

A STUDY OF EFFECTIVE METHODS OF TEACHING
LARGE CLASSES OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
HOME ECONOMICS STUDENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Our general well-being as a nation is dependent upon the continued vitality of the family as a central institution of American life. The rapidity with which changes have been occurring in our country has placed much stress upon the American family. The education for home economics in the school of today must be comprehensive in scope in order to keep pace with the changing aspects of home and family living. Through a variety of learning experiences, students are taught to appreciate the contributions that wholesome family relationships, proper nutrition, good health habits, wise use of leisure time, and prudent economic decisions can make towards improving family and community life.

The need for the study.---The job of the home economics teacher has changed from one that concentrates on techniques of cooking and sewing to one which includes; child care and family relationships, money and time management, proper nutrition, health habits and care of the sick, conservation of energy studies, principles of color, line, and design, interior decorating, clothing selection, personal grooming, social and emotional development, community relationships and responsibilities, plus food preparation and garment construction. As the job has increased in scope, the time allotted

seems to have decreased, and class size has increased.

Thus, one problem facing most teachers is how to teach larger classes as effectively as they did the smaller ones of a generation ago. Almost all schools are faced with the population explosion which has resulted in larger classes, crowded classrooms and double sessions. The training of more teachers has not caught up with the demand for them. Therefore it is imperative that a way or ways be found to do the job needed without sacrificing quality.

The rapid technological development of our time has increased the amount of general knowledge that must be studied in the school-time of a student. This has resulted in a crowded curriculum. The area affected most by this is the junior high school. Science, mathematics, and languages are being offered on a more advanced scale in the seventh and eighth grades, sometimes even in the elementary years. A reduction in the amount of time allotted to some subjects, including home economics, often follows.

The basic skills and knowledge that a girl learns in her home economics classes in junior high school may constitute the only formal training in home-making that she will have. Seldom does the student receive this type of formal training in the home. Yet this is the training which every girl needs for a healthy and happy future for herself and most likely for a family as well. This type of training may lead to a healthier generation in the future, longer life span, and better emotional balance in the family relationships.

Quality of teaching should not then be sacrificed because of time.

The quality of study that the student gives to an assignment is as varied as the students who open the books. The need is for varied techniques of presenting material to students that will captivate and hold their interest so that they are motivated to learn the lessons needed.

The problem seemed to resolve itself into finding ways, using old methods and techniques or discovering new ones, that would teach the student to think for himself. There must be effective means of teaching so that the student of every type can be guided towards knowledge, motivated to continue learning, and given a joy of accomplishment. This, however, is an overwhelming task.

The limitations of the study.---The first limitation was to consider here only those student experiences within the school situation. This eliminated field trips and project assignments. A second limitation was to try only such techniques as could be handled within a class period. There was a third limitation in the resource materials available.

The statement of the problem.---The purpose of this study, then, was to find effective methods of teaching larger classes in home economics which would not, at the same time, decrease the enthusiasm of the students. The study sought:

- (1) to investigate various methods that could be used in teaching larger classes,
- (2) to choose one method for study,
- (3) to determine a procedure for its use,
- (4) to develop a

plan for using it in the classroom, (5) to develop a satisfactory method for evaluation, and finally, (6) to try it out in the classroom.

An explanation of terms.--Certain terms need definition in order that no misunderstandings may occur. For instance, effective teaching, in its best connotation, means that a high percentage of the learning is retained and used in, and perhaps changes the later life of the student. This is very difficult to measure particularly in a limited time span. So for the purposes of this study effective teaching was used in the sense of acquired knowledge and satisfactory attitudes that could be measured by a pretest and post test, and by an attitude test. The attitude test was used only to obtain the student's reaction to the technique used in the study.

Enthusiasm and satisfactory attitudes would be judged to mean that the students would cooperate in the study after the first lesson.

When the normal size of classes for home economics in the seventh grade is referred to in this study, sixteen students is considered a maximum number. When the size of classes are increased to eighteen to thirty students the term larger classes is used. For the purposes of this study, larger lecture modules of students are not considered.¹ However,

¹The department to be used for this study had four kitchen units and eight machines. This normally accommodates sixteen students during the foods unit and sixteen students during the clothing unit. A general tendency towards class size increase without equipment increase and the accommodations that

some material found here could be related to programs for many types of modular plans.

can be made are discussed in the bulletin by Ruth C. Cowles and Grace F. Harrison, "New Directions" for Junior High Homemaking; Hartford: Connecticut State Department of Education, Home Economics Education Service, 1960, p. 31.