

Why Every Student Needs Home Economics Today

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For decades, home economics has carried the stereotype of being limited to baking, sewing, and other domestic chores. Because of this perception, many schools have pushed it aside to make way for science, technology, and other academic subjects often seen as more relevant for future careers. Yet, the practical knowledge home economics provides—skills for everyday life—has never been more vital than in today's fast-paced and complex world.

At its core, home economics focuses on lifestyle and well-being, drawing from multiple disciplines to address the needs of both individuals and society in a given context (Kostanjevec & Kozina, 2021). Rather than being limited to the domestic sphere, it equips learners with the capacity to manage essential aspects of life, such as nutrition, finances, health, and consumer awareness. In fact, the field has long been understood as an interdisciplinary subject whose purpose is to raise the quality of daily living for families and households (Arai & Ohta, 2005; Elorinne et al., 2017).

A continuing issue, however, is that many young people complete formal education without practical know-how—such as managing their income, preparing nutritious meals, or making informed spending decisions. Scholars like Smith and de Zwart (2010) have highlighted that home economics fills this gap by developing both independent living and practical life skills that are often missing in traditional curricula.

The challenges of modern living make the subject even more relevant today. Fast food culture, the rising cost of living, and easy access to credit all present risks for young people who are unprepared to make responsible choices. A forward-looking home economics program can respond to these realities by teaching how to eat healthily on a budget, use money wisely, and exercise smart consumer behavior. As emphasized by the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes (2022), the subject is not only about theoretical knowledge but also about applying hands-on skills that learners can immediately use in their everyday lives.

Financial literacy is a clear example. With debt, inflation, and economic uncertainty on the rise, students need to learn early how to budget, save, and even plan for the future. Similarly, nutrition education provides tools to fight health issues like obesity and diabetes, which are common in today's youth. Importantly, mastering practical “how-to” skills is just as meaningful as understanding the underlying theory behind them (Pendergast & Dewhurst, 2012). This balance makes home economics uniquely positioned to bridge classroom learning with real-world application. Equally important, home economics promotes inclusivity and equality. By teaching all students—regardless of gender—how to care for themselves and their households, it dismantles outdated stereotypes that label domestic responsibility as “women's work.” Instead, it instills independence and responsibility in every learner, encouraging self-reliance and confidence that extends into both personal and professional life.

Reintroducing a modernized home economics program into schools is not just about reviving a subject from the past—it is about securing the future of today's

learners. In an era where students are expected to be adaptable, self-sufficient, and resilient, equipping them with practical life skills is just as important as preparing them for exams or careers. A holistic education cannot be complete without the competencies that help students thrive outside the classroom.

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