industry professionals with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, and to import more high-quality labor for the home economics industry in order to meet the practical needs of modern families. The results of the study are expected to provide meaningful insights for policy makers, university educators, and organizational leaders who are committed to promoting the high-quality and sustainable development of China's home economics industry.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology, based on the theoretical framework of 'industry-education integration' and systematically analyzes the problems and coping strategies faced by teachers of home economics majors in China's higher vocational colleges and universities through document analyses and policy interpretations. The research design is mainly descriptive-analytical, and the sources of information include national policy documents (such as *General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 2017*) statistical data released by the Ministry of Education and industry organizations, academic journals, and research reports on the home economics service industry. Through qualitative content analysis methods, the data were compared and inductively integrated across the literature, focusing on three major problem domains: teacher professionalism, educational philosophy, and structural configuration. The study aims to reveal the linkages between policy

orientation, institutional reform, and school-enterprise cooperation in teacher development and to propose feasible paths to enhance the training of 'dual-teacher' teams, optimize the curriculum system, and improve teachers' practical ability. Although this study does not involve field research, in order to enhance the credibility and robustness of the findings, this paper adopts a multi-source data (triangulation mutual evidence) strategy to integrate and analyse the information, which provides a theoretical basis and policy rationale for the subsequent empirical research (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Problems

Professionalism Problem

Presently, the level of home economics teachers in China's institutions of higher education is generally low, and many full-time teachers mainly come from academic research universities with master's and doctoral students and are mostly transferred from medical, nursing, and education majors. Although teachers seem highly educated, they have deviated from the home economics profession and do not have the right experience in the field (Ding, 2022). For example, teachers of education teach family pedagogy, and teachers of psychology teach child psychology. Some teachers are experienced but lack home economics experience or are out of touch. For example, nursing teachers lecture on medical and nursing experience, and chefs lecture on hotel work experience. Therefore, it is time-sensitive to build a team of teachers who have both high cultural quality and experience in home economics.

Practical Problem

Due to the historical development and policy orientation of higher education in China, there is a common concept of "emphasizing education but not ability" and "emphasizing theory but not practice" in the construction of faculty teams. Most of the higher vocational teachers think that teaching should let students have a more profound understanding of their specialties and improve their knowledge reserve, which does not combine teaching with industry (Zhang, 2024). Nowadays, we advocate the concept of industry-education integration, which does not stop at theoretical knowledge but combines it with practice based on learning theoretical knowledge and strengthens our knowledge of theory by practice.

Structure and Quantity of Teacher's Problem

Currently, China has 1,418 higher vocational colleges and universities. Following the expansion of higher vocational education, the enrollment at each institution has risen by approximately 705 students annually, necessitating an increase of about 39 teachers per year per higher vocational college to maintain the Ministry of Education's stipulated student-teacher ratio of 18:1 (Zhang, Y., 2021). To address the shortage of educators, higher vocational colleges and universities are aggressively recruiting and increasing the number of new instructors. This has resulted in challenges in ensuring the quality of instruction provided by teachers, and under the dual pressures of expansion and quality enhancement, most private schools and universities typically lack highly qualified educators in their teaching staff (Chen & Astillero, 2023). Educators are required to manage extensive teaching responsibilities across various disciplines, resulting in fatigue, diminished self-efficacy, and an inability to focus on enhancing their pedagogical skills.

Suggestion

"Enhancing the integration of industry and education, along with school-enterprise collaboration, is essential for expediting the establishment and advancement of a contemporary vocational education system. The introduction of home economics service and management programs in higher vocational institutions is a necessary response to the talent deficit in the home economics sector." Consequently, enhancing the integration of industry and schooling is a crucial method for establishing a faculty of home economics majors and subsequently developing new home economics professionals that align with societal demands.

Improving Professional Literacy

Following the issuance of "Several Opinions on Deepening the Integration of Industry and Education" by the General Office of the State Council in 2017, the government has released numerous pertinent documents that bolster the integration of industry and education, thereby enhancing school-enterprise collaboration. Educational institutions and businesses are encouraged to establish professional teacher development centers founded on a mutually advantageous framework. They should routinely facilitate the placement of professional educators within enterprises to enhance teachers' practical skills while simultaneously fostering the high-quality advancement of corporate personnel. Enterprises will supply schools with essential industry insights, while schools will deliver skilled industry talent to enterprises, thereby realizing reciprocal benefits and a win-win scenario. The home economics discipline is inherently interdisciplinary, enabling educators with analogous academic backgrounds to be effectively directed towards disciplinary innovation and to emerge as leading professionals in the field.

Revise the Pedagogical Framework

The home economics profession in China remains nascent, with numerous courses replicated from Western curricula lacking localization and a formalized pedagogical framework. Educational institutions ought to promote the involvement of professional leaders in the formulation of the curriculum framework grounded in the conventional theoretical teaching model. Additionally, they should support and finance educators in the preparation of instructional materials for essential home economics courses, particularly those focused on practical training, to enhance the diversity of teaching methods and invigorate the classroom experience, thereby integrating "production" with "teaching." The goal is to combine "teaching" and "production" and to bring about the transformation of pedagogical concepts and processes. A curriculum team is established to thoroughly redesign the traditional structure of core courses for home economics majors, implementing modularized course learning and assigning different instructors to oversee specific teaching boards based on their expertise and interests.

Modifying the Teacher Framework to Enhance Self-Efficacy

Colleges and universities should proactively recruit new educators, acquire teaching resources through diverse avenues, facilitate a reciprocal exchange of talent between schools and enterprises, implement collaborative teacher development initiatives, and mitigate the work and teaching pressures resulting from increased recruitment efforts. Higher vocational institutions ought to alleviate the many occupational pressures on educators, promote independent and voluntary teaching initiatives, and bolster instructors' self-efficacy. Higher

vocational institutions can initiate improvements through two avenues: incentive policies and training systems. The incentive policy stipulates that academic research and practical experience are equally significant and contribute to additional points for teacher promotion. This approach encourages educators to prioritize the enhancement of their practical experience. Teachers possessing specific practical skills are permitted to supervise relevant training facilities, and they are directed to mentor students in practical applications, thereby augmenting teachers' self-efficacy. The school can utilize summer and winter periods to facilitate teachers' engagement in home economics enterprises annually, thereby enhancing their industry comprehension and quality through collaborative efforts such as placements and research and development partnerships(Yang, 2020).

Conclusion

The team building of home economics teachers in higher vocational industry-teaching integration plays a crucial role and is a necessary path for the development of vocational colleges. It can effectively improve the teaching effect of teachers and thus promote the overall development of home economics students. The school should actively cooperate with enterprises and guide and help teachers to improve teachers' own professionalism, change teachers' educational philosophy, and adjust the overall teacher structure with the help of industry-teaching integration to improve teachers' self-efficacy and help the school to build a better teacher team for home economics.

Each cooperative body should strengthen communication, improve the system and incentive policy related to the integration of industry and education for teachers, provide institutional guarantees for carrying out the integration of industry and education for teachers, create a dual-teacher home economics professional teacher team, innovate the curriculum system and lecture form, and realize the collaborative education method of multi-party cooperation to cultivate more talents in the home economics industry that meet the needs of social development.

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