

\* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \*

*\*Serial\** ***Home Economics Education in Japan 13***

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

\* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \* - \*

## **Citizenship Education and Home Economics Education toward Gender Equality Society: Promoting Female Economic and Political Participation in Japan**

Kazue MOCHIZUKI

*Faculty of Human Sciences and Design, Japan Women's University*

### **Key words**

citizenship education, gender equality, globalization, home economics education, voting age of 18

### **Introduction**

Economy and politics have casted a shadow on our daily lives since globalization accelerated in the 2000s. Even though gender equality has been placed as one of the top priorities of the Japanese government, female economic and political participation have still been underrepresented.

Firstly, this paper recognizes child and elder care faced by women prevents them from realizing gender equality society. Secondly, it argues the necessity of citizenship education aiming for gender equality with regards to lowering voting age to 18 in 2016. Lastly, it emphasizes that practices of home economics education in Japan which covers a wide range of fields including food, clothing, living, family are defined as caring for both oneself and others; and that they are positioned as citizenship education of gender equality.

### **Gender inequality in Japan**

Regardless of the fact that Japanese women are educated and healthy as indicated in the Gender Gap Index (GGI), it has been widely known that female participation in economy and politics is underrepresented. The main reason is that there are burdens of child and elder care faced by women. Japan's GGI in the Global Gender Gap Report 2016 provided by World Economic Forum is ranked as 111 out of 144 countries (Table 1). The index consists of four dimensions, economy, education, politics, and health factors and shows the values ranged between 1 (equality) and 0 (inequality).

Gender division of labor is prevalent in that long-hour working environment and male dominated

customs are still persisted in the workplace while child rearing and elder care have been undertaken by women at home. This reflects in a survey result of the Cabinet Office in 2014 about the challenges faced by women; lack of support of partners in child rearing, elder care, and household work (50.1%), there is no adequate public support in child and elder care (42.3%), there has not been enough improvements in reducing long working hours (38.8%), and male colleagues and bosses and clients do not welcome female leaders (31.1%). There is also a problem arisen for women caring both children and elder parents, namely “double care”. It is attributed to women marrying and having children at the later life stage. Gender division of labor needs to be tackled by education by gender perspective to secure human rights for women.

**Table 1: Gender Gap Index of Iceland & Japan**

(cited from the Global Gender Gap Report 2016)

Country	Rank	Score (average of four dimensions)	Economy participation and opportunity	Education attainment	Political empowerment	Health and survival
Iceland	1	0.874	0.806	1.000	0.719	0.970
Japan	111	0.660	0.569	0.990	0.103	0.979

### Voting age of 18 and citizenship education aiming for gender equality

As the voting age was lowered to 18 years old in 2016, education of politics is rather required more at high school than that of preparation for suffrage. It is critical that political education for women should be promoted as there is the biggest gender gap in politics and female suffrage established after that of male. Science council of Japan proposed in 2016 the reform of subject of civics at high school with the aim of cultivating citizenship for 18 year-old in the light of the necessity of citizenship education. Home economics was defined as a subject which is suitable to collaborate with a subject of civics in the proposal. Home economics as a subject was established in 1948 aiming to democratize the household. It has accumulated practices in the fields such as gender equality, cultural diversity, and sexual diversity and has become co-educational subject since 1989 at high school.

The importance of education of home economics was stressed too in the action plan of Basic Act for Gender-Equal Society in 2000, a year after the law was enacted. Home economics can contribute to citizenship education aiming for gender equality because it covers a variety of areas such as food, clothing, living, family, elder and child care, community, environment and home economics as consumers. It is unique and has a longer history compared to home economics education abroad. The word itself, home economics, has been used in English to show the uniqueness of *Kateika* in Japan (Kawamura 2016). Home economics was taught only for girls from 1970 to 1988 at high school, which was criticized because it was said it promoted gender division of labor (Hounoki 1999). It has become co-educational subject since 1989 after Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

against Women was ratified by Japan in 1985. The key word in this new era is “gender”, and the importance of home economics needs to be highlighted to realize gender equality society (Horiuchi 2012). However, the lack of gender perspective at practices of co-education of home economics, which could be a factor of Japan’s GGI being dropped year by year.

### Home Economics education as citizenship education aiming for gender equality

The rights of women, children, handicapped, and immigrants have been ignored by the male dominated concept of citizenship by Marshall (Walby 1994) . Citizenship education aiming for gender equality leads to improve not only citizenship education but also education of home economics itself. It was suggested that it was not connecting private and public spheres rather incorporating people who cannot put needs into words in the concept of citizenship (Mochizuki 2012, 2015).

**Table 2:Home Economics education as citizenship education aiming for gender equality (Mochizuki)**

Sphere	Characters of people	Rights and duties	Four areas to learn about to realize Home Economics education as citizenship education aiming for gender equality
Private (family)	There are members who are different in generations and competencies.	Relationships are asymmetrical. Particular duties exist in order to secure mutual dignity.	-child rearing, elder care, and household work by gender equality perspective -ethics of care through the practice in home economics education
Public	Independent individuals	Relationships between individuals are equal. Rights and duties are performed liberally and autonomously.	-methods to solve family and labor related issues -social and political literacy for quality of life and well-being

There is a need of a theory of caring for care givers which includes human rights, conflicts, and consciousness in relation to children and handicapped as relationships in private spheres are asymmetrical (Held 2006) . “Nurturing a mind that cherishes the family in education of home economics education (guidelines for elementary school education 2008)” can be used as a definition of the theory of caring and lead to citizenship education by gender equality perspective. It was highlighted by Okano (2015) who is a feminist and a political scientist, that practice of caring for family requires to be positioned as developing precious individuals in consideration of that families face crises in the globalized economy. Rationality and efficiency prioritized in the economy can cause critical problems such as high poverty rate of one parent family in Japan.

Caring for family entails particular duties in the globalized economy (Okano, 2007). Home Economics education can address needs of vulnerable people such as children and handicapped and protect their human rights. There is also a potential that it can empower school cultures and global society by expanding the subject to nurture citizens who are conscious about gender equality. To realize it, home economics needs to emphasize gender perspective in the practice. There is a

necessity that all the areas covered by home economics should be practiced in terms of citizenship and gender equality by utilizing the uniqueness of home economics mentioned herein above. Skills and knowledge in the practice of home economics which were accumulated during both periods, girl's only and co-educational times, need to be regarded as cultural and political practices which are associated with public spheres.

## Conclusion

Knowledge and skills in relation to a variety of fields such as food, clothing, living, family, elder and child care, community, environment and home economics from a point of consumers' perspective have been developed by home economics for a long time. It is necessary that a theory of caring should be placed at the heart of home economics to deal with the globalized society. Namely, knowledge and skills promoted by home economics are to be redefined as citizenship education aiming for gender equality to encourage more female economic and political participation in Japan.

## Reference

- HELD Virginia (2006) *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political*, Global, Oxford University Press, USA.
- HOUNOKI Kaoru (1999) Gender Equality Education: Home Economics and Equality in Educational Opportunity, *Journal of National Women's Education Centre of Japan*, Independent Administrative Institution National Women's Education Center, 23-32
- HORIUCHI Kaoru (2012) The Educational Purpose of Home economics Incorporating Gender Perspectives: Towards the Actualization of a Gender-Equal Society, *Journal of the Japan Association of Home Economics Education*, Vol.54 -4,215-225
- KAWAMURA Miho (2016) Japanese Home Economics Education 'Home Economics education': All Children Love It, *Journal of the Japan Association of Home Economics Education*, Vol.59-1,46 -48.
- OKANO Yayo (2007) Revisiting Citizenship A Critique of Civic Responsibility, *The Annuals of Japanese Political Science Association*, Vol.58.No.2,122-141
- OKANO Yayo (2015) A Social Meaning of Family Nurturing Individuals: Through the Criticism of "Independent Individuals" of Care Ethics, *Journal of the Japan Association of Home Economics Education*, Vol.58-3,133-143
- PAREKH and WILCOX (2014) Feminist Perspectives on Globalization, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-globalization/>
- MOCHIZUKI Kazue (2012) *Teachers' Positionality in Citizenship Education* — Examining the practices of Home Economics class and Guidance —, Keisou syobou
- MOCHIZUKI Kazue (2015) Citizenship in Home Economics Education: Contemporary Role and Its Framework, *Civil Society from Home Economics Education*, Domes syuppan.28-48
- WALBY Sylvia (1994) Is Citizenship Gendered?, *Sociology*, Vol.28, No.2, 379-395