

How we teach solidarity between young and elderly citizens for future multigenerational living



The Japan Association of Home Economics Education



Educational background and objective of the study

The Japanese course of study for home economics education was revised in 2008 (for elementary and junior high school) and 2009 (for high school). One concrete aspect of the revision was a focus on building students' life prospects and ability to achieve a livelihood.

Aging is a problem not only for the elderly but for all people. The objective of this study is to analyze how relationships between young and elderly people are represented in Japanese home economics textbooks, including how students feel about the elderly and what communication with the elderly teaches them.



Methodology

1. Textbook analysis: Six integrated home economics textbooks were analyzed focusing on representations and practices to promote solidarity between the young and the elderly.
2. Introduction to educational activities involving the elderly in home economics classes : High school home economics practices involving learning about and/or from the elderly are identified.

Results

1. Textbook Analysis

Various contents regarding the elderly were found in these textbooks. Many of the textbooks considered communication between the young and the elderly, the lifestyle of the elderly and related issues, human dignity and caring for oneself and others, and the conditions of an aging society and social welfare in that context. However, interaction between people of different generations was shown in only three textbooks. The first textbook, published by KA, shows government data on interaction between the young and the elderly as communication partners. On the other hand, a textbook published by TA included content about the social role of elderly citizens and interaction between different generations. As family size becomes smaller, the importance of intergenerational networking in a community is emphasized. Finally, a textbook published by DA features representations of solidarity between generations and points out that interaction with people of other generations is meaningful for the young and the elderly alike.

	TO	KY	JI	KA	TA	DA
Interaction and communication with elderly citizens	○		○	○		
Daily nursing care	○	○	○	○	○	○
Care for and communication with elderly citizens	○	○	○	○	○	
Active listening volunteer activity		○				
Intergeneration exchange in a community				○	○	○
Physical and mental characteristics of elderly citizens	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dementia	○	○	○	○	○	○
The actual conditions of an aging society	○	○	○	○	○	○
Interdependence and elderly citizens' reasons for living	○	○	○	○	○	○
Systems of social welfare for elderly citizens	○	○	○	○	○	○
Total number of pages for the contents on elderly citizens	18	24	16	18	16	15
Total pages of a textbook	247	285	241	257	224	220
The percentage of pages for elderly citizens(%)	7.3	8.4	6.6	7.0	7.1	6.8

2. Introduction to educational activities involving the elderly in home economics classes

Students visited a nursing home, communicated with the elderly residents, and helped with their care. After the lesson, some of them began to think about future careers as specialists in eldercare and social welfare.
(Saga Prefectural U Senior High School)



Students developed a plan to promote a comfortable lifestyle for elderly people requiring nursing care; this plan was then evaluated by nursing professionals and carried out as an activity of the "Future Homemakers of Japan" through their home economics classes.
(Fukuoka Prefectural A Senior High School)



Elderly citizens were invited to the school as guest lecturers. They looked back at their history and spoke vividly to students of their lives and careers. These lectures from "seniors of life" stimulated students' thinking about their own lives and futures.
(Toyama Prefectural T Senior High School)



Conclusion

Textbooks were analyzed and educational practices researched in order to clarify the possibilities for teaching solidarity between young and elderly citizens. It was found that there were differences between the descriptions of the elderly provided by these textbooks, and that on the whole the attention given to representing elderly citizens as partners for other generations, living together and building communities and a society, were not sufficient.

Many interesting home economics practices related to the lives of the elderly were found in Japanese high schools. It is expected that more such practices, each with distinct features, can be identified.