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## \*Serial\* *Home Economics Education in Japan 2*

This serial focuses on the characteristics and current issues surrounding home economics education in Japan, while also providing a historical perspective.

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# Learning Harnessed in Information and Human Service Society

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home economics education, information and human service society, living environments, social media

### Living Environments of Children in Information and Human Service Society

In Japan, the industrial structures are divided into three sectors. There is the Primary sector which covers agriculture, forestry and fisheries. This accounts for 3.7% of the labor force. Next is the Secondary sector which covers manufacturing. This accounts for 23.6% of the labor force. Finally, there is the Tertiary sector which is by far the biggest and covers the entire service industry. This accounts for 72.7% of the labor force ("Population Census Japan 2010").

Today we have the knowledge-based society and the ubiquitous network society. These form the information industry accompanying the rapid spread of ICT.

"The vast majority of the labor force is no longer involved in agricultural production or the manufacturing sectors. Data collection, sales and efficient movement of goods is now by far the most important and labor intensive." (Takahashi Masaru p4)

Japanese society is faced with a myriad of new social problems. Low birthrate, a rapidly aging society, social exclusion as a result of NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training), the homeless etc. As a result, the need for human service-industries and specifically those centering on the social welfare services in connection with assisted living are increasing.

With this background children's living environments have undergone substantial change. (Figure 1).

This phenomenon can be observed in the "White paper on Information and

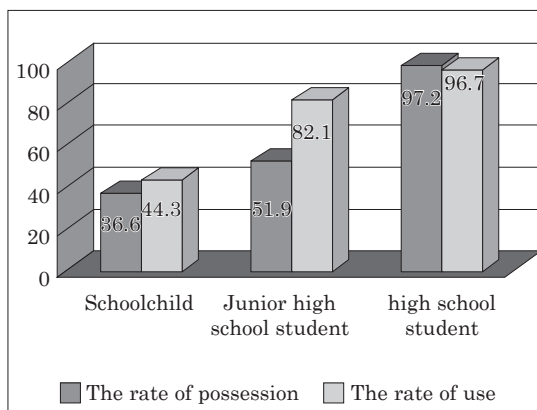


Figure 1 Possession of a mobile phone and a smart phone, and the Internet use situation (Source) Cabinet Office, Government of Japan "Communication use trend investigation of youth"(2013)

Communications in Japan 2011".

- ① Social media such as blogs and SNS have become increasingly prevalent and the number of users is still on the rise. With this comes the trend, particularly among the young, toward diversification of communication methods, and in some cases toward an affinity for cyber communications such as e-mail and text messaging rather than face-to-face communication.
- ② As behaviors in information-gathering change, recognition of internet importance is large and increasing. 74.8% of teens recognize the Internet as being important and 26.2% trust the Internet for information.
- ③ As purchasing behavior changes, the number of Internet shopping users increases. Total Internet shoppers aged 15 years old and over in Japan are equal to 36.5% which is about 1/3 of the population.

The mobile phone has made the Internet available to children, but has reduced the need for face-to-face meetings. Children increasingly rely on the mobile phone and Internet for communication. This has meant that children have stepped into a network society that is fraught with dangers.

It is not too much to say that the children are defenseless in the face of this new society created by adults. Children feel lost and confused in this environment. They need to learn how to communicate and exist in this new information society.

On the other hand, in situations where a child lives with seemingly unsurmountable problems such as child abuse, poverty, NEET etc., it is necessary to be aware of the system and the methods to solve such problems, and to learn how to be independent in life.

## **Information, Human Service Society, and Learning of Home Economics Education**

Teachers are filled with pride when they bring up children. Home Economics education arms children with knowledge and lifelong skills that help them be independent and happy in life. This knowledge and skills empowers children to change the society they live in and gives them "Zest for life". "A better life" is the main objective of the home economics education. The information and human service society, which we saw in the preceding paragraph above, is in need of this education.

What follows is an introduction to the educational content.

### **① Home Economics Education in Elementary School**

The elementary school teaches the base that becomes the children's lifelong foundation. This foundation is divided into several sections such as; the basis of life, personal growth, family and relationship with the people in their neighborhood. It teaches them how life is realized and how to relate to others. Additionally, they get to learn through practical activities what things are, how to choose, buy and use various items. Through these activities they learn that they can do things for themselves.

### **② Home Economics Education in Junior High School**

Here the aim is to acquire and develop skills and attitudes necessary for a better life. Their view on life widens to encompass a variety of aspects such as:

- \* One's surroundings in childhood
- \* The formation of basic relationships of trust
- \* Lifestyle habits during this time
- \* Their connection with people in the community, such as the elderly
- \* How to select not only things but also services.

In elementary school, they learn these basics of purchasing. Here it builds on the students' knowledge to help them understand characteristics of marketing methods, and so be able to appropriately select, purchase and use the goods and services necessary for life.

This is the time students learn a very important lesson. How to find, arrange and make sense of relevant information out of a large amount of information. Thus children learn how to exist in this information and service society. If this process is properly undertaken, it avoids the occurrence of the problems mentioned in the preceding paragraph above and children are better able to defend themselves.

### ③ Home Economics Education in High School

High school continues to build on what students learned in elementary and junior high school. Here, students learn how to understand the relationship between their current consumption life and the economy. They learn about factors affecting the economy such as technical improvements, globalization and informationization. They can then be sent into society with advanced educational content which empowers them to improve their own quality of life. It is important to make them understand matters relating to life and equip them with resources for dealing with real-life needs such as money, interpersonal relationships, life time, food, clothing, housing, child care, consumption etc.

Students get to understand the problems related to each stage of life. The aim is to promote children who can act independently aiming at the solution of the problem. This is according to (Course of study explanatory). The target of this subject is not only building one's home and regional life but also the building of a sustainable society

## Learning that Helps in Information and Human Service Society

The subject of Home Economics Education is as important as the security of the right of life. Therefore I would like to see the subject of Home Economics Education taught as standard in the information and human service society. It is important that the teaching of Home Economics Education and the materials used, take into account children's life actual conditions. It is my hope to secure such learning for children.

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