DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 356 368 CE 063 452

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TITLE Curriculum Orientations of Home Economics Teachers.
PUB DATE 7 Dec 92
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the American Vocational Association Convention (St. Louis, MO, December 7, 1992). For related papers, see CE 063 450-451.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum Development; *Educational Change; *Educational Philosophy; Educational Research; Home Economics; *Home Economics Teachers; Secondary Education; Secondary School Teachers; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Education; Teacher Education Curriculum; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS Nebraska

ABSTRACT

A study collected descriptive information about 152 Nebraska home economics teachers and their curriculum orientation(s). The questionnaire was adapted from the Curriculum Orientation Profile designed by Robin (1979) and revised by Carlson (1991). Teachers responded to 45 statements on a Likert-type scale. Nine statements reflected each of five curriculum orientations: technology, critical consciousness or social reconstruction, personal relevance, cognitive process, and academic rationalism. An additional section of the questionnaire requested demographic information about respondents and schools. The mean scores on the five curriculum orientations indicated that Nebraska home economics teachers agreed most strongly with the cognitive process curriculum orientation with a mean of 4.75. This was followed closely by self-actualization (4.34) and social reconstruction (4.25). Significant differences were found among the mean scores of each orientation. No significant differences were found in curriculum orientation profiles for teachers based on school size, year graduated, graduating institution, or number of recent graduate college courses attended. Significant differences were found in curriculum orientations held by teachers based on differing amounts of contact hours in recently taken inservice education. (Transparencies showing research questions, sample questions, and data tables are appended.) (YLB)

CURRICULUM ORIENTATIONS OF HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS

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December 7, 1992

Many different curriculum frameworks or "orientations" could be used to develop home economics curriculum. The term orientation was used by Eisner (1985) to mean a belief system, way of thinking, philosophy, view, or theoretical framework. Eisner labeled these differing curriculum orientations as:

Technology

Personal Relevance

Social Reconstruction - (another word used for social reconstruction is critical consciousness)

Social Adaptation

Cognitive Processing

Academic Rationalism

Each orientation represented a different philosophy, way of thinking or belief about curriculum that could be held by teachers.

Eisner perceived the technology orientation as the development of a set of systematic techniques where curriculum planning is essentially a technical undertaking, a question of relating means to ends once the ends have been formulated by the teacher. Students would be pretested, taught, and then retested in a technical fashion. The teacher and textbook would be perceived as experts.

Personal relevance is concerned with presenting education as a means of personal fulfillment. According to Eisner, (quote) "the image of the teacher is not so much that of a sculptor, someone that gives shape to formless clay, but rather that of a good gardener who cannot change the basic endowment that can nurture whatever aptitudes they bring with them into the world." (unquote) The student plays a significant role in choosing what they will study in this orientation.

The aim of social reconstruction or the critical consciousness orientation is not primarily to adapt to a society that is in need of fundamental change, but to help students recognize the problems in today's society and be able to do something about them. Students learn how to think critically about social concerns or issues.

Social adaptation is concerned with societal problems but the focus is not on enabling students to make societal change but rather informing students on how to manage existing social problems such as teen pregnancy and AIDS.

Cognitive processing seeks to develop cognitive skills in students. The subject matter is instrumental in the development of these intellectual abilities, but the subject matter is of lesser importance than the development of intellectual power.

Academic rationalism is one of the oldest orientations. The premise of this orientation is that we must provide opportunities to cultivate the intellect by studying subjects most worthy of study. Some subjects, generally elective courses, and home economics would be one of these, are considered to dilute education and cannot teach students to make rational judgments.

Fenstermacher (1979) argued that if people want teachers to change their practice, teachers must be provided with pertinent evidence related to their existing beliefs. Teachers can then use this information for significant and positive change.

Shulman (1979) also felt that significant educational reform programs should take teachers existing beliefs into account.

Because of the importance of a teacher's belief or orientation, a statewide Nebraska project was funded through Carl Perkins funds in 1991. One portion of this project was designed to identify the existing beliefs or orientations of Nebraska teachers. The state had been involved in efforts to move Nebraska teachers to a social reconstruction orientation. Since 1986 workshops and graduate courses had been directed toward this end. Although there had been some progress, more was needed. It was felt that after determining what teachers' beliefs were, additional strategies could be designed that would foster growth and change where necessary. Teachers could be later retested for their beliefs after the inservice education was experienced.

The purpose, then, of this study was:

to identify the curriculum orientation(s) profiles of Nebraska home economics teachers.

The research questions which provided focus for the study included:

1. What differences exist in the curriculum orientation(s) held by Nebraska home economics teachers?
2. What differences exist in the curriculum orientation(s) held by teachers:
   - who graduated before and after 1985?
   - who graduated from different institutions?
   - based on the sizes of their schools where they teach?
   - having a different number of recent college graduate courses? or
   - with different amounts of inservice education?

These data could then provide baseline information to compare changes in the curriculum orientations of teachers over time.

Design of Study

Survey research was used to collect descriptive information about Nebraska home economics teachers and their curriculum orientation(s). The questionnaire that was used was adapted from one designed by Babin (1979) and used by Carlson (1991). Babin designed the Curriculum Orientation Profile instrument to discover teachers' ways of thinking and used the instrument primarily as a discussion tool in his graduate classes in Canada. Carlson surveyed cooperating teachers to determine their orientation using an adapted version of his instrument.

Babin's initial instrument and Carlson's revisions were examined for this study and revisions were made based on Carlson's use of the instrument. In order to validate the instrument it was sent to ten experts, including Babin and nine other home teacher educators from the United States and Canada. Six responded and reviewed the questionnaire. Comments from this panel were then used in the final revision of the instrument.

The final instrument used a Likert-type scale where teachers were asked to circle the appropriate number to indicate their response to the statement where (1 = SD = Strongly Disagree and 6 = SA = Strongly Agree). A total of 45 statements were used, nine reflecting each of five curriculum orientations: technology, critical consciousness or social reconstruction, personal relevance, cognitive process and academic rationalism. An additional section of the questionnaire requested demographic information about the respondents and their schools.

Selection of the Sample

The population for this study was Nebraska home economics teachers. There were a total of 523 teachers teaching in Nebraska public and private schools in the Fall, 1991. Approximately fifty percent of the teachers or 250 teachers were randomly selected from each of four school sizes according to school enrollment.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was mailed to the randomly selected home economics teachers and postcard reminders were sent after 10 working days. Another questionnaire was mailed following the postcard. A total of 152 questionnaires were returned for a 60.8% response rate.

Analysis of Data

Research hypotheses were analyzed using Repeated Measure Analysis of Variance, using Wilks Lambda as the test statistic at the $p < .05$ level.

Findings

Of the teachers surveyed 42.3% graduated from college in the 1970's. Forty-nine teachers (30.2%) graduated in the 1980's. More than 23% of the teachers held a masters degree and 90.8% of all respondents reported having taken courses beyond their last degree. The largest percentage of teachers (23.0%) taught 16 to 20 years. Fifty teachers (32.0%) reported they were between the ages of 39 and 44. Most of the teachers (57.9%) taught in a one teacher department and 65% taught full time.

The amount of recent graduate level education courses taken by the teachers was minimal.

Workshops related to the critical consciousness and cognitive processing curriculum orientations had been attended by large numbers of teachers.

The mean scores on the five curriculum orientations indicated that Nebraska home economics teachers as a group agreed the most strongly with the cognitive process curriculum orientation with a mean of 4.75; this was followed closely by self-actualization at 4.34 and social reconstruction at 4.25. The mean score for technical orientation was 3.70 and lastly the academic rationalism orientation had a mean score of 3.43. Significant differences were found among the mean scores of each orientation.

No significant differences were found in the curriculum orientation(s) profiles for teachers based on the size of school, the year graduated, the graduating institution, or the number of recent graduate college courses attended.

Significant differences were found in the curriculum orientation(s) held by home economics teachers based on differing amounts of contact hours in recently taken inservice education.

Follow-up tests measured the slope of the line regressing orientation against contact hours and the orientation held by the teachers. The negative slope between contact hours and the technical orientation indicated the more inservice education contact hours the teacher had the lower the teacher's mean score for the technical orientation. A positive slope between contact hours and critical consciousness indicated the more contact hours the teachers had the higher their mean score. Although none of the slopes were significantly different from each other, the slope for critical consciousness was marginally positive and the slope for technical was marginally negative. It would appear, then, that the workshops may be a beginning for moving to a critical consciousness orientation, however, more is needed.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study adds to the body of knowledge concerning curriculum orientations', however, the findings are specific to Nebraska home economics teachers. A number of questions can be raised as a result of this study:

1. What factors explain the differences in the means of the curriculum orientations?
2. How would the information about beliefs differ if you asked the teachers what they believed rather than using a standard instrument?
3. Would teachers in other states, and other subject matter areas show similar scores?
4. What has happened in Nebraska to raise the cognitive process orientation scores to this level?
5. How closely do the teachers' beliefs match their practice?
6. What explains their practices?

Richardson, Anders, Tidwell and Lloyd (1991) believed it to be helpful to understand teacher beliefs at the present to develop new programs that will move teachers in their thinking. Richardson (1990) felt teachers empowerment may be threatened when teachers are asked to make changes without helping them to examine where they are presently. This study provides a beginning point to help teacher educators identify where teachers are in their beliefs. Knowing the results of this study, may help teacher educators to know where to begin in working with Nebraska teachers in understanding curriculum orientations. It may, however, be necessary to do long interviews and observations to get further information about teachers beliefs and their actual practice in the classroom.

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CURRICULUM ORIENTATIONS

- TECHNOLOGY
- PERSONAL RELEVANCE
- SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION
- SOCIAL ADAPTATION
- COGNITIVE PROCESSING
- ACADEMIC RATIONALISM

Purpose

To identify the curriculum orientation(s) profiles of Nebraska home economics teachers.

Research Questions

1. What differences exist in the curriculum orientation(s) held by Nebraska home economic teachers?

2. What differences exist in the curriculum orientation(s) held by teachers:

   - who graduate before and after 1985?

   - who graduated from different institutions?

   - based on the sizes of their schools where they teach?

   - having a different number of recent college graduate courses?

   - with different amounts of recent in-service education?

Sample Questions

	Disagree SD<——————————>Agree SA					
The teacher and the textbook are the "experts" in the subject matter	1	2	3	4	5	6
Intellectual skills are more important than particular subject matter or knowledge	1	2	3	4	5	6

45 statements were used reflecting:

technology

social reconstruction or critical consciousness

personal relevance

cognitive processing

academic rationalism

Mean Scores for Orientations

Orientation	Mean
Cognitive Processing	4.75
Self-Actualization	4.34
Critical Consciousness	4.25
Technical	3.70
Academic Rationalism	3.43

Note. 1=Strongly Disagree
6=Strongly Agree

Significant Differences in Orientation and Other Variables

Source	NUM DF	DEN DF	Value	F Value	PR>F
Orientation	4	100	0.3516	46.094	0.00**
Orient * Size	12	265	0.8388	1.516	0.12
Orient * Year	4	100	0.9847	0.388	0.82
Orient * Inst.	8	200	0.8889	1.516	0.15
Orient * Credits	4	100	0.8897	1.227	0.30
Orient * Contact	4	100	0.9532	3.099	0.02**

** significant at $p < .05$

Note. F statistic for Wilks' Lambda is exact.