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**Serial* Home Economics Education in Japan 3*

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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The Basis for Family Education, Home Economics Education

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Family Education and Home Economics Education

Family education and home economics education are very similar terms. Therefore, just as their meanings are similar, a lot of people have a similar understanding of both terms. So what is the same, and what is the difference?

Family life is an important area that shapes the life structure serving as a frame of our lives from our births to our deaths, along with our professional life. Family education and home economics education are both intended for family life. However, family education, which comprises things necessary for actual life management, such as human relations and life behavior such as greetings, meals, excretion, and clothing, is provided in an informal learning program passed down from elders to younger family members in individual families. Comparatively, home economics education (school education) has provided things considered to be necessary to educational development, attaching particular importance to those parts of life culture within various life challenges, in a formal program. Also, family life is changed by social trends and family, so a common point of both styles of education is that to live our lives in a more fulfilling fashion, continuous learning it is essential throughout one's life.

So, specifically, what kinds of challenges exist in relation to family life?

R. J. Havighurst systematically theorized the concept of developmental tasks, writing, "A developmental task is a task which arises at or about a certain period in the life of the individual, successful achievement of which leads to his happiness and to success with later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness in the individual, disapproval by the society, and difficulty with later tasks." (Shoji Masako translation, "Human Development and Education" Maki Bookstore, 1985, p.21) Working with the premise of the importance and necessity of lifelong learning, he presented the development tasks from childhood to old age.

The Tasks of Family Education and the Fundamental Law of Education

Today, the decline within family education centers around basic lifestyle habits, perseverance, strength of will, and the spirit of valuing money and material goods. On the whole, educational ability

has been changing in terms related to life, including the way of life and money and goods. In addition, the number of counseling sessions on child abuse in child guidance centers across the country in 2011 was 59,919, an increase of about seven times the number before the Child Abuse Prevention Law was put into enforcement in 1999. In addition, serious child abuse cases, including those where the lives of children have been taken, show no sign of significant decline. (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Heisei Year 23 Social Welfare Administration Business Report, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2013) The chain of abuse perpetuated by parents who were abused when they were raised now abusing their own children, and differences of home environment based on education, income and cultural capital having a large relevance to the academic performance of children, are making the disparity of education more pronounced. In other words, it is necessary to study educational ability itself which comes from the stratification of household environments. Households tend to be sealed environments constructed solely from family members, and due to this, they include problems arising from the closed nature of the workings of education done there.

The Ministry of Education carried out substantial measures in response to this current situation, such as establishing a round-table conference about home education in 2001, examining the state of family education, promoting the activation of family education classes, and distributing family education notebooks. However, the results were limited.

Family education was placed under the Fundamental Law of Education when it was amended in 2006. Namely, a new article, Article 10, was established in relation to family education. (1) Family education has a primary responsibility of educating children and is to foster habits necessary for living and self-reliance. (2) In addition to respecting the autonomy of family education, it incorporated measures such as the ability to get support from the educational administration. It assumed that it would support family education at its very foundation. In this way, if family education related to the family life is in a weakening condition, education to correct that situation is required from home economics education.

Cooperation of Family Education and Home Economics Education

In family life, the restoration of the original functions of the household, the discipline of children and teaching basic lifestyle habits, is important. For this reason, there is a need to rethink opportunities and methods of sharing household work to enrich the life experience of the child. These are placed within the hidden curriculum of life culture that is dealt with in home economics education, and are to develop into the creation and transmission of life and culture. In addition, it becomes a place to apply the material learned in school education which is highlighted in the current curriculum, and to foster the ability to apply it.

From the home economics education of public notice in 1989, which took the viewpoint of reviewing static gender roles and forming a gender-equal society, we have the goal of development of the ability to carry out family life for both men and women who will become parents. In home economics education, where male and female students learn together as part of their school education, it is concerned with the problems that occur within the realities of families and treated as a living teaching resource for the facts of family life. Also, looking at it scientifically, the learning outcomes obtained by generalizing and theorizing are fed back into family life, open the way to solving problems, and promote the development of family life.

Reasons given by high school students who said it was good to learn home economics in high

school include “It helps in real life” and “I learned something I couldn’t learn in other subjects”, which represented the majority. Nevertheless, other reasons which include “I was able to hear the opinions of others” and “I began to see life’s many facets” show its ability to complement home education. (Figure 1)

In order to further enhance family life, it is required that home economics education and home education cooperate and develop both the ability to plan and create and the practical attitudes necessary to solve problems. In this way, a richer return is guaranteed through the cooperation of family life and home economics education, fields of education which deal with human life. However, for fruitful returns to be guaranteed, ensuring time for learning is important, but in reality the time set aside for studying technology and home economics or home economics is too little, and in order to achieve these goals, the major challenge of securing time for learning remains.

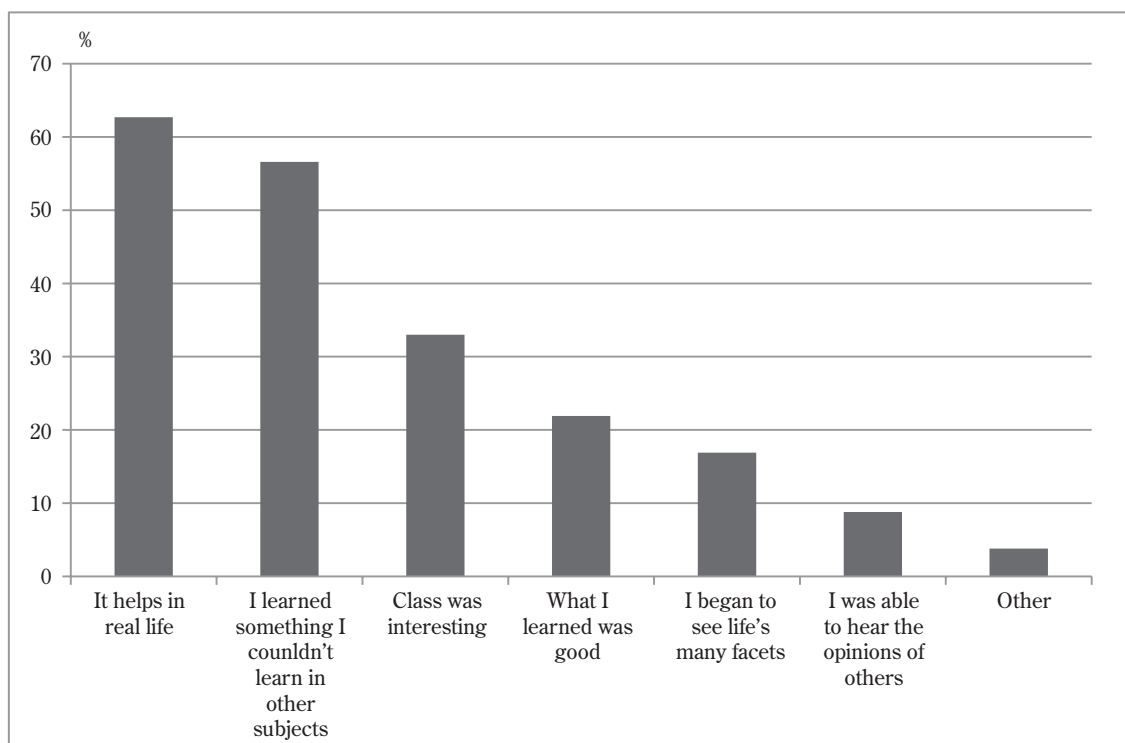


Fig.1 Reasons for saying “It was good to learn home economics.” (Multiple answers allowed)

Source) Japan Association of Home Economics Education, Home Economics Issues Research Committee, “Results and Challenges in Mandatory High School Home Economics for Men and Women” 2007, P.15