

# 한국의 가정학 : 과거, 현재, 그리고 미래\*

Home Economics in Korea : Past, Present, and Future

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〈Abstract〉

가정학이 학교교육의 체계를 갖추기 시작한 것은 개화사상이 전반적으로 확산된 19세기 말이다. 미국인 선교사에 의하여 시작된 가정과교육은 그 후, 대학이 설립되고, 석·박사 과정이 증설되면서 양적인 증가와 더불어 가정학의 전문성이 강화되었다. 한국의 가정학은 초기부터 여성교육에 주도적 역할을 해왔으며, 실생활에 필요한 지식을 제공하여 생활개선에 계몽적인 활동을 추구해왔다.

현재 한국의 가정학은 초기의 가정과 교육에서 분화하여 아동 및 가족학, 가정관리 및 소비자학, 식품영양학, 의류학, 주거학 그리고 가정교육학 등 6개 하위영역으로 세분화해가고 있다. 그리고 어느 분야이든 궁극적으로 가정복지를 목표로 하고 이를 실현하려고 노력하고 있다. 따라서 현재의 한국의 가정학은 전문적인 분화와 전체적인 통합간의 균형을 추구하고 있으며, 변화하는 미래 사회에 적합한 전문인을 양성하기 위하여 새로운 교과과정을 준비하고 있고, 가정학의 발전방향을 공동연구하고 있다. 또한 그동안 상대적으로 소극적이었던 대외활동 및 서비스를 활성화하여 함께 발전하는 가정과 사회 건설에 적극 참여하고 있다.

한국에서의 가정학 역사는 60여년에 불과하나, 짧은 역사에도 불구하고 학문적 체계를 갖추고 의미있는 성과를 거두어왔으며, 미래 사회에서는 가정학이 더욱 중요한 역할을 할 것으로 전망된다.

\* 본고는 ARAHE(1995)에 제출한 논문〈The History of Home Economics in Korea〉중 발췌한 것임.

## I. Introduction

It was not until the end of the 19th century when enlightenment spread throughout society that Home Economics education became systemized. Home Economics education, begun by an American missionary, reinforced its professional character as Home Economics colleges and graduate courses at both the masters and doctoral levels were established. Home Economics in Korea has played a leading role in women's education from the beginning and has actively pursued the need to improve the quality of family life by providing accurate and current knowledge needed in daily life.

At present, Home Economics in Korea has evolved from Home Economics education in its early stages by subdividing into six subordinate areas : Child and Family Studies, Home Management and Consumer Studies, Food and Nutrition, Clothing and Textiles, Housing and Home Economics Education. The ultimate objective of each field is the welfare of the family and each area works to achieve this goal. Currently Home Economics in Korea is pursuing a balance between professional specialization and general integration by preparing a new curriculum to provide professionals needed in the changing society of the future and by studying the direction of its development cooperatively. In addition, scholars engaged in Home Economics are actively participating in serving family and society, an area which has been neglected until now.

## II. The Historical Development of Home Economics in Korea

### 1. Changes in the Content and Name of Home Economics

In traditional society, women's education which

consisted of moral character and skills was accomplished within the family using Chinese liberal arts books.

Later, *Nae Hun* written by Queen Sohae and *SanRimGyungJe* written by Hong were published. They described household guidelines and thus provided the basic textbook for women's education. In these books, the concept of Home Economics was presented by providing fundamental ethics for household management and detailed living rules. It aimed for harmony in the family. Therefore, it can be explained that Korean Home Economics in the traditional period started with philosophy and ethics for home management.

Afterwards, through the colonial period and the Korean War, the Department of Domestic Science had charge of Home Economics. At that time, the purpose of Home Economics education was more focused as a science, because some technological knowledge was needed to solve the clothing, food and housing problems confronted in daily life and to help reconstruct the economic basis.

Since the 1950s, when Korean Home Economics Association(KHEA) was established, the concept of Domestic Science shifted to Home Economics. Along with the establishment of the College of Home Economics, Home Economics with a scientific basis prevailed. Therefore, in middle school, Vocational Business and Domestic Science are learned parallel with Home Economics, but, at the university level, Home Economics has its own academic identity as an integrated and practical science.

Since 1970, in which Home Economics education in the United States changed its name to the College of Home Economics, some debate about the modification of its name has continued in Korea. In response, some universities selected other names for Home Economics, for example, the College of Living Culture, the College of Human Ecology or the College of

Family Science.

Until now, no appropriate name to substitute for Home Economics exists as a unique science area to investigate the interrelations among individual, family and society. Also, to change the name only to enhance its image can create further complications. Therefore, many professors consider it very seriously. Universities which have changed the name, in fact, keep the same curriculum as before.

In conclusion, the current name is likely to remain for the time being. It is expected that it will change gradually through specific research and opinions shared by professors.

## 2. Objectives of Home Economics

The ultimate objective of Home Economics is to maximize individual and family satisfaction and welfare by enhancing the understanding and knowledge of humans and its physical and social environment. In the past, the focus of Home Economics was limited to the physical environment. However, at the present time, professors recognize the necessity of studying the influence of physical environment on families and the interrelationship between family members(Yoo & Lee, 1994). To be concrete, by considering family welfare from micro and macro perspectives, the objectives of Home Economics in Korea are as follows :

### 【Micro perspectives】

Korean Home Economics was greatly influenced by American Home Economics in the 1970s, because it was thought to be appropriate to conditions in Korea and thus the goals are as follows :

- 1 : To improve the conditions contributing to man's psychological, social and physical development
- 2 : To improve the conditions contributing to man's physiological health and development
- 3 : To improve the physical components of man's

near environment

- 4 : To improve consumer competence and family resource use
- 5 : To improve the quality and availability of community services which enrich family life

In the early period of Home Economics, the first three goals were the major ones, but, in the 1970s and the 1980s, the fourth goal was positively pursued. Since 1990, the last goal has been sought after.

### 【Macro perspectives】

To improve the quality of life of the individual , effort in the public dimension as well as in the private one is necessary. In contrast to passive acceptance and adjustment for a socio-systematic change from the past, Korean Home Economics has tried to embody the objectives of family welfare at the macro level by increasing the standard of the field of Home Economics.

The concrete goals are presented as follows :

- 1 : To strengthen the organization of the field of Home Economics and to make Home Economics known publicly
- 2 : To reorganize and revise the curriculum to meet social needs
- 3 : To participate positively in legislation or legal structures to contribute to the enhancement of family welfare
- 4 : To have a social extension service through life-long education in communities

## 3. Faculty

In 1994, the number of teachers holding Home Economics education licenses for middle and high schools amounts to 5,298 teachers in middle schools and 1,650 teachers in high schools(see Table 1).

Faculty members in higher education are presented in Table 2. The number of faculty members totals

Table 1. Number of Teachers in Home Economics Education

Classification	Middle school	High school
National	18	18
Public	4,129	743
Private	1,151	889
Total	5,298	1,650

Source : Ministry of Education, National Board of Educational Evaluation(1994). Statistical Yearbook of Education.

1,415 persons. Almost all of them are composed of females.

By position, the number of presidents(or deans) is 1, the number of professors is 270, the number of associate professors is 237, the number of assistant professors is 267 and the number of full-time lecturers is 177. Most these faculty members have received their master's and doctor's degrees in their own country or abroad.

#### 4. Home Economics Research

An analysis of the academic achievement in Home Economics by decade follows?

The 1960s was the early developmental period of Home Economics. With fewer human resources for research, so research activities were scarce. In the late 1960s, Home Economics colleges were founded in

universities and the Home Economics department was divided into many areas. Thus, the content of each area became more specified.

In the 1970s, each Home Economics college established graduate courses. The conditions for high quantitative research were also established.

In the 1980s, qualitative statistics by computer became available. With the increase of graduate courses at both the master and doctoral levels, research increased qualitatively. In addition, scholars educated abroad returned to Korea and proceeded to undertake many empirical studies.

Currently, Korean Home Economics consists of six subdivisions : Child and Family Studies, Home Management and Consumer Studies, Clothing and Textiles, Food and Nutrition, Housing, and Home Economics Education. In the early years all these areas were included in the department of Home Economics Education. However, with the development of Home Economics, areas have continued to divide into more specified areas. For example, in the late 1980s, the Department of Home Management divided into additional specified areas.

A review of the changes in research subjects by subdivision follows.

##### 1) Child and Family Studies

In the 1960s, Child Studies researchers were

Table 2. Faculty Members of Home Economics by Position

Classification	Status	President (Dean)	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Full-time Lecturer	Teaching Assistant
National	230	-	74	49	36	18	53
Public	12	-	1	3	4	-	4
Private	1,173	1	195	185	227	159	406
Total	1,415	1	270	237	267	177	463

Source : Ministry of Education, National Board of Educational Evaluation(1994). Statistical Yearbook of Education.

interested in the influence of the environment on children. In the area of Family Studies, research concerning the family structure such as family institution, kinship and lineage were conducted.

In the 1970s, the study of family structure still proceeded, but the study of family relationships dealing with interactions between family members increased qualitatively. Research on the influence of children's environment and parents' rearing attitudes on their children's development were of major concern (Lee & Yoo, 1990). In addition, the importance of preschool education was suggested. Through surveys of day-care centers, a way to help children of working mothers was searched for. Research on marital relationships also began. Subjects like adjustment, marital satisfaction, and decision-making newly emerged.

In the 1980s, as the parental role became important in child rearing, the husband's or father's role in the family was studied. In Family Studies, research subjects became more diverse. From the research findings, concerns about family relationships and family problems became significant. As a result, studies on marital satisfaction, communication, family conflict, and family violence were subdivided. In addition, as social concern of the aged increased, studies on adulthood adjustment and senescence began to increase.

After the 1980s, studies on children's cognitive development began in earnest. In Family Studies, family counseling and family therapy were introduced as new subjects. Currently, family life education programs by life-span are developing in Home Economics.

## 2) Home Management and Consumer Science

In the early 1960s, there were a lot of studies about effective kitchen work to improve the standard of living. There was also research on movement in the kitchen, kitchen management and surveys on time management of the household. In the 1970s, the

content of the research shifted to a pursuit of the rationalization of housework. Surveys on the division of housework were done and its solutions were considered (Moon, 1981). Macro-level studies such as an analysis on household structure, income and expenditure were made.

From the mid 1970s, consumer science emerged in Korean Home Economics. Research on consumer science, consumer behavior, consumer protection, consumer education, and consumer policies have been accomplished. Presently, not only problems concerning commercial products but also problems concerning environmental pollution are being studied in consumer areas.

Since the 1980s, a re-evaluation of household labor has been examined in a theoretical framework. While studies on life-style patterns and socialization of housework are on going, family stress management is also studied in these areas.

## 3) Clothing and Textiles

In the 1960s, to meet the social needs for clothing improvement, studies on textile selection, hygiene, and reform of Korean clothing were conducted. In the area of clothing, from the beginning, studies were proceeded based on experimental surveys which contributed to the scientific approach of Home Economics. In addition, research on textile, pattern making, and home dress making were done.

In the 1970s, studies on the history of traditional clothing began, and research to establish a standardization index for Korean clothing were continuously explored.

After the 1980s, psycho-social perspectives in the clothing area were introduced. Clothing purchase behavior and marketing were studied in earnest. The area of clothing design was also vigorously studied.

#### 4) Food and Nutrition

In the 1960s, this area provided the Korean standardization of nutrition measurement through national surveys. Studies on the improvement of dietary patterns in rural areas were vigorously proceeded. At this time, similar to the area of Clothing and Textiles, this area played a major role in Home Economics through scientific research.

In the 1970s, experiments on the effectiveness of the traditional foods, especially, kimchi were conducted. The effects of dietary habits on the nutritional development were also examined. Particularly, surveys on nutrition intake began.

In the 1980s, surveys on institutional meal service were implemented. In the 1990s, nutrition surplus as well as nutrition deficiency was questioned in surveys.

#### 5) Housing

Until the 1970s, plans on housing space and movement lines were major subjects. Since the 1980s, sociological studies on housing increased quantitatively investigating such factors as housing value, housing need and housing satisfaction.

In addition, subjects such as the improvement of living conditions were explored. Thus, surveys on housing according to the rapid increase of land value were done, and methods to improve rental housing were explored.

Currently, the areas of interior design and planning are developing independently to meet social needs.

#### 6) Home Economics Education

In the 1960s, Home Economics Education played a greater role than any subdivision of Home Economics. From the beginning, studies on the Home Economics Education curriculum proceeded and scholars from this area organized monthly meetings and workshops for middle and high school teachers.

In the 1970s, surveys on Home Economics Educa-

tion were implemented, and cooperation on examinations and suggestions for the future direction of Home Economics were also done. A historical review of Home Economics education, studies on Home Economics curriculum, and research on the improvement of Home Economics textbooks continued in the 1980s (Seong, 1981).

As mentioned above, the achievements of Home Economics research have been reviewed. In the early period of modernization, Korean Home Economics research was task-oriented relating directly to family living. Recently, however, they have been skewed too much in the direction of specialized subjects in each area. It is unfortunate that Home Economics Education, which had been the leading role of women's education, is now stagnant.

### 5. Special Programs in Women's Projects

Home Economics in Korea started as education to develop the special qualities of women and educated many women. In providing knowledge and skills related to family life, Home Economics contributed to the realization and improvement of the scientification and rationalization of family living in Korea. For that reason, especially in the past, there was a tendency for women to be selected or recommended to study Home Economics by their families or society. Home Economics in Korea played a connecting role in the rationalization and modernization in the education for women. Thus, almost all of the female pioneers or leaders in Korea graduated from Home Economics colleges. These women participated in educational fields and were in charge of women's problems, women's education issues, and family problems(Seong, 1981).

In contemporary society, Home Economics is expanding the educational direction toward equality between the two sexes to ensure equal opportunities for females and to realize a more democratic family

life. Women and family will continue to be central issues in Home Economics.

## 6. Professional Organizations and Links

Korean Home Economics has organized academic associations for the development of Home Economics and its members. The associations are fundamentally included in the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). For the development of the individual and society, members of these associations have had a direct or indirect influence on national policies.

First of all, KHEA has presented Home Economics articles and has led the direction of Home Economics research. KHEA is the largest organization, with a membership of 1,200. It is the central organization incorporating all the specialized areas related to Home Economics.

The KHEA has its headquarters in Seoul with branches in every region of the country. Through the regional organizations, academic research is conducted with results contributing to the communities. In addition, many associations have been established and have strengthened the specialization of disciplines since the 1970s.

Academic interchange with foreign associations provides opportunities for Home Economics professionals in Korea and abroad to discuss common concerns together. Since the 1950s, Korean Home Economics professionals have participated in the International Federation for Home Economics(IFHE), the American Home Economics Association(AHEA), and have close contact with members in the Japan Society of Home Economics and the Asian Regional Association for Home Economics(ARAHE). In addition to this, a lot of research centers have been established and they are working on studies in each field of Home Economics.

Home Economics in Korea has had many workshops with interest in research methodology as well as

academic studies. The list of theses has been published, which is the most fundamental work in the study of Home Economics. Since the Korean Association of Family Studies published the list of studies in each field after the 1960s, lists of theses and abstracts have been published frequently.

In addition, since the 1990s, a full scale computer information service has become available. The library of each college and the National Assembly Library has programed the theses and a bibliography is available on computer.

## 7. Outstanding Contributions to Society

Home Economics contributes to society by providing education to its students, employment to its graduates, further academic studies to its professionals and social services to the community at large.

From right after liberation to the 1950s, Home Economics promoted education, information and research under the slogan of rationalization of living to lead a scientific and economical family life.

In this period, home economists contributed by promoting a scientific and economical family life required by the post-war generation. As a way of rationalizing living, measuring instruments were made and distributed, life-planning by precise measurement and improved soy-bean malt were provided and methods of effective consumption were explained. In addition, the democratization of family living was actively advocated(Yoo & Lee, 1994).

In the 1960s, Home Economics played a leading role in enlightening the rural community. By participating in meetings to educate farmers, discussions were held to further their education. In addition, through "The Exhibition of Creativity Development" and a standardization of recipes for meal service, Home Economics had a close relationship with the rural communities. By utilizing research findings, Home

Economics professionals were in charge of educating the rural women.

In the 1970s, scholars of all areas of Home Economics were engaged in the national task of family planning. In 1973 and 1974, symposiums on Home Economics and education on family planning were held by the KHEA. In 1975, a family planning study meeting for the improvement of rural life was held by the Department of Agricultural Home Economics in the Agricultural College at Seoul National University to teach family planning to leaders and housewives in rural communities. Following this, in 1978, the "Home Science Education Workshop" was held by the College of Home Economics at Yonsei University. The program with lectures and practice from the area of Clothing, Food, Housing, and Child Studies was held for village extension leaders (Lee, et al., 1979). Thus, Home Economics played a leading role in teaching family planning and improving the quality of life in rural communities.

Since 1980, to solve the employment problems of graduates, home economists took an interest by providing information about Home Economics and connecting it to various social classes, overcoming the passive attitude about cooperation between industries and universities. Each Home Economics college was committed to research projects sponsored by companies or the government through the activity of the Research Institute of Human Ecology attached to the college of Home Economics. In addition to this, since the latter half of the 1980s, journals and broadcasting media have presented issues concerning women and home life independently. In addition, Home Economics research theses have been made available to the public.

In the 1990s, a professor of Home Economics was appointed Minister of Education and a Home Economics scholar participated in the Department of Social Welfare of the 21st Century Committee. Also a home economist was elected chairperson of the Feminine

Studies conference and had a chance to be involved in making several social policies. In 1994, the International Year of the Family designated by the United Nations, a Korean Home Economics academic conference announced a joint declaration in cooperation with other family-related associations and suggested a desirable policy for family welfare.

### III. Concerns and Issues in Home Economics in Korea

Until now, Home Economics which has had a fairly conservative tendency has been absorbed only in developing its professionalism. Without being fully prepared to meet the needs of a new society, home economists themselves are not proud of the unique characteristics of Home Economics and tend to be satisfied with the current situation instead of concentrating on its future development. In contrast, scholars in other fields permeate into Home Economics and Home Economics in Korea has come to face times of crisis and challenge.

The subjects of academic reports at KHEA conferences in the past 10 years, provide an understanding of the urgent issues of Home Economics in Korea. The role of Home Economics in modern society was mainly discussed in themes such as "Home Economics and Society", "The Employment of Home Economics Majors in Society", "Professionalism and the Fields of Home Economics", and "The Field of Home Economics According to Changes in Society".

At present, many Korean scholars continue to hold seminars discussing the future direction of Home Economics. They are most concerned with achieving the following goals: 1) the establishment of a Home Economics philosophy, 2) the activation of interdisciplinary studies, 3) the activation of cooperative studies between businesses and universities, 4) public awareness of Home Economics, and 5) the revision of the



Home Economics curriculum.

#### IV. Conclusion

As long as society is responsible for the life of a human from the cradle to the grave, the family will continue to exist in the future. Various types of families will appear in Korean society and a person will be able to experience a variety of family life according to his or her choice.

The role and importance of Home Economics will not decrease. Rather, it will increase. The more alienated and mechanized humans become the more society will demand a restoration of humanity and the establishment of family ethics. Home Economics has the most professional knowledge to find the ways to realize human values. Home Economics is often said to be a "future-oriented discipline", because it has the flexibility to meet change and to restructure knowledge without being satisfied at maintaining the present level.

However, in order to further develop, Home Economics should establish a model or a theory suitable for Korean society, broaden its old views and outlooks, and reinforce a system for social service. Like a person, Home Economics should keep and develop its own territory. It should also compete and cooperate with other scientific fields.

For the future society, a family-related extension service will be considered as an important field to confirm the necessity of Home Economics. It should

play a leading role by preventing family problems in advance, reinforcing family strengths and establishing family policies to contribute to the development of a healthy society.

Though the history of Home Economics in Korea is only 60 years old, it has accomplished remarkable academic success. It is expected that Home Economics will play a more important role in the future.

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