

**Review, Rethink, Renew:
Educators' Perspectives on Home Economics
as a School Subject in Malta**

Suzanne Piscopo* ** and Karen Mugliett*

*Department of Health, Physical Education and Consumer Studies
Faculty of Education, University of Malta.

**suzanne.piscopo@um.edu.mt (Corresponding author)

Abstract: Home Economics (HE) education is increasingly recognised as a vehicle for promoting wellbeing, sustainability, responsible citizenship and the practical competencies required for everyday life. This study explored Maltese HE educators' perspectives on the relevance, employability preparation, status, curriculum content, pedagogical approaches and future direction of HE education within the context of contemporary societal challenges and the OECD's *Education for Human Flourishing framework*. An online survey was conducted with 34 HE educators, including practising teachers and student teachers. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative responses underwent thematic analysis.

Findings revealed strong consensus regarding the relevance of HE education to both the current and future needs of learners, particularly in relation to health, nutrition, financial literacy, consumer education, sustainability and family wellbeing. Educators favoured active, experiential and inquiry-based pedagogies, but identified curriculum overload, limited resources and persistent misconceptions about the subject as significant challenges. Although respondents viewed HE as highly valuable, they perceived its status within schools and Maltese society as relatively low. They advocated for curriculum renewal through updated content addressing food literacy, mental wellbeing, digital literacy, sustainability and adult life skills, alongside increased opportunities for practical learning. The study proposes a teacher-informed roadmap for renewing HE education in Malta through curriculum innovation, structural support, policy advocacy, enhanced marketing and alignment with broader educational goals centred on human and planetary flourishing.

Keywords: Home Economics education, Home Economics educators, Human Flourishing, Survey, Malta

Introduction

Education and schooling do not exist in a vacuum. Teachers and learners function in different settings where curricula, programmes and their implementation are designed in tune with current and emerging societal needs. At the international level a crucial conversation has been developing around reorienting educational purposes, practices and policies (OECD, 2025). In this conversation, the vision of education is seen as going beyond a Human Capital approach which focuses on investing in knowledge and skills growth for enhancement of productivity in the labour market (Smith, 2005). Education systems are being proposed as settings for 'human flourishing'; nurturing a broad range of capabilities and competencies to help restore meaning to children's and adolescents' lives and equip them with the skills and ambition to remake our societies, economies and organisations in harmony with the planet (OECD, 2025). This revisioning requires educational approaches which will help foster skills and attitudes to understand, appreciate and act in the world, and to do this through being critical and adaptive problem solvers in an empathetic and ethically sound manner.

This language of human flourishing is not alien to any trained Home Economics (HE) educator. As stated in the most recent International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) Position Statement (IFHE, 2008), HE developed around the study of individuals, families and communities and their interaction with everyday living environments. As a vision, HE aspires to a just, sustainable, healthy and equitable society in which individuals and families are equipped with the knowledge, values and practical capabilities needed to navigate everyday life and contribute positively to their communities and environments. As a mission, HE seeks to empower individuals, families and communities to achieve sustainable and healthy living through informed decision-making, critical reflection, resource management, care and responsible participation in society.

This article is inspired by the OECD's (2025) new and reinvigorating focus for education, as well as the historical and contemporary goals of HE as a discipline. However, the motivation for the research to be presented in this paper stemmed from a workshop held in 2024 where a small group of teachers gathered informally on March 21st – World Home Economics day – to conduct a SWOT analysis of HE education in Malta. Major themes emerging from this workshop were:

- a) Strengths: The strong provision of life skills in an experiential and fun manner, with continual curriculum updating to meet contemporary needs;
- b) Weaknesses: The lack of general understanding about what HE encompasses, its negative historical image, and the perceived identification as a 'soft subject' with poor job prospects;
- c) Opportunities: The possibility of building on the general political and societal recognition that life skills are lacking among youth; taking advantage of the

entitlement for HE at ages 11-12 for most students; and the potential for leading to careers in the hospitality and care services sectors, among others;

- d) Threats: The competition from the variety of Vocational subjects to choose from at the Secondary level specialisation stage, which relegate HE to be seen as a comparatively “useless” subject due to differences in job opportunities; and the resistance to change by some HE teachers.

As a result of this workshop, a formal survey among HE educators and prospective educators was recommended, to delve more deeply into the issues emerging from the SWOT analysis.

The remainder of this article will offer a critical review on HE as a discipline in light of the OECD Education for Flourishing recommendations, and then outline and discuss the research study conducted in 2026 on the current perspectives and desired future for HE education by Maltese HE practitioners. This study is an initial teacher-informed snapshot of HE education in Malta, set against current concerns about wellbeing, sustainability and life skills.

The HE discipline and education as aligned with human flourishing

The beginnings of HE emerged formally in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in response to major social and economic changes linked to industrialisation, urbanisation, public health concerns and changing family life. Early pioneers like Ellen Richards believed that scientific knowledge should improve everyday living conditions, especially within homes and communities (McGregor, 2020). At one of the first Lake Placid Conferences in the United States (often considered foundational to the discipline), HE was defined as “the study of the laws, conditions, principles, and ideals which are concerned on the one hand with man’s [sic] immediate physical environment and on the other hand with his nature as a social being, and is the study especially of the relation between these two factors” (Henderson, 1902, p. 70). Thus, HE was considered a response to a “recognised need” and has continually been called upon through different curricula to address everyday challenges, particularly in a context where families are often less stable, more transient and exposed to complex social and economic demands (Davis, 2008).

Pendergast (2010) hails the discipline as uniquely placed to connect personal wellbeing with broader social, economic, environmental and cultural sustainability, and argues that HE must continually “future-proof” itself by responding to megatrends and societal transformations. Similarly, the IFHE Position Statement (IFHE, 2008) recommends that HE should respond to contemporary global challenges, such as climate change, food insecurity, consumerism, inequality and changing family structures.

Within its proposed Education for Flourishing framework, the OECD (2025) highlights two foundational ideas: 1) student wellbeing -- the subjective happiness of individuals currently

in education, and 2) caring for others -- including our responsibilities to other living species and considering lives as yet unlived. These ideas are somewhat congruent to McGregor's (2012) description of HE as a "life-centric" discipline focused on ethical, sustainable and socially responsible living. They also remind us of McGregor and Piscopo's (2021) assertion that HE is concerned with both 'caring for' and 'caring about' humans. The authors proposed a new construct for HE called the 'caring professional continuum', which is grounded in the education, prevention and development approach to practice, working through families to enhance the human condition. Such thinking is reminiscent of what Smith (1991) had outlined when describing how a global HE education is required which is built on a vision of complexity, uncertainty and value conflicts, and which aims to foster the development of reflective, critical thinkers, secure in dealing with the perennial practical problems of families in a global society.

Since then authors such as Hira (2013), Piscopo (2016) and Pendergast (2023) have written about the role of HE education in nurturing multiple literacies in order to develop individuals who can make sound decisions and take meaningful, efficient actions in everyday life situations. These literacies, which include health, food, consumer, environmental, financial, technological and social literacy, are considered as best implemented through pedagogies based on experiential approaches that apply knowledge to real-life scenarios. This approach aligns well with the OECD's (2025) proposition for learning environments that promote human flourishing. Specifically, the OECD asserts that teacher guidance on disciplinary knowledge and skills, as well as experiential learning are the twin building blocks of active learning, the "signature education for human flourishing pedagogy" (p. 9). In operationalising active learning, teachers are advised to be "domain experts, designers of learning, guides, facilitators, motivators, coaches, mentors and role models. Their overarching role must be to nurture purpose-driven individuals [learners] who can lead productive lives and care for the common good of society." (p. 116)

Home Economics education in Malta and beyond

The Maltese context

Within the Maltese context, HE has increasingly been framed as a discipline that integrates wellbeing, sustainable living, food literacy, family life and responsible citizenship, while responding to contemporary social and ecological challenges (Piscopo & Mugliett, 2012). This is evident at all levels of education, from Secondary, to post-Secondary, to tertiary education (Piscopo et al., 2019). It is clearly articulated in the national HE syllabus (Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation [MESYRI], 2024); specifically, in its rationale where the stated aim is for HE education which facilitates the development of students as individuals, as contributors to society and as contributors to the economy (figure 1). Building on this rationale, the Syllabus comprises four main dimensions (p.5):

- Area 1: Food, Nutrition, and Health
- Area 2: Family Wellbeing
- Area 3: Financial Literacy and Consumer Education
- Area 4: Sustainable Living and Effective Management of Resources.

Figure 1 *The Rationale for the Secondary Home Economics Syllabus in Malta*

Home Economics – Rationale

Home Economics (HE) is a multi-disciplinary field of study that seeks to promote optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families, and communities. It is concerned with meeting the challenges of everyday living in modern society. Furthermore, it provides a balance between theoretical understandings and practical actions in everyday situations. HE encompasses the learning and mastery of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and competencies that enable students to develop:

- **As individuals by:** helping them to become health literate to be able to address health problems and issues, making responsible informed choices about their food and diet, thus enhancing their potential to improve their health and wellbeing;
- **As contributors to society by:** helping them realise their responsibility to ensure that the community is kept healthy, safe, and secure, becoming effective communicators, making them aware of values and lifestyles that are different from their own, and helping them make meaningful decisions in family relationships taking into consideration the ever-changing nature of families and parenting in today's society;
- **As contributors to the economy by:** guiding them to enhance their ability to become cautious, competent consumers and manage their resources in an efficient, effective, and sustainable manner; making informed choices in relation to the environment not only within their immediate context but also in the future; promoting financial literacy as a salient contributor towards the achievement and maintenance of the improved quality of life and nurturing a creative entrepreneurial mind-set.

Source: Adapted from Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation; Department of Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and Employability. (2024). Year 11 Home Economics Learning and Assessment Programme.

Assessment of Learning in relation to these dimensions is based heavily on continuous and formative evaluation to help learners identify their strengths and work on their weaknesses, thus consolidating what has been learned. The assessments reflect the active pedagogical approach and include, among others: performance tasks that fulfil specific assignment briefs; evaluation exercises that are completed after learners participate in a food-related preparation session, experiment or investigation; on site visits with tasks and reflection; research or project work whereby the learners have the opportunity to meld knowledge, skills and attitudes into

a complete package, or product, with individual style. Thus, the HE Secondary syllabus can be said to have both a utilitarian focus and an education for human flourishing focus, and the types of learning outcomes and assessments are reflective of both.

A vision to promote learning for holistic wellbeing is also evident in the B.Sc. (Hons) Home Economics degree offered by the University of Malta (UM) (2026a), as well as in the Masters in Teaching and Learning in Home Economics (University of Malta, 2026b). It has also been portrayed in a review of various research studies conducted by students at undergraduate, graduate and doctorate level (Piscopo et al., 2019). This review demonstrated how HE curricula and teacher training have developed in relation to contextual changes in society. It also showed how HE research can offer evidence in a variety of domains in order to inform curricular decisions in the area and to influence and advocate for effective policies and structures in education, family, health and consumer affairs among others. The authors concluded that this is in line with the HE goal of empowering individuals, families and communities to achieve the best possible level of wellbeing whether through facilitative environments, services and policies, or individual actions for behaviour change.

The international context

A research study by Haapaniemi et al. (2022) involved conducting a review of recent dissertations across the Nordic-Baltic region where the focus was on HE education. The researchers' three analytical questions were: 1) For whom was the HE Education relevant? 2) What was the content being covered in HE Education? 3) How could HE be taught? Their main conclusions were that HE content needs to be in tune with societal changes to decide in an informed manner what to teach in HE and how. The researchers also recommended that HE Education should use a variety of teaching and learning tools and exploratory learning tasks to nurture and strengthen students' critical thinking and reflective skills.

Nõmmik et al. (2025) conducted an extensive mapping exercise of HE Education across European countries, with a particular focus on public schools. They found that, out of 44 countries, HE was an independent compulsory subject in 9 countries, a combined compulsory subject in 12 countries, a limited compulsory subject in 3 countries and not offered in 20 countries. These numbers indicate that for just over 50% of European nations HE is still a component of the national curriculum, though at different levels of entitlement, type of integration and target age groups.

As can be seen from table 1, much of the content which is covered in the different countries reflects the multi-disciplinary nature of HE and its location within the Human Sciences as described in the IFHE Position Statement (2008). It also addresses contemporary global challenges as similarly emphasised in the IFHE statement. Many topics are covered in each broad theme; although for some themes countries differ in their emphasis. For example, one

country might emphasise household management from a life skills perspective and the other from the home maintenance perspective. Or one country might delve deeply into garment making, whilst another country omits it completely from the syllabus. Indeed, topics which were less emphasised, or sometimes excluded in specific countries were food science, household management, planning living spaces, HE in the community (community service activities), family roles and social relationships, and textiles (the latter two because they were possibly taught elsewhere in other subjects). According to the IFHE (2008) Position Statement, cultural nuances in the curriculum are necessary to reflect sensitivity. Indeed, the Statement repeatedly emphasises that although HE shares universal concerns, such as shelter, food, care, resource management and wellbeing, its expression is culturally situated based on, for example, national and regional cultural values, gender roles, food traditions and educational priorities.

Table 1 also shows broader links which emerged from the mapping of the various syllabuses. These can be seen as fulfilling the OECD Education for Flourishing goals since they are about personal growth and wellbeing, whilst also fostering social and ethical aspects of equality, respect, and development through creativity and innovation. Akin to the flourishing framework, there is a strong emphasis on active learning through experiential learning, inquiry-based learning and project-based learning, manifested in multiple approaches ranging from critical reflective exercises, to hands-on practical or experimentation work, to project work within the school community or beyond.

Whereas the Nõmmik et al. (2025) study looked at the current HE education provision across Europe, the Delphi study by Erjavšek and Kostanjevec (2026) served to identify the perceptions of teachers, parents and students as to the areas of HE education that are important for a quality of life in modern society and what needed to be included in the HE curriculum. Findings showed that all the stakeholders considered nutrition, health, wellbeing, environmental responsibility, financial literacy, textile literacy and social and practical life skills as essential components of HE education. Adults particularly emphasised that students should acquire competencies relevant to everyday life, singling out understanding and skills related to health and wellbeing, environment and consumption, family and social skills. In contrast, the findings suggested that students awarded less value to certain content areas which teachers and parents perceived as critical for daily life and long-term wellbeing, such as family relations and social competencies. This discrepancy in valuation highlights “the importance of incorporating multiple perspectives in curriculum renewal to ensure relevance, engagement, and long-term applicability” (Erjavšek & Kostanjevec, 2026, p. 46).

Table 1 *Home Economics Curricula Across Europe**

Theme as per IFHE (2008)	Example topics	Linked broader concepts	Delivery
Food Nutrition and Health	Balanced and healthy nutrition, meal preparation, hygiene and safety	Life skills	Critical evaluation
Food Culture and Etiquette	Local food culture, festive meals, seasonal eating, social aspects of dining, shared meals etiquette	Wellbeing	Practical skills (food, textiles, budgeting)
Food Science	Nutrients, scientific processes behind food preparation, cooking and quality, preservation	Sustainability	Experiments
Consumerism and Consumer Science	Financial literacy, budgeting, consumer rights, critical evaluation of advertising and media	Equality	Project work
Textiles and Clothing	Fashion design, garment sustainability, sewing, embroidery, garment making, textile care	Respectful communication	Connecting personal skills with civic engagement
Household Management	Running a household effectively (time management, organising, cleaning, safe use of appliances, budgeting)	Informed and ethical decision-making	
Housing and Shelter	Planning living spaces	Creativity	
Human Development and Family Studies	Personal growth, family life and social relationships, family roles, equality in household chores	Innovation	
Community Services	School gardens, local sustainability projects, student-run markets		

* Table created from text in the report by Nõmmik et al. (2025)

A study of practitioners' perspectives on HE Education in Malta

Spanning nearly two centuries, HE Education in Malta has developed through intersections between education policy, social reform, public health needs and changing family life, while also being shaped by British educational influences and Mediterranean cultural traditions (Portelli, 2016). The HE syllabuses were recently revised as a result of the broader national reform of the National Curriculum (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012), with the specific syllabuses for different Years being rolled out over a few years (Department for Curriculum, Lifelong Learning, and Employability, 2026). Given this context, the authors of this article conducted a barometer-type study as an initial exploration of perspectives of HE education in Malta, beginning by giving voice to educators themselves.

Study aim and research questions

Motivated by the outcomes of the informal workshop described earlier, the rapid changes in family life and societal health, economic and housing needs, and the introduction of the National Education Strategy 2024–2030 (MESYRI, 2023), which identifies learner wellbeing as a strategic objective, this study explored HE educators' perceptions of the HE curriculum for Maltese Secondary schools (ages 11–15), focusing on its perceived relevance, utility and status. The specific study research questions were:

- How do Maltese HE educators perceive the relevance and utility of the HE curriculum content to the current needs, future needs (as parents and/or family members) and employability of learners?
- How do Maltese HE educators perceive the status of HE within their own work setting and in society in general?
- Which aspects of the HE curriculum would HE educators retain, revise or update, reduce in coverage, remove completely?
- Which pedagogies do educators feel are most effective to teach HE to Secondary students and which challenges do they face in delivering HE education?
- What do HE educators feel is the priority content for future HE education and how do they envisage a redesigned HE?
- What do HE educators feel are the key priorities for ensuring the future of HE education itself?

Methodology

This study involved a simple survey via an online questionnaire targeting HE educators. It was conducted towards the end of the scholastic year 2025-26 so that the educators could look back on their experience for the year with a reflective frame of mind. The survey ran for 5 days in the 3rd week of June 2026.

Study sample

The target group for the survey were HE teachers working in Secondary schools, or with Secondary level students, as well as other HE educators who had experience working in Secondary schools. Student-teachers of HE who had experienced a field placement at a Secondary school were also eligible. Experience working with Secondary school students in Malta was, therefore, the main inclusion criterion.

The sample was recruited via a mailshot to all part-time HE lecturers at the UM, most of whom are also practising teachers in Secondary schools, and via a post on the 'Home Economists in Action' professional association's Facebook group. Snowballing was encouraged, whereby respondents were asked to share the survey link with HE educator colleagues and friends.

Survey tool

The survey tool was purposefully developed by the researchers to answer the research questions. The researchers did not use a previously validated tool; however, the questions were informed by the studies of Nõmmik et al. (2025) and Erjavšek and Kostanjevec (2026), together with the informal SWOT analysis which had been conducted in 2024. The survey domains focused on: the respondent's work-related profile; HE relevance, employment prospects and status; HE curriculum content revision; HE effective pedagogies and teaching challenges; Vision for HE content and HE as a school subject. The survey comprised both close-ended and open-ended questions, urging the respondents to explain their answers further. It was pilot-tested with two educators and no changes were deemed necessary. The survey took about 6-8 minutes to complete.

The survey was fully anonymous and, after reading the preamble, individuals could opt out by merely leaving the survey or ticking that they did not agree to participate. Those who ticked that they agreed to participate were transferred to the questionnaire. This was also deemed as informed consent to participate in the study. The study complied with the ethical approval process of the Faculty of Education (ID no: EDUC-2026-00702).

Data analysis

Once the survey period closed, the responses were transferred to an Excel sheet. Simple frequencies were calculated immediately through the Google Form platform and converted into tables by the researchers. The responses for each of the open-ended questions were transferred to a word document (raw data with no respondent profile information) and each set was analysed for recurring words/ideas. For this initial basic analysis an AI tool (ChatGPT) was used, prompted to find patterns in the responses and identify predominant answers for each question. To ensure validity and mitigate bias, all AI-generated summaries were vetted

by the researchers and matched manually through a close reading of the original text. AI was used for a second time, to analyse the summaries further and obtain emerging themes within the broader themes of the study research questions. Once again, the researchers scrutinised the suggested themes to ensure that they captured well the respondents' answers. Eventually, some of the qualitative data was also presented in tables to classify the breadth of responses for particular questions.

Results

Sample description

The sample comprised 34 teachers, predominantly female (91.25%), reflecting the proportionate gender division of HE teachers in Malta (table 2). The sample was quite evenly split across years of teaching experience, with just over half of the sample (53%) having 11 or more years of HE teaching experience and just under half (47%) having less than 11 years of experience. This augured well for a diversity of perspectives based on teaching experience and proximity in age to the Secondary level students and their lifestyle characteristics.

Table 2 *Study Sample Demographics*

Characteristics	% (N=34)
Gender of respondent	
Male	8.8
Female	91.2
Other	0
Prefer not to say	0
Years of teaching experience in Home Economics	
Student teacher Teaching Practice period	17.6
0-5 years	14.7
6-10 years	14.7
11-20 years	32.4
21+ years	20.6
School sector (current/most recent)	
State	67.6
Church	20.6
Independent	5.9
Junior College	2.9
Tertiary	2.9

Table 2 *Study Sample Demographics (CONTINUED)*

Gender of students taught (current/ most recent):	% (N=34)
Single gender: Male	14.7
Single gender: Female	17.6
Co-educational	67.6

The majority of the teachers (67.6%) taught in State schools, which is the largest sector in the education system, and consequently they worked in a co-educational environment. The second largest group was from the Church sector, which schools are gender segregated, but the sample had teachers from both girls' and boys' school. Finally, a few teachers were from the Independent sector which is also co-educational. The proportion of teachers from Church and Independent schools was fairly representative of the actual proportion of these schools in the education system.

Quantitative and qualitative findings

The quantitative and qualitative results will be presented in an integrated manner, combining responses to questions with similar foci. Apart from showing numeric data from the quantitative responses, the narrative will also describe patterns in the qualitative responses, indicating a magnitude of strength where beneficial to do so. Some verbatim from the open-ended questions will also be presented.

Perceptions of relevance of HE education: As can be seen in table 3, a clear majority of respondents felt that HE education was 'extremely' or 'very' relevant to meet students' current (85.3%) and future (94.1%) needs. They described how it equips students with essential real-world skills needed for everyday living, including good nutrition, healthy lifestyle choices, childcare, first aid, budgeting, financial literacy, consumer awareness, informed consumer decision-making and household management. Many believed these skills are increasingly important in addressing contemporary challenges, such as obesity, sustainability, rising living costs, increasing independence among adolescents, as well as a good preparation to support family wellbeing and responsible parenthood. Respondents highlighted that several of these skills are not adequately addressed elsewhere in the curriculum or within families. Indeed, several educators expressed concern about an apparent decline in young people's practical abilities. One female teacher's comment encapsulated these sentiments:

"It [HE] is the foundation for independent living. It equips students with the practical life skills and resilience required to navigate complex real-world challenges.... One of the very few subjects that gives real life skills to students -- skills that we see increasingly diminishing."

The respondents advocated for greater emphasis on experiential learning, particularly in lower Secondary years, suggesting that practical activities increase engagement and demonstrate relevance more effectively than theory alone. They recommended this is done alongside curricular adaptations that reflect contemporary modern lifestyles, societal changes and emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence. Respondents frequently linked HE to self-sufficiency, resilience and readiness for everyday challenges. However, some felt that whereas teachers clearly understand the subject's value, students may not always recognise its relevance due to assessment pressures, societal perceptions, or the way content is delivered.

Perceptions of employment utility of HE Education: In contrast to the educators' highly positive perception for relevance, there were a range of perceptions with respect to HE education and use for future employment. Respondents were divided quite equally along the continuum from 'extremely useful' to 'slightly useful', though nobody opted for 'not useful'.

The most frequently cited careers were teaching and education-related professions, followed by occupations in nutrition, dietetics and health promotion, suggesting that these remain the most visible and well-established employment pathways associated with HE in Malta. Many respondents also mentioned careers in nursing, childcare, social care and family support services, highlighting the subject's relevance to caring professions. Fewer respondents associated HE with opportunities in the hospitality and food sectors, including chefs, catering, food styling and food product development. One-off responses referred to careers linked to consumer affairs, policy development, sustainability, entrepreneurship, textiles, interior design and the media. Of note is some respondents' expressed concern that HE does not always provide a direct pathway into a specific career or profession and often requires further specialisation at tertiary level.

Perceptions of the status of HE: The quantitative responses were heavily swayed to the perception of HE as having a 'moderate' to 'very low' status, both in schools and in society in general. 'Moderate' status (61.8%) predominated for schools; but 'very low' or 'low' status (52.9%) predominated for society. Respondents generally perceived HE as holding a 'moderate' or 'low' status within schools, largely due to enduring misconceptions about its purpose and scope. One female teacher described her colleagues' limited understanding: "Labelled as *tat-tisjir* [cooking subject]. No one believes the amount of topics we teach until we show them our file + HW + exam paper." Indeed, many educators reported that the subject is often associated with cooking, seen as intended for girls, regarded as an easy option, or recommended primarily to lower-achieving students, thereby diminishing its academic standing. Many also felt that these perceptions obscure the subject's interdisciplinary nature and its contribution to health, family wellbeing, consumer literacy and everyday living.

Table 3 *Perceptions of Relevance, Employment Utility and Status of Home Economics (N=34)*

Perception	Extremely relevant	Very relevant	Moderately relevant	Slightly relevant	Not relevant
Relevance to needs	%	%	%	%	%
Relevance of Home Economics to the current needs of today's learners as adolescents in contemporary society	55.9	29.4	14.7	0	0
Relevance of Home Economics to the future needs of today's learners as parents and/or family members	64.7	29.4	5.9	0	0
	Extremely useful	Very useful	Moderately useful	Slightly useful	Not useful
Utility for employability	%	%	%	%	%
Utility of learners' current Home Economics education to their future employment	20.6	32.4	26.5	20.6	0
	Very high status	High status	Moderate status	Low status	Very low status
Status by context	%	%	%	%	%
Current status of Home Economics as a school subject in respondent's work/study context	0	5.9	61.8	17.6	14.7
Current status of Home Economics as a Secondary school subject in Maltese society	0	5.9	41.2	44.1	8.8

The introduction of Vocational subjects and the increasing range of subject choices were also perceived as contributing to declining enrolment in the HE specialisation route in Year 9 (age 13). Vocational subjects were frequently described as offering clearer employment pathways and being perceived by students and parents as more contemporary, attractive or career-oriented. In contrast, students and parents were seen as having limited awareness of the diverse progression routes and career opportunities associated with HE. Respondents therefore highlighted the need for greater advocacy, improved public awareness and stronger promotion of the subject's educational, employment and professional value.

Perceptions of need for review of specific HE curriculum content: Table 4 portrays that 'Health, Hygiene and Safety' was unequivocally the topic most favoured to be retained, as indicated by 82.4% of the respondents. At the other end of the spectrum, 'Family and Relationships' (20.6%), plus 'Child Development and Childcare' (23.5%) were perceived as requiring reduction of coverage in the curriculum. Collectively, respondents acknowledged the value of retaining many aspects of the HE curriculum, lamenting, however, that some aspects were quite outdated and in need of modernisation. In fact, many respondents suggested updating existing content to reflect contemporary lifestyles, technologies, consumer practices and family realities. Housing, household appliances, banking practices and food preparation methods were often cited as areas requiring revision. In contrast, several topics were identified as requiring reduction or removal; particularly highly technical food commodity content (e.g. fish classification and milk products), investment-related topics, and some aspects of family studies which teachers felt may cause discomfort among students, or overlap with other school subjects.

A reasoned explanation was presented by one of the male respondents:

"Milk and milk products in Year 9 needs to be reduced - too much detail - ...filleting of fish in Year 9 is irrelevant. Gadgets and appliances should reflect today's technologies, and not remain out-dated - for ex. hoods and grills should be revised to today's technologies like in-built hoods in hobs. The family unit should be reduced; mentioning of different types of families and ways to overcome/solve issues in relationships should be enough; comparison between families is strongly suggested to be removed as students feel uncomfortable when comparing fostering with single parent families, or divorced... teachers do too. It's a hot topic to discuss. Year 9 syllabus needs to be reduced as there are too many topics and less opportunity to include activities and make lessons fun."

Table 4 *Perceptions of Review Need for Specific Home Economics Curriculum Content (N=34)*

	Kept as is	Revised / Updated	Reduced	Removed
Home Economics Content Area	%	%	%	%
Food and Nutrition	47.1	44.1	8.8	0.0
Meal Planning	50.0	38.2	11.8	0.0
Housing	41.2	47.1	8.8	2.9
Kitchen Planning	44.1	35.3	17.6	2.9
Sustainable Consumption	50.0	41.2	8.8	0.0
Home Management	38.2	55.9	5.9	0.0
Choice of Appliances	41.2	38.2	14.7	5.9
Health, Hygiene and Safety	82.4	17.6	0.0	0.0
Family and Relationships	32.4	44.1	20.6	2.9
Child Development and Childcare	47.1	29.4	23.5	0.0
Ageing and Elderly Care	38.2	47.1	14.7	0.0
Consumer Education	67.6	29.4	2.9	0.0
Financial Literacy and Budgeting	44.1	50.0	5.9	0.0
Clothing choice and care	47.1	35.3	8.8	0.0

At the same time, as indicated in table 5, respondents also advocated adding several topics to the syllabus. These included emerging or highly popular topics, such as financial literacy, digital wellness, mental health first aid, the Mediterranean diet and sustainable consumption. Practical life skills associated with adulthood, such as taxes, bank loans and government schemes, were also considered important additions. However, the strongest theme emerging from the qualitative responses was the need to reduce excessive theoretical content and repetition to allow greater emphasis on practical and experiential learning. Overall, respondents appeared to favour a more streamlined, modernised and skills-oriented curriculum.

Effective teaching and learning pedagogies for HE: There was very strong consensus among respondents regarding the most suitable pedagogies for contemporary HE education. The educators predominantly favoured active, experiential and learner-centred pedagogies for HE. The dominant view was that the applied nature of the subject requires teaching approaches that are practical, authentic and closely connected to learners' everyday lives. Mentioned approaches included experiments, cooking sessions and simulations through learning by doing. Many respondents also highlighted the value of inquiry-based, problem-solving and project-based learning, such as case studies and conducting

interviews. These were seen to encourage learners to think critically, apply knowledge and engage with real-life situations. Off-site and community-based learning, including visits, interactions with professionals and exposure to workplaces, were considered experiential opportunities, as well as effective ways of demonstrating the relevance of HE beyond the classroom. Technology-mediated learning was generally supported, although one participant expressed concern about the increasing use of AI for coursework and homework tasks. In general, respondents advocated for a varied pedagogical repertoire that promotes engagement, authenticity and meaningful learning.

Table 5 *Educator-Suggested Topics to Add to the HE Curriculum*

Diet and food production	Health	Personal finance and home purchase	Digital and online world	Home management
Mediterranean diet principles	Mental health and mental health first aid	Reading payslips	Online and digital literacy	Time-saving household strategies
Quick, nutritious meal preparation	Digital wellness	Understanding taxation	Influence of social media personalities and influencers	Correct disposal of common and less common household waste materials
Home gardening and micro-farming		Cryptocurrencies, stocks and bonds		Sustainable consumption across different lifestyle behaviours
		Home purchasing and home loans		
		Government schemes		

Challenges faced in delivering HE education: There was strong agreement in the educators' responses on challenges to implementation of quality HE education. The responses revolved around three main themes. Firstly, respondents overwhelmingly identified time constraints and an overloaded syllabus as the greatest challenge in delivering high-quality HE education. Many participants reported feeling pressured to cover extensive theoretical content within limited lesson time, leaving insufficient opportunities for experiential activities, discussion

and revision. Several noted that lessons are frequently shortened by school routines and interruptions, further exacerbating time pressures.

A second dominant theme concerned student attitudes, motivation and engagement. Teachers reported that some students perceive HE as an easy subject or show disinterest in theoretical components. They may also exhibit limited ownership of learning and struggle to meet deadlines. Teachers also highlighted class management problems emerging from changing attention spans, disruptive behaviour and a tendency among students to want to engage only with assessed work. Several respondents also observed that students increasingly lack basic practical skills acquired traditionally at home which influenced the efficiency of lessons involving cooking.

Resource-related issues formed a third major theme. Participants referred to small HE laboratories, shared facilities, insufficient equipment, lack of funding to buy certain food or other products as resources, and the absence of laboratory technicians, all of which were primarily perceived as limiting the implementation of experiential and practical learning activities.

Less frequently mentioned challenges included perceptions of HE as a low-status subject, overlap with other curriculum areas, language barriers, parental attitudes, and limited support from school leadership teams.

A desired future for HE Education: A final set of questions were more forward-looking and asked teachers to identify the core priorities that should shape the future identity and sustainability of HE education. Again, there was remarkable convergence among respondents who seemed to agree not only on what HE should become, but also on how that transformation might realistically be achieved; that is, through a combination of curriculum renewal, innovative pedagogy, enhanced public visibility and supportive educational policy.

Similar to what had been indicated by the educators as potential changes in the current HE curriculum, here respondents identified food literacy, financial literacy and sustainability as the principal priorities for the future of HE education. Respondents described a future curriculum that equips learners with practical competencies for independent living, informed consumer behaviour and lifelong wellbeing, while also addressing emerging societal challenges such as media influence, use of digital technologies and responsible consumption and citizenship. Collectively, these responses seemed to be recommending a shift away from a traditional home management orientation towards a broader vision of HE as an education for sustainable, healthy, informed and resilient living throughout the lifespan. One female teacher offered the following direction:

“I believe the key priorities for the future of HE education should be to prepare students for real-life situations and modern-day challenges. The subject should continue teaching essential practical skills, while also including topics such as financial literacy, budgeting, taxes, housing, consumer awareness, waste management, sustainability, social media influence and healthy lifestyles. There should also be a greater focus on time-saving strategies, modern cooking methods, special diets and the safe use of household appliances. The subject should aim to develop independent, responsible and informed individuals who are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed for everyday life.”

From a pedagogy perspective, many educators highlighted the continuing relevance of practical life skills, including food preparation, sewing, ironing, cleaning and household management, which were viewed as essential for self-sufficiency and family wellbeing. A few educators recommended adopting a more modern yet sensitive approach to teaching about building caring relationships and fostering mental wellbeing.

Notably, several educators suggested a substantial reduction in theoretical content and assessment by memorisation in favour of inquiry, experimentation, authentic tasks and student-led learning. Respondents argued that advances in AI lessen the importance of recall-based learning and strengthen the case for competency-based approaches. Some respondents acknowledged that the future of HE depends on actual improvements within classrooms, including innovative pedagogies, greater teacher collaboration and more visible community engagement. One female teacher expressed her desire and a logical solution as follows:

“In 10-years-time, I wish to see this subject as compulsory for all students from primary to secondary education. I believe it is an asset for students in all aspects of life. One should see what was not given at school, and what one was not prepared for when facing life and reality, and add it to the subject.”

Another female teacher made an extensive wish-list of the desirable changes and the possible outcome:

“If I had the opportunity to redesign HE for the next 10 years, I would make it much more hands-on and enjoyable for students. While theory is important, I believe students learn best when they are actively involved in their learning. I would like every lesson to include practical activities, experiments, games, challenges, or cooking sessions that make learning fun and memorable. I would also ensure that teachers have all the resources, equipment, ingredients, technology and funding they need to deliver

engaging lessons. Too often, good ideas are limited by lack of resources. By making lessons more interactive and providing proper support, I believe more students would choose HE and see its value. My goal would be for students to leave each lesson having learned important life skills while also enjoying the experience.”

A number of strong themes emerged around future-proofing HE as a school subject, involving greater advocacy, visibility and policy support. On a micro level within the school setting, the most frequently suggested strategy was marketing and awareness-raising among students, parents and Guidance and Counselling teachers. The latter were perceived as strongly influencing subject choices, whilst sometimes holding misconceptions about the subject. Several respondents stressed the importance of strengthening progression routes and professional opportunities, including postgraduate programmes, collaborations with universities abroad, and improved career guidance to demonstrate the subject's diverse pathways beyond teaching.

On a more macro level, many educators suggested a rebranding of the subject, including a possible name change, to overcome stereotypes associated with HE and better communicate its broader educational purpose. Respondents emphasised the value of using modern communication channels and public engagement, suggesting television and radio programmes, blogs, social media campaigns with TikTok-style content, and national awareness initiatives to showcase the extent and relevance of HE and revitalise its image.

Another dominant theme was the call for policy changes to guarantee entitlement to HE throughout compulsory schooling, with many participants advocating its introduction at Primary level and continuation from Year 7 to Year 11. Respondents believed that exposure from an early age would help normalise life skills education and improve uptake of HE at Secondary level. They also considered the knowledge and skills gained through HE education as essential for all learners, regardless of future careers.

Discussion

This study explored Maltese HE educators’ perspectives on the current state and future direction of HE education. The findings are discussed in relation to the research questions, existing literature and the OECD Education for Flourishing and other relevant policy frameworks.

Home Economics as an education for contemporary living

The findings suggest that contemporary HE education in Malta remains closely aligned with the vision articulated by the IFHE (2008) and the foundational principles outlined by Henderson (1902). Educators viewed HE as highly relevant because it develops knowledge, skills and values that support personal wellbeing while fostering social, economic and environmental responsibility.

This perception reflects the rationale of the Maltese HE syllabus, which aims to develop health-literate individuals capable of contributing positively to society and the economy (MESYRI, 2023). It is also consistent with McGregor's (2012) description of HE as a life-centric discipline and with McGregor and Piscopo's (2022) emphasis on both "caring for" and "caring about" people and society. Participants regarded HE as a vehicle for developing practical life competencies that support wellbeing across the lifespan, including future family and caregiving roles.

Educators' recommendations for curriculum renewal further reinforced this perspective. While supporting the retention of core HE content, they advocated updating the curriculum to address emerging concerns, such as mental health, digital wellbeing, social media influence and sustainable lifestyles. They also emphasised competencies associated with adulthood and independent living, including financial literacy, taxation, home ownership and consumer decision-making.

These recommendations closely mirror international findings. Haapaniemi et al. (2022), Nõmmik et al. (2025) and Erjavšek and Kostanjevec (2026) all argue that HE curricula should remain responsive to societal change while maintaining a strong focus on nutrition, health, sustainability, financial literacy and family life. The Maltese findings therefore suggest that HE continues to fulfil its traditional role of preparing individuals for everyday living, while adapting to contemporary social, technological and economic realities.

Maltese educators also called for a reconceptualisation of home management. Rather than focusing solely on household operations, they favoured greater emphasis on time management, wellbeing and everyday life competencies that promote self-sufficiency, independent living and family wellbeing. Interestingly, Nõmmik et al. (2025) reported that some countries have removed Home Management from their curricula, while Food Science has been reduced or eliminated in others. Similarly, Maltese educators advocated reducing theoretical Food Science content to create more opportunities for practical food preparation.

Family relationships emerged as a more contested area. While some educators favoured reducing coverage of family relationships and child development because of their potentially sensitive nature and overlap with other subject curricula, others viewed caring relationships as fundamental to HE and argued for their retention. This aligns with international findings showing that human development and family studies remain common HE curriculum components (Nõmmik et al., 2025); however, parents tend to value family and social skills more highly than students themselves (Erjavšek & Kostanjevec, 2026). As Pendergast (2010) argues, future-proofing HE requires responsiveness to changing family structures and social realities.

Strengthening active pedagogies for authentic learning

The OECD (2025) identifies active learning as a cornerstone of education for human flourishing, a view strongly reflected in this study. Educators consistently advocated for practical, inquiry-based and experiential approaches, arguing that they make learning more meaningful, develop transferable life skills and encourage uptake of HE at Secondary level. Food preparation was regarded as particularly important, but participants also highlighted problem-solving, experimentation, case studies and off-site learning as ways of fostering critical reflection and informed decision-making. Many observed that adolescents increasingly lack practical skills traditionally acquired at home, reinforcing the need for experiential learning.

Overall, educators argued that applying knowledge through practical activities develops competencies central to the IFHE (2008) mission which lead to smart and responsible action. These findings are consistent with those of Haapaniemi et al. (2022), Nõmmik et al. (2025) and Smith (1991), all of whom emphasise exploratory and project-based learning as a means of developing reflective thinkers capable of addressing complex everyday challenges. Collectively, the evidence suggests that HE educators are well positioned to enact the OECD's (2025) human flourishing vision of active learning, while nurturing purposeful, socially responsible and civically engaged individuals.

The HE status paradox

The study findings confirmed that HE educators in Malta believe strongly in the worth of HE Education on multiple fronts. However, their passion is tempered by the low status of HE which they believe exists in the school community and in society in general. This can be seen as a paradox – high relevance yet low status -- which creates a tension among HE educators. The causes are structural and social. At subject specialisation stage, HE is often recommended as a soft option for low ability students. It is viewed as a subject for girls and cooking-oriented, and is

sometimes not afforded the same kind of resources as the newer Vocational subjects. Collectively, these lower the status of the subject within the school and in the community. Sakuwunda et al. (2023) and Uwadiae and Ehimare (2025) have similarly shown that inadequate teaching and learning resources, untrained teachers, societal misconceptions about the subject, and negative attitudes of parents toward the teaching of HE in Secondary schools adversely affect the subject in Ghana and Nigeria, respectively. In contrast, Nanayakkara et al. (2018) have demonstrated that there is widespread support for HE education among young adults and parents in Australia, given their belief that HE is of similar importance to health, physical education and digital technologies.

The HE educators in this study believed that a name change could help clarify the content of HE as a school subject and help the subject be more attractive. Whether the name was changed or not, they felt that a strong marketing campaign was required at the school and societal level, using different traditional and social media channels to target students, Guidance teachers, school leadership, as well as the general public. The Faculty of Education at the UM, had in fact changed the name of its degree to Nutrition, Family and Consumer Studies (NFCS) in 2007; however, it had reverted back to Home Economics in 2016. Adopting the name NFCS happened after lengthy discussions with many stakeholders and the choice and sequence of words were purposefully selected to offer clarity, but also because of marketability and local positive image of the word 'Nutrition' (Piscopo & Mugliett, 2012). In 2016, the BSc (Hons) Home Economics was launched and NFCS was slowly weaned out. Reverting to using the name HE after just a few years was influenced by an international movement among the HE community to strengthen the professional identity of HE on a global level through consistency in nomenclature among others (Davis, 2008; IFHE, 2008).

One of the issues which emerged from the study was that HE teachers themselves appeared to perceive being a teacher or nutritionist as the dominant professional identities of HE graduates, while newer and emerging job opportunities (food innovation, sustainability, policy development, entrepreneurship) were recognised by only a few respondents. This may be a legacy of many of the HE teachers' own training when the only option with a HE Advanced level certificate was to follow a Bachelor of Education in Home Economics, leading to a teaching job. It is only since 2016 that a B.Sc. (Hons) Home Economics has been offered. The B.Sc. is the preferred degree for entry into the Masters in Teaching and Learning for Home Economics, but also opens the door to other further studies and career paths in Malta and abroad. This finding about the teachers' own restricted perception of HE-related jobs and further studies opportunities suggests that the profession may need to update its own members, as well as communicate its broader advanced study and career possibilities more effectively to prospective students and their parents as this may also enhance the subject's status.

Given the prevailing context, one innovation which might attract Secondary students to choose HE could be the option of combining HE with the Vocational subject 'Retail' at the Secondary level, or even offering such courses through higher education institutions. Fadoju et al. (2026) have discussed the role of digital competencies in enhancing entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and e-commerce skills among HE graduates. They argue that integrating digital tools and skills into HE education will help to foster innovation, economic diversification and wealth creation which prepare individuals for 'modern' work and promote self-reliance. The entrepreneurial route combined with HE education could be an area to strengthen in Malta, also given that one of the goals in *Malta's Strategy for Resilient Food Systems* (Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights, 2025) is to empower small-scale local food producers by fostering innovation and entrepreneurship and enhancing market access. In many European countries, curricula explicitly connect HE with technological and entrepreneurial competencies, emphasising innovation, design processes and links to industries in the food, health, textiles and tourism sectors (Nõmmik et al., 2025).

A collective vision for the future of HE education

The findings support the development of a teacher-informed roadmap for renewing HE education in Malta. Educators envisioned HE as an interdisciplinary subject promoting human and planetary flourishing through resilient, sustainable everyday living. Rather than focusing solely on domestic competencies, HE was viewed as a vehicle for developing informed, reflective and caring citizens who contribute to personal, family, societal and environmental wellbeing. This vision requires a contemporary, skills-oriented curriculum that retains its core foundations while streamlining existing content and incorporating topics relevant to emerging needs.

Sustainability emerged as a central priority. This aligns closely with *Malta's Sustainable Development Vision 2050* (Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, 2018) and reflects the broader international view of HE as a discipline that prepares learners to act responsibly in ecological, economic and social contexts through practical, inquiry-based and critical learning approaches (Nõmmik et al., 2025).

Participants also identified several priorities for maximising the impact of HE education. At policy level, they advocated making HE an entitlement throughout compulsory schooling and increasing investment in facilities, resources and teacher professional development. These recommendations are congruent with *Malta's National Education Strategy 2024–2030*, which highlights learner wellbeing, resilience, adaptability and responses to challenges such as obesity, mental health

concerns and increasing individualism (MESYRI, 2023). The educators' proposed emphasis on food and digital literacy, financial capability, mental wellbeing and sustainability reflects these national priorities.

A second priority was greater visibility for HE education. Participants argued for a coordinated marketing strategy that clearly communicates the subject's aims, content, pedagogical approaches and career pathways to students, parents, educators and the wider public. Such efforts could contribute to a revitalised and more contemporary image of HE.

Figure 2 presents an evidence-based, original integrated model for reimagining HE education in Malta. The model begins with the current context, including curriculum strengths and limitations, status concerns and competition from other subjects. It then proposes a process of renewal involving curriculum reform, pedagogical innovation, teacher professional development, policy support, adequate resourcing and targeted advocacy. Together, these elements can contribute to an improved public image and stronger future for HE education. Guiding this process is the OECD's (2025) *Education for Human Flourishing framework*, adapted to reflect the principles and goals of HE education.

Conclusions and recommendations

The educators in this study regarded HE as highly relevant to contemporary life and to preparing young people for future family and caregiving roles. Yet, despite these potential benefits, the subject continues to face challenges related to status and employability perceptions, curriculum competition and persistent stereotypes. Respondents emphasised that HE offers a rich interdisciplinary curriculum that develops essential life skills, literacies and competencies through active and meaningful learning. They also highlighted the need for stronger advocacy and more effective promotion of the subject within schools and society.

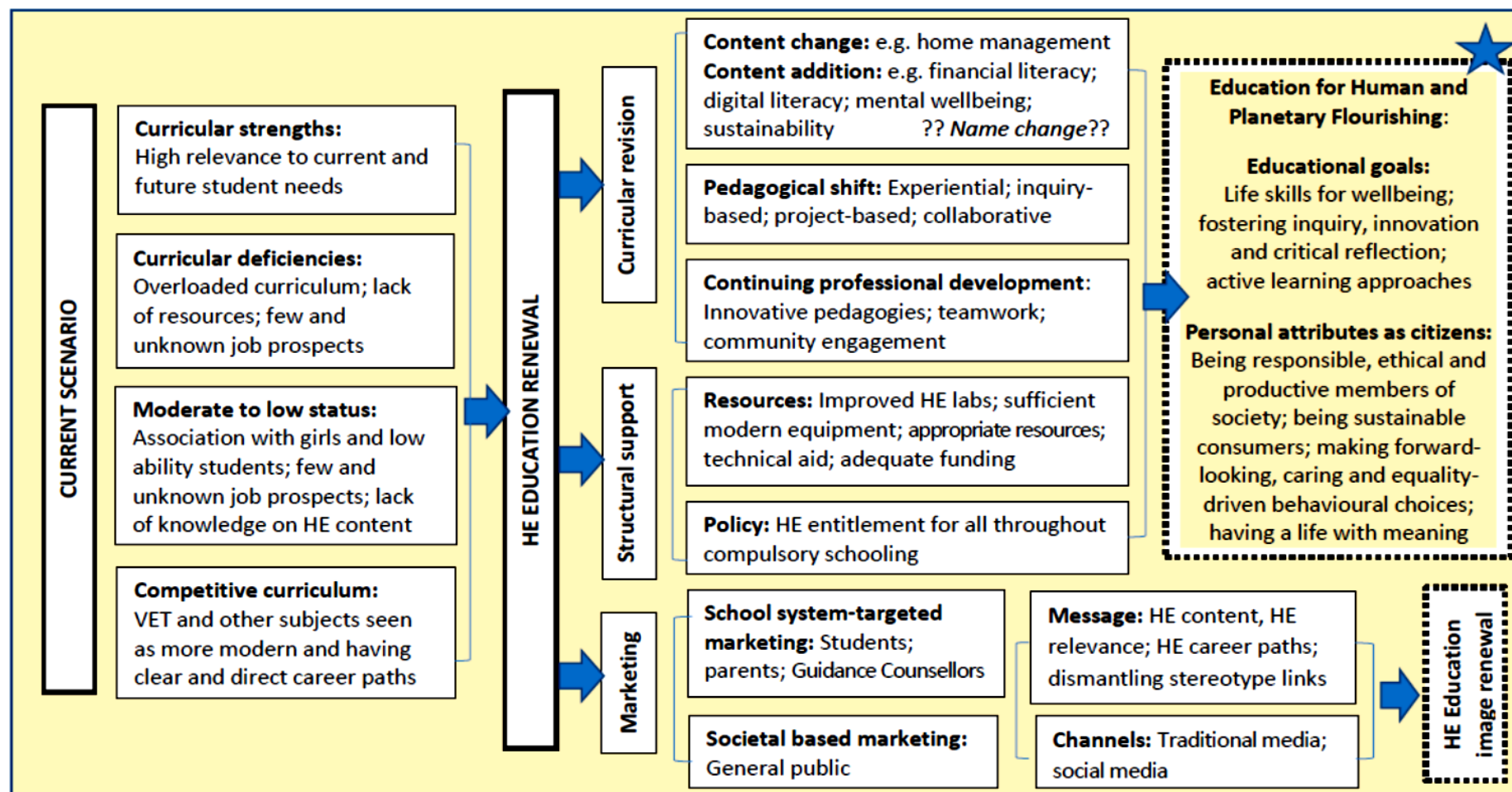
The findings suggest that curriculum renewal should be viewed as an evolution rather than a revolution. Educators largely supported the retention of existing curriculum foundations while advocating for targeted updates to content, pedagogy and assessment to better reflect contemporary realities and future needs. As Malta advances national strategies related to wellbeing, sustainability, food systems and education, HE is well positioned to contribute to these priorities. The OECD's (2025) *Education for Human Flourishing framework* provides a useful reference point for guiding this process.

Whereas this study has served as an efficient preliminary barometer on the current perspectives and ideals regarding HE education, the study's limitations should be acknowledged. The sample was relatively small, data were collected only from

educators, and responses may have been influenced by end-of-year fatigue. Thus, the results are not generalisable to the larger community of HE educators. Additionally, the researchers' positionality (as HE education practitioners for over 30 years) may have influenced how they approached and engaged with the research problem, data collection tool and analysis and interpretation of results, although reflexivity was adopted throughout to mitigate potential bias.

In the future one could conduct a large-scale mixed-methods study to obtain deeper insights from various interested parties, including Primary and Secondary students and parents, as well as representatives of government entities and industry. This would offer a much more comprehensive picture of the current scenario, exploring barriers, facilitators and priorities for the way forward. Meanwhile, the current findings offer sufficient evidence to inform incremental curriculum improvements and broader strategic planning.

Figure 2 Re-imagining Home Economics Education in Malta



The proposed integrated framework for renewal of HE education in Malta could help guide discussion among curriculum developers, teacher educators and professional HE bodies. A steering committee could be set up to coordinate this process, identify strategic partnerships and support implementation. Central to success would be the active involvement and ownership of HE educators themselves. Particular attention should also be given to developing a targeted marketing strategy that raises awareness of the subject's value, content and career opportunities among students, parents, educators and the wider public. HE students themselves could play an important role in these initiatives, contributing authenticity, creativity and contemporary perspectives.

HE education in Malta appears to be at an important juncture. The challenge is not whether renewal is needed, but how it can be achieved in ways that preserve the discipline's strengths while responding to emerging societal needs. HE educators are among the few professionals specifically prepared to teach for everyday living, drawing upon interdisciplinary knowledge and pedagogical expertise to support learners in navigating food environments, financial systems, family relationships, consumer cultures and sustainability challenges. Through this preparation, they are well positioned to facilitate learning experiences that integrate knowledge, practical skills, values and critical reflection, enabling individuals to make informed decisions, care for themselves and others and manage resources responsibly.

HE education is also uniquely placed to translate national and international policy aspirations into meaningful everyday practices, equipping learners with the competencies required to engage with sustainable consumption, environmental protection, healthy eating, active ageing and lifelong education strategies, as well as consumer protection frameworks, financial capability agendas and broader policies aimed at enhancing individual, family and community wellbeing. Few school subjects possess the breadth and applied orientation necessary to bridge the gap between policy intentions and the daily decisions that ultimately determine wellbeing, equity and sustainability outcomes. In this sense, HE may be understood as an education for human flourishing, equipping learners with the capabilities, dispositions and resilience needed to lead practical, meaningful and fulfilling lives while contributing positively to their families, communities and the planet.

In the early 2000s, this essence of HE was captured eloquently by Canadian Home Economists seeking direction for their discipline. They called it: “Wise living with care and connectedness” (McGregor, 2025). Twenty-five years later, this direction still holds even in Malta. Clearly HE education renewal cannot wait. It is time to review, rethink and renew!

References

- Davis, M. L. (2008). On identifying our profession. A response to the IFHE Position Statement -- Home Economics in the 21st century. *International Journal of Home Economics*, 1(1), 10-17. https://www.ifhe.org/fileadmin/user_upload/e_Journal/IJHE_Volume_1.pdf
- Department for Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and Employability. (2026). *Syllabi and learning outcomes*. <https://curriculum.gov.mt/resources/syllabi-and-learning-outcomes/>
- Erjavšek, M., & Kostanjevec, S. (2026). Defining key areas of home economics education based on stakeholders' perceived needs: Results of a Delphi study. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 15(1), 39-51. <https://doi.org/10.12973/euer.15.1.39>.
- Fadoju T. J., Ogunwemimo F. O., & Olatunde, D. O. (2026). Home economics education: Digital competencies of economics diversification for wealth. *Wonder hands a Journal of the School of Secondary Education (Vocational and Technical Education)*, 13(1), 143-148. <https://www.nigerianjournalonline.org/index.php/WONDERHANDS/article/view/6024/5606>
- Haapaniemi, J., Palojoki, P., & Taar, J. (2022). Future directions of home economics education: Nordic-Baltic perspectives. *Journal of Home Economics Education Research*, 34(4s), 71-86. <https://doi.org/10.19031/jkheea.2022.12.34.4s.71>
- Henderson, C. R. (1902). Social conditions affecting the law of domestic life. In E. H. Richards (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Fourth Lake Placid Conference* (pp. 61-72), 16-20 September, 1902, Lake Placid, NY.
- Hira, T. K. (2013). Home Economics literacy: Investing in our future. *Journal of ARAHE*, 20(3), 113-118.
- International Federation for Home Economics. (2008.). *Home economics in the 21st century*. https://www.ifhe.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/IFHE_Position_Paper_HE_21st_Century.pdf
- McGregor, S. L. T. (2025). *Harvesting home economics philosophy from the Canadian Home Economics Journal*. McGregor Monograph Series 202501. McGregor Consulting. https://consultmcgregor.com/images/Documents/Harvesting_Home_Economics_Philosophy_from_Canadian_Home_Economics_Journal.pdf

- McGregor, S. L. T. (2020). Home ecology to home economics and beyond: Ellen Swallow Richards' disciplinary contributions. *Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences*, 112(2), 28-39. <https://doi.org/10.14307/JFCS112.2.28>
- McGregor, S. L. T. (2012). Bringing a life-centric perspective to influential megatrends. In D. Pendergast, S. L. T. McGregor, & K. Turkki (Eds.), *Creating home economics futures: The next 100 years* (pp. 24-37). Australian Academic Press
- McGregor, S. L. T., & Piscopo, S. (2021). A caring professional continuum: Home economics working through families. *International Journal of Home Economics*, 14(2), 94-107.
- Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights. (2025). *Malta's Strategy for Resilient Food Systems*. Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights. <https://agriculture.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/national-food-strategy-for-resilient-food-systems.pdf>
- Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MESYRI); Department of Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and Employability. (2024). *Year 11 Home Economics Learning and Assessment Programme*. https://curriculum.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/syllabus_Home_Economics_yr11_Sept-2024.pdf
- Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MESYRI). (2023). *Visioning the future by transforming education: National education strategy 2024-2030*. Government of Malta. <https://education.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-BOOKLET-DEC-2023-2030.pdf>
- Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change. (2018). *Malta sustainable development vision for 2050*. <https://sustainabledevelopment.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Maltas-Sustainable-Development-Vision-for-2050.pdf>
- Ministry of Education and Employment. (2012). *A national curriculum framework for all*. <https://curriculum.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/NCF.pdf>
- Nanayakkara, J., Burton, M., Margerison, C., & Worsley, A. (2018). Importance of home economics compared to other secondary school subjects: Australian parents' and young adults' views. *International Journal of Home Economics*, 11(1), 72-79. https://www.ifhe.org/fileadmin/user_upload/e_Journal/IJHE_Volume_11_Issue_1_2018.pdf
- Nõmmik, M., Taar, J., Palojoki, P., Haapaniemi, J., & Oikarinen, K. (2025). *Home Economics in European public school curricula: Report of the Horizon Project SHAREE*. Tallinn University, School of Natural Sciences and Health. <https://helda.helsinki.fi/server/api/core/bitstreams/e16ff4b1-778a-43c0-9f17-1476458c44d3/content>
- OECD. (2025). *Education for human flourishing: A conceptual framework*. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2025/11/education-for-human-flourishing_cb043494/73d7cb96-en.pdf
- Pendergast, D. (2023). What is 'knowledge' in Home Economics education: The concept of Home Economics literacy. *Journal of the Japan Association of Home Economics*

- Education*, 66(3), 89-99.
https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/jjahee/66/3/66_89/_pdf/-char/ja
- Pendergast, D. (2010). Home economics: The next 100 years, *Victorian Journal of Home Economics*, 49(2), 26-33. <https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au/server/api/core/bitstreams/b18d6243-ea6d-54f6-8e5f-e1e3962e3a88/content>
- Piscopo, S. (2016). Home Economics literacy: What it is and where it's going. In ICERI2016 Proceedings - IATED 9th Annual International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation (pp. 5130-5138), 14-16 November, 2016, Seville, Spain. <https://library.iated.org/view/PISCOPO2016HOM>
- Piscopo, S., & Mugliett, K. (2012). Redefining and repackaging home economics: Case of a Mediterranean island. *International Journal of Home Economics*, 5(2), 264-278. https://www.ifhe.org/fileadmin/user_upload/e_Journal/IJHE_Volume_5.pdf
- Piscopo, S., Mugliett, K., & Portelli, L. (2019). The role of Home Economics in education for holistic wellbeing: A review of research and practice in Malta in Recent Years. In C. Bezzina & S. Caruana (Eds.), *Teacher education matters: Transforming lives... transforming schools* (pp. 378-394). Faculty of Education, University of Malta.
- Portelli, L. (2016). *Home Economics and Textiles Studies in Malta: A curriculum history, 1960-2010* (Doctoral thesis, University of Brighton). <https://research.brighton.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/home-economics-and-textiles-studiesin-malta-a-curriculum-history1/>
- Sakuwunda, K., Nyantekyiwaa Gyau, A., & Agyei, J. (2023). Assessing the challenges of teaching and learning Home Economics at the junior high school level, *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 7(5), 1720-1731. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.70633>
- Smith, A. (2005). An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations. (Original work published 1776.) In J.Mannis (Ed.), *The Electronic Classics*. University of Pennsylvania (pp.3-785). <https://www.rrojasdatabank.info/Wealth-Nations.pdf>
- Smith, G. (1991). Home economics as a practical art: Preparing students for family life in a global society. *THESA Newsletter*, 32(1), 13-15 https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5cd204878d97405fba780530/t/5f6e22d93fe41208f29ca7cd/1601053401897/Vol32_1Smith.pdf
- University of Malta. (2026a). *B.Sc. (Hons) Home Economics*. www.um.edu.mt/courses/overview/ubschhecft-2026-7-o/
- University of Malta. (2026b). *Masters in Teaching and Learning: Home Economics*. <https://www.um.edu.mt/educ/study/mtl/homeeeconomics/>
- Uwadiae, W. C., & Ehimare, E. B. (2025). Occupational-related challenges of pedagogical practice of Home Economics in secondary schools in Benin City. *Concrescence Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Research*, 2(5), 283-292. <https://journals.casjournals.com/index.php/CJMR/article/view/302/296>

