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** Serial * Home Economics Education in Japan 10*

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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Japanese Home Economics Education ‘Kateika’ : All Children Love It.

Miho KAWAMURA

Saitama University

Compulsory Subject ‘Kateika’

There are some serious problems about human health and eating foods in the world. Some countries are reevaluating food education and Home economics education (A.Worsley et al.,2015) because of the need for solving these urgent issues. For example, the government of the United Kingdom has started Food education for all children in elementary and junior high schools from 2014(Department of Education in UK 2013). As part of the 2014 reform of the Danish compulsory primary and lower secondary schools, a new subject, Food Knowledge, was introduced (Ministry for Children, Education, and Gender Equality in Denmark, 2013).

Kateika(Home Economics Education) has a long history in Japan and accumulated much research and experience related to food education and children’s daily lives. In addition, Kateika has other special features. Firstly, Kateika is a compulsory subject for students from fifth grade in elementary school to Senior high school. Second, Kateika covers a wide variety of fields; food, clothing, living, baby and child, elderly, economics, family, and environment. Third, most students like Kateika and are willing to have Kateika classes.

Kateika has needed to change its goals during its long history to conform to social conditions. Kateika placed great significance on acquiring only skills for daily life a long time ago. Kateika now emphasizes not only the acquisition of skills, but also problem solving. This is useful for students in two ways. One is useful for students in their daily lives. Students sometimes cook in their homes for their families using their skills learned from Kateika classes. Those experiences are good for students, because they can get some competency and self-esteem. Another is useful for the students’ futures. Interests for something and problem solving may be not useful now, but will be useful in the future. There are many problems in our lives that need to be solved by ourselves. When students study Kateika, they are preparing for their future lives. There is not only one solution for problems and troubles in our lives. We need to choose the best solution for problems at that time. Students can learn many things in order to choose the best answer for themselves in Kateika classes.

Let’s look at a specific case involving cooking classes for elementary school children.

Cooking experiences for third grade students of elementary school

This case suggested that younger students in elementary school are good learner of Kateika.

We(a teacher and I) planned one food study curriculum for third grade students (boys16, girls11) of elementary school in 2010. This curriculum focused on cooking using the microwave. Students learned this through 7 steps.

- 1) How the microwave works. (using a microwave for pancakes)
- 2) cooking1 : mixing cabbage and dried tuna with soy sauce
- 3) Students wrote about what they learned in cooking 1.
- 4) cooking2 : salad with potato, ham, and corn
- 5) Students wrote about what they learned in cooking 2.
- 6) Students researched about cooking with the microwave.
- 7) Students made presentations about their investigations.

Students enjoyed and were interested in all of the above steps and could get knowledge about cooking. Data about what students learned was collected after each class. Please look at students' narratives in Table1, which suggested students' learning in the cooking classes. Each narrative data includes several sentences. This each sentence (data) was analyzed and divided into 5 categories. (see Table2)

It was clear that students learned a lot of things. Experiences were especially important, because students could discover new things through cooking; for example, after microwaving, cabbage is very hot. Perhaps students could understand the food's change during the cooking process and learn it by tasting and using their own experiences.

This curriculum is not in Kateika, because officially fifth grade students start learning Kateika for

Table1 Third grade students' narrative after cooking classes

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| ●I was excited about the microwave's secrets and how to use it for the first time. I worried about using the microwave at that time. I want to go to the Kateika room again. |
| ●We cooked delicious boiled cabbage with dried tuna due to our good team work. I felt hot when cooking. I enjoyed Kateika. I want to study Kateika more and more. |
| ●I saw the cold pancake get brown after heating with the microwave. I think that learning how to use the microwave became more and more like Kateika for me. At first, I was not interested in the microwave, but I gradually became interested in it. Kateika is wonderful. |
| ●I studied about the microwave in the Kateika room. I couldn't understand how a potato could cook well in the microwave. I can understand now. The potato was delicious. I hope to cook and eat it again with my mother. |
| ●I cooked boiled cabbage with dried tuna. I was very surprised at cooking with the microwave and hot cabbage. I tore off the cabbage with my classmates. It was so easy. Finally we ate all of the boiled cabbage and dried tuna. |

Table 2 Categories from students' narrative data after cooking class

| category | Students' narrative data |
|-----------------|--|
| experience | I was very surprised at cooking with the microwave and hot cabbage. |
| microwave | I couldn't understand how a potato could cook well in the microwave. |
| cooking process | I tore off the cabbage with my classmates. |
| enthusiasm | I hope to cook and eat it again with my mother. |
| taste | The potato was delicious. |

the first time. However, this case shows the enthusiasm and willingness of younger students toward cooking classes and thus is important for Kateika.

Kateika is useful in daily lives and in our near future

We would like to rethink about 'usefulness' again. What is useful in Home Economics Education? We know that it isn't easy to acquire skills for daily life. It will take a long time to acquire skills, for example, using kitchen knives, sewing, and cleaning rooms. Some people think that Kateika classes are not effective for students with no skills, but experiences in Kateika classes are useful for students for now and in the future. Students are encouraged by these experiences. Kateika (Home economics education), which is a compulsory subject in Japan, may provide a good opportunity for all students to discover new things and widen their cultural perceptions. Some students have already experienced something in their home, but experiences with their friends and teacher in Kateika classes could widen their viewpoints even more.

In other words, Kateika can encourage students in their daily life, and promote them to be more conscious in their lives.

Kateika aims for Flexible independence

There is one more important thing concerning Kateika learning. For a long time, the aim of Kateika has been for students to become independent in their daily lives. For example, cooking by themselves, washing clothes by themselves, and cleaning rooms by themselves, are the big aims for students because of necessity. Kateika has a good methodology for students to acquire those competencies and many types of curriculums.

We should rethink about independence in relation to our lives and community. I now propose a flexible independence as a new goal for Kateika. We now live in a wider world connected with others and other countries now than ever before. We actually can't do everything by ourselves alone. We should connect with others and do everything to help each other. And so I suggest a more flexible independence than the independence before. Let's ask others to help, if one is having troubles. To help and to be helped by others will make our society good and comfortable for everyone.

References

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