

# 3 The Advancement of Home Economics Education in Post-war Era

## 3-1 The Birth of Home Economics

Home economics education in Japan was started in 1947, two years after the conclusion of World War II, a time-period when the new values of democracy were starting to spread throughout the country. Home economics, along with social studies, was included in school curricula as one means of spreading these new values. Its predecessors during the pre-war period had been subjects such as housekeeping and sewing, which served the paternalistic family structure of the time by providing females with the education necessary to become good wives and mothers.

During the occupation, however, the American General Headquarters (GHQ) implemented a policy of democratic reform, resulting not only in the breakup of *zaibatsu* and large land holdings but also in extensive educational reforms, resolutely carried out under the “guidance and advice” of the Civil Information & Education Section (CIE). In a 1946-47 publication from the Japanese Ministry of Education entitled *Shin Kyouiku Shishin* (Guidelines for a New Education), the following principles of education were made public: 1) the thorough instilling of democratic values, 2) respect for individuals and individuality, 3) the improved teaching of civic rights and responsibilities, and 4) the advancement of education for females (Hounoki, Suzuki, 1990). Soon thereafter, the Japanese constitution, under the strong leadership of GHQ, was ratified and proclaimed law. Article 14 of that constitution firmly establishes the principle of “equality under the law.” Furthermore, Article 24 states clearly that, “in regards to matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes.” The supreme law of the land clearly protects the ideal that men and women are to be treated equally.

The new government may have stated its goal of dismantling the infrastructure of a militaristic state and building a democratic society, but the difficult and important job of nurturing democratic-minded citizens and families became the duty of educators. The making of good citizens was seen as the responsibility of the social studies curriculum, while the making of good families came under the auspice of home economics. This is how the subject of home economics came to be established in the

1947 Course of Study, the official Ministry of Education policy on national curriculum standards and content. According to this policy, it should be the goal of home economics to foster the attitudes and skills necessary for a family to function and prosper within a democratic society. Inspired by the American model, Japanese home economics education was created as a new curriculum for a new society.

Since the birth of home economics, the Course of Study has been revised about every ten years, for a total of six revisions since 1947. Examining the gradual changes in the learning goals and content of the curriculum, one can see the influences that different social policies have had over the last half century. With this in mind, the course of the evolution in elementary, junior and senior high school home economics education, from its inception to the present, will be followed.

### **3-2 The Evolution of Home Economics in Elementary Schools**

Home economics in the fifth and sixth grades has been a required subject for Japanese boys and girls since 1947. However, when one looks at the actual content of the curriculum, there is a noticeable difference between the subject matter being taught immediately after the war and that being taught thereafter. As stated earlier, home economics had its beginnings while Japan was still under American leadership in the immediate post-war years and was created then as a school subject intended to democratize the family; however, it has changed little by little into a subject concerned less with upholding democratic ideals and more with developing homemaking skills. One significant reason for this was the difficult economic conditions during the post-war years. For instance, the shortage of ready-made clothing at the time created an urgent need for girls to learn sewing skills. Furthermore, an overlap existed between the subject matter of home economics and social studies, which began a debate about whether or not home economics should be discontinued completely. Clearly, the two subjects needed to be distinguished from one another.

Thus began home economics' focus on practical skills development. Ever since 1958 the learning goals have been for students to acquire basic, fundamental knowledge and skills in clothing, food, life, etc; to deepen their understanding of family life; and to nurture a positive, hands-on attitude. The four learning areas were defined as follows: clothing, food, housing and home/family. There have been no major changes in the content of the curriculum since 1958; however, starting in the latter half of the eighties, the curriculum, influenced by the government policy of consciously placing greater focus on family, consumer and environmental issues, gradually began to include broader subject matter. Further to that effect, in the 2008

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Course of Study, home economics in elementary and Junior high schools was better organized to comprise 4 major common study areas: 1) Family and family life, 2) Daily meals and cooking, 3) Clothing and Housing, and 4) Consumer issues and the Environment.

One of the primary revisions contained in the 1998 Course of Study was the addition of the newly created “Comprehensive Learning Time,” which greatly reduced the amount of study time for all existing subjects. Home economics was no exception. Prior to the revised Course of Study, fifth and sixth graders spent seventy hours per year studying home economics. Since the revision, fifth graders spend only sixty hours while sixth graders spend just fifty-five. (It is the same in the 2008 Course of Study.) With so little time given for home economics education, teachers are confronted with the problem of how to teach students even the basics, a situation that also applies to junior and senior high schools. (See Chapter 2)

**Table 3-1 Elementary School “Home Economics”– Ministry of Education’s Course of Study from 1955 to the Present**

| 1955 (56) ~  | 1958 (60) ~   | 1968 (70) ~   | 1977 (78) ~                                      |
|--|---|---|--|
| Family<br>Life Management<br>Clothing<br>Food<br>Housing | A: Clothing<br>B: Food<br>C: Housing<br>D: Home/Family  | A: Clothing<br>B: Food<br>C: Housing<br>D: Home/Family  | A: Clothing<br>B: Food<br>C: Housing &<br>Family |
| 1989~  | 1998 (99) ~   | 2008~   |  |
| A: Clothing<br>B: Food<br>C: Family Life<br>& Housing    | 1) Family life, housework<br>and family relations<br>2) Skills to wear and take<br>care of clothes<br>3) Creation of useful things<br>4) Planning a balanced diet<br>5) Skills to cook simple dishes<br>6) Housing, living environment<br>7) Managing money and<br>shopping<br>8) Relations with neighbors and<br>environment consideration | A: Family and family life<br>B: Daily meals and basics<br>in cooking<br>C: Comfortable clothing<br>and Housing<br>D: Daily Consumer issues<br>and the Environment |  |

Another problem that exists at the elementary level is the lack of dedicated home economics teachers: the subject is usually taught by general classroom teachers who lack

any special training in home economics. This has led to reduction in the quality of the course content.

Lastly, it is a well-known fact that Japanese children today do not eat well and that they are slow to become self-reliant. Recently, however, society has started to address these issues, especially that of dietary education. But, the urgent question is how can home economics help such children by applying itself directly to the more fundamental task of developing independence and self-reliance.

### **3-3 The Evolution of Technology & Home Economics in Junior High Schools**

Home economics at the junior high school level (grades 7-9), just like at elementary school, is a required, co-educational subject. It was initially known as "Vocational Training & Home Economics," but since 1958 has been called "Technology & Home Economics." At that time, Japan was undergoing fast economic growth during its post-war reconstruction, and the advancement of scientific learning was a very important concern of the country. To give one example, in 1956 the *Nihon Keidanren* (Japan Federation of Economic Organizations) released a publication entitled *Shinjidai no Yousei ni Taiousuru Gijyutsu Kyouiku ni Kansuru Ikensho* (Meeting the Demands of a New Age: Science and Technology Education), which called for the enrichment of scientific and technological research and education.

Junior high schools responded to this call by establishing Technology & Home Economics with the purpose of teaching technological skills and techniques. At first, it was suggested that the subject be called simply "Technology." Due to resistance from home economics teachers, however, the two subjects were eventually merged under the single name, Technology & Home Economics. The curriculum was structured around three practical skills: designing, building, and operating, with the actual content focused either towards girls or boys. Boys studied carpentry, metalworking, machinery, electricity and cultivation, while girls studied cooking, clothes-making, childrearing, drafting, home appliances, and crafts. In the 1960s the curriculum was revised to strengthen gender segregation, reflecting the general trends that existed in society. This institutional segregation of the curriculum content continued until 1989 when the Course of Study was revised to make the subject co-educational. In fact, however, the content continued to be focused either towards boys or girls.

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**Table 3-2 Junior High School “Technology & Home Economics” – Ministry of Education’s Course of Study from 1955 to the Present**

| 1955 (56) ~   | 1958 (60) ~  | 1968 (70) ~  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Food (Eating &amp; Cooking)</li> <li>-Clothing (Wearing, Making, and Adjusting)</li> <li>-Housing (Home living &amp; Appliances)</li> <li>-Family (Child raising, Family, and Nursing the sick and elderly)</li> </ul>  | <p>For Girls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Cooking -Clothes making</li> <li>-Planning &amp; Drafting</li> <li>-Home Machinery &amp; Handicrafts</li> <li>-Child raising</li> </ul> <p>For Boys</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Drafting -Wood and Metal</li> <li>-Horticulture -Mechanics</li> <li>-Electricity</li> <li>-Comprehensive Practice</li> </ul>  | <p>For Girls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Clothing -Food</li> <li>-Housing</li> <li>-Home appliances</li> <li>-Home electricity</li> <li>-Child raising</li> </ul> <p>For Boys</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Drafting -Wood shop</li> <li>-Metal shop -Mechanics</li> <li>-Electricity -Horticulture</li> </ul>   |
| 1977 (78) ~   | 1998(99) ~   | 2008 ~   |
| <p>A. Carpentry 12<br/>B. Metalworking 12<br/>C. Mechanics 12<br/>D. Electricity 12<br/>E. Horticulture<br/>F. Clothing 123<br/>G. Food 123<br/>H. Shelter<br/>I. Child raising<br/>*Boys choose one learning area from F-I; Girls choose one class from A-E.</p>   | <p><i>Technology</i></p> <p>A. Technical Skills &amp; Making Things (abridged)<br/>B. Information &amp; Computers (abridged)</p> <p><i>Home Economics</i></p> <p>A. Independent Living and Food, Clothing and Housing</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Nutrition and meals</li> <li>(2) Selection of food and skills to cook daily meals</li> <li>(3) Selection and maintenance of clothes</li> <li>(4) Management of the house and ways of residing</li> <li>(5) Eating habits and advanced cooking</li> <li>(6) Making simple clothes</li> </ol> <p>B. Family and Family Life</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Relation between their own growth and their families</li> <li>(2) Child development and the family</li> <li>(3) Family and family relations</li> <li>(4) Family life and consumption</li> <li>(5) Child life and interaction with children</li> <li>(6) Relation between family life and the community</li> </ol> | <p>A. Family, Home and Child Growth</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Growth of students themselves and their families</li> <li>(2) Students’ home and family relations</li> <li>(3) Children’s lives and their families</li> </ol> <p>B. Food, Cooking and Independent Life</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) dietary habits and nutrition</li> <li>(2) How to select a daily menu and foods</li> <li>(3) Preparation of daily meals and regional food culture</li> </ol> <p>C. Clothing, Housing and Independent Life</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Selecting and caring for clothing</li> <li>(2) Function of housing and modes of living</li> <li>(3) Life techniques on clothing and housing</li> </ol> <p>D. Daily Consumption and the Environment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Domestic life and consumption</li> <li>(2) Domestic life and the environment</li> </ol> |
| 1989~   |  |  |
| <p>A. Carpentry*<br/>B. Electricity<br/>C. Metalworking<br/>D. Mechanics<br/>E. Horticulture<br/>F. Information Processing<br/>G. Family Life*<br/>H. Food<br/>I. Clothing<br/>J. Housing<br/>K. Child rearing</p> <p>*Family Life is a new learning area<br/>*Carpentry and Family Life required of all students</p> |  |  |

During this period of transition there were basically two problems with Technology & Home Economics at the junior high school level: firstly, the division of content based on gender, and secondly, the removal of learning content concerned with family and home life in order to make life skills the heart of the curriculum. These problems also contributed to the inconsistency that existed in the curricula at the elementary, junior and senior high school levels.

In the years following Japan's ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), there was growing criticism of gender discrimination in school curricula. Eventually advances were made in the combination of the learning content for boys and girls. In 1998 the Course of Study stated clearly that the learning content for both Technology and Home Economics would, henceforth, be united and studied by both girls and boys together. In addition, family and home life content would be included in the area of home economics. Finally, the home economics curriculum should remain consistent across all grades while maintaining its focus on knowledge of personal & family life and the learning of technological skills.

### **3-4 Home Economics in Senior High Schools, 1950s – 1970s: Gender Roles in Society and the Home Economics Requirement only for Girls**

At its beginnings, home economics at senior high school level was an elective course of study, where girls or boys could learn things related to becoming democratic-minded homebuilders. However, it was mostly girls who actually took the course; most boys, along with a small number of girls, chose not to study home economics. In recognition of this reality, home economics teachers formally proposed making the subject required for all female students, claiming that the obligation of such a minimum requirement on girls would not break the fundamental equality of the sexes; rather, it would make the most of the unique characteristics of both. This strengthened the trend towards home economics becoming a required class for girls only. The 1960 and 1970 Courses of Study clearly stated that General Home Economics was a requirement for girls, mainly in their first and second year of high school (10-11 grades), where students would learn how to maintain their future homes by learning the skills necessary to manage a household. In other words, the subject was essentially a training course for housewives. The course content consisted of household management, cooking/nutrition, clothing, home life, and child-raising. In the 1978 revised Course of Study, two independent content areas were added: home project and home economics club. Like at elementary and junior high school, home economics at

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**Table 3-3 Senior High School “Home Economics” – Ministry of Education’s Course of Study from 1955 to the Present**

| 1955 (56) ~  | 1958 (60) ~  | 1968 (70) ~  |
|--|--|--|
| <p><i>General Home Economics</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clothing</li> <li>2. Home management</li> <li>3. Food</li> <li>4. Child rearing &amp; family</li> </ol> <p>* Students take one elective from the following courses: fine arts, home economics, vocational skills.</p>   | <p><i>General Home Economics</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Home life and management</li> <li>2. Personal financial planning</li> <li>3. Efficient home life</li> <li>4. Food management</li> <li>5. Clothing management</li> <li>6. Household management</li> <li>7. Education and care of young children</li> <li>8. Improving home life</li> </ol> <p>* Girls take 2-4 credits</p>   | <p><i>General Home Economics</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Home life and management</li> <li>2. Scheduling time for work and play at home</li> <li>3) Home and organized life</li> <li>4) Planning meals</li> <li>5) Clothing management</li> <li>6) Household management</li> <li>7) Education and care of young children</li> </ol> <p>* Girls take 4 credits</p>  |
| 1977 (78) ~  | 1989 ~   | 1998 (99) ~  |
| <p><i>General Home Economics</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Home life planning &amp; family</li> <li>2. Clothes planning &amp; making</li> <li>3. Planning meals &amp; cooking</li> <li>4. Household planning &amp; organization</li> <li>5. Mother’s health &amp; education and care of young children</li> <li>6. Home project &amp; family life club</li> </ol> <p>* 4 credits required for girls</p> <p>* Elective for boys</p> | <p><u><i>General Home Economics</i></u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Family and family life</li> <li>2. Household management and consumption</li> <li>3. Planning of clothing and clothes making</li> <li>4. Planning for eating and cooking</li> <li>5. Planning housing and house organization</li> <li>6. Child rearing and parenting roles</li> <li>7. Home project &amp; family life club</li> </ol> <p><u><i>General Home Life</i></u></p> <p><u><i>Home Life Skills</i></u></p> <p>* 4 credits required for all girls and boys</p> <p>* School may select one Of the above three learning courses.</p> | <p><u><i>Comprehensive Home Economics</i></u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Human life and family &amp; welfare</li> <li>2. Child development, child rearing and child welfare</li> <li>3. Life and welfare for elderly people</li> <li>4. Life science and culture</li> <li>5. Consuming for living, resources and environment</li> <li>6. Home projects and Family life club activities</li> </ol> <p><u><i>Fundamentals of Home Economics</i></u><br/>(abridged)</p> <p><u><i>Home Life Skills</i></u> (abridged)</p> <p>*2-4 credits required for all girls and boys</p> <p>* School may select one of the above three learning courses.</p> |

| 2009~   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* 2-4 credits required for all girls and boys</li><li>* School may select one of the following three learning courses.</li></ul>  |
| <p><b><u>Basic Home Economics</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) Human life, Family, Home and Welfare</li><li>(2) Independent life, Consumerism and the Environment</li><li>(3) Home project and Future Homemakers Club Activity</li></ul>   |
| <p><b><u>Comprehensive Home Economics</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) Human life, Family and Home</li><li>(2) Relationship with children and elderly people, and Welfare</li><li>(3) Financial Planning and Consumption in Life</li><li>(4) Life Science and Environment</li><li>(5) Life Planning</li><li>(6) Home project and Future Homemakers Club Activity</li></ul>   |
| <p><b><u>Life Design</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) Human life, Family, Home and Welfare</li><li>(2) Lifestyle Establishment Concerning Consumption and Environment</li><li>(3) Planning and Creation of Life regarding Food</li><li>(4) Planning and Creation of Life regarding Clothing</li><li>(5) Planning and Creation of Life regarding Housing</li><li>(6) Home project and Future Homemakers Club Activity</li></ul> |

senior high school level was supposed to focus on developing practical knowledge and life skills through hands-on activities. One important difference, however, was that the child-raising content in senior high school home economics included a separate item called “Motherhood and Health,” thus making a point of the connection between home economics and being a mother.

To understand how home economics came to be a required high school subject for girls only, it is necessary to know a little of the social background. In post-war Japan the home was the domain of the woman, and housework was primarily the woman’s responsibility. Thus, it was to be expected that girls would be the ones to learn the skills and knowledge needed for taking care of the home. Furthermore, during the economic revival of the 1960s, the discriminatory slogan “*Otoko wa Shigoto, Onna wa Katei*” (Men Work, Women Home) had been used to rally industry and the country to achieve rapid economic growth. This notion had surely influenced the educational



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system as well. Add to this the fact that home economics teachers themselves advocated making their subject required only for girls as a way to preserve their field. These, as well as other factors, contributed to the upholding of gender-based roles throughout the period of economic recovery in the 1960s and 1970s.

#### **3-5 Home Economics in Senior High Schools from 1980s to the Present: The Realization of a Home Economics Requirement for both Boys and Girls**

In the 1989 Course of Study, senior high school home economics, before a subject required only for girls, was changed into a regular co-educational course of study. Changing a school subject originally designed for girls into one to be studied by both boys and girls, with the stated goal of overturning established gender roles, was a new achievement in the history of Japanese education.

If one considers the situation in other countries, one quickly notices that Japan is unique in this regard. For example, in most US states home economics is an elective course in senior high school, or at best a required elective. In countries of the British Commonwealth, such as England and Canada, in all but a few provinces or regions, there is no course with the name “home economics”. Even in the countries of northern Europe, where home economics is comparatively advanced, it is a required subject only in elementary and junior high schools; in senior high schools it is regarded as a vocational course of study.

So, why, in Japan, was home economics established as a regular part of senior high school curriculum as a required part of the curriculum? In the following sections, the social background of the process leading to this achievement and its significance and several outstanding issues will be discussed.

##### **3-5-1 Social Background and Process**

The switch to a co-educational home economics course was not accepted very well by individual school administrators, nor was there enough prior debate or mutual understanding between teachers and administrators about the necessity of such a course. In fact, it is clear that there was little recognition within the Japanese educational system of the real problem, that is, the tendency of schools to maintain the discriminatory status quo, which, in terms of the curriculum content, meant that home economics would remain a subject studied only by girls.

There were, largely speaking, three main factors that contributed to the advancement of reform. First, there were the efforts of home economics teachers at the time to incorporate coeducational home economics into the curriculum. Second, parents and members of the community actively promoted the new system. And, lastly,

there was the growing awareness around the world of the problem of gender-based discrimination and the influence of the global movement to abolish it, as represented by CEDAW. The following will look at these factors in more detail:

**(1) The Efforts of Teachers**

As mentioned previously, home economics was designated in the 1970 Course of Study as a requirement for girls only. This policy was started, for the most part, in schools throughout the country. However, there were a few prefectures, such as Nagano and Kyoto, which went against the trend and implemented a home economics requirement for both boys and girls. In 1973, progressive schools in these prefectures required all students to take two credits out of four of home economics. In these cases, there are three factors thought to have contributed to the early realization of a co-educational course.

First, there existed in these areas an association of teachers that actively promoted co-educational home economics at the municipal level. In Nagano and Kyoto, members of the local home economics teachers' associations were constantly active, publishing papers that promoted "Co-educational Home Economics," submitting proposals to the Ministry of Education or to prefectural boards of education, and trying to gain the understanding of teachers' unions as well as teachers of other subjects. These home economics teachers were (and still are) active in research, working on papers or writing textbooks especially for co-educational classes - textbooks that were full of the sociological perspective that had, up to then, been lacking in the field.

Second, there was the persistence of teachers who held seminars, wrote proposals, debated the issue, and offered logical arguments that managed to convince school administrators and other teachers that the girls-only requirement for home economics was discriminatory.

And third, there also existed in these places boards of education, or other faculty organizations, that were open and understanding to the arguments offered by home economics teachers.

It was these factors, along with the support of progressive-minded prefectural governments, which allowed innovation to happen. In most prefectures or districts where these three conditions were absent, the girls-only requirement was allowed to continue.

However, as the 1980s began, the problem of gender-based discrimination in schools was no longer simply a concern of individual teachers: teachers' unions, research associations in the field of home economics education, and even private research institutes, start to focus attention on the problem. A lively debate begins to

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take place in academic home economics journals. Unfortunately, however, this debate did not manage to reach the whole education community. This failure was due in part to the lack of a concentrated effort on the part of home economics professionals to publicize the issue. However, there was also a general belief among teachers and educators that gender was not really a problem. Many of these teachers also looked down on home economics as being “un-academic.” Such attitudes were common at the time and also contributed to the problem.

#### **(2) The Efforts of Local Citizens**

Starting in the latter half of the 1970s, a number of local citizens’ groups and community associations began focusing attention on the problem of gender discrimination in schools. With the issue “Girls-only Home Economics Perpetuates Sexual Stereotypes,” they organized campaigns seeking to make home economics a required course for boys as well as girls. One such local group, founded in 1973, called itself “The Committee for Co-ed Home Economics.” In addition to researchers and teachers, it had as its supporters: lawyers, writers, editors, mass media professionals, housewives, and various other members of the community. They were very active in writing appeals, gathering petitions, contacting government representatives, and publishing papers. Thus they managed to spread the word to a broader public. In February of 1981, the Japanese Attorneys’ Association published an opinion paper which proposed, first of all, that “the current girls-only system be abolished and a co-ed curriculum be installed in its place – a curriculum that includes in its content the following elements: 1) the nurturing of the knowledge and skills necessary for the building of a democratic family and 2) the understanding and appreciation of the principle of equality and respect for the individual.” Through the actions of these groups and individuals, the awareness of the problem, which had, up to then, been confined mostly to schools, was spread far and wide.

#### **(3) Co-educational Home Economics and CEDAW**

The single greatest influence on the creation of co-educational high school home economics was the worldwide struggle against sexual discrimination led by the United Nations, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, commonly known as the Treaty for the Rights of Women or simply as the Women’s Convention.

Influenced by the worldwide movement in the 1960s to liberate women, the United Nations declared 1975 the “International Year of the Woman,” and the first World Conference of the International Women’s Year was held in Mexico City. Thus, one can see that even the United Nations was turning its attention to the problems of

the gender gap and sexual discrimination in an effort to rectify the situation. The next year the General Assembly resolved to make the next ten years the United Nations Decade for Women. Halfway through that decade, in 1980, a conference was held in Copenhagen, where a plan of action was adopted for the latter half of the decade. At the heart of this plan was the ratification and implementation of CEDAW (adopted by the UN in 1979). Japan signed on to the Women's Convention at the Copenhagen Conference and by 1985, the last year of the Decade for Women, had re-evaluated its laws and institutions in order to ratify the Convention. During this process it became known that girls-only compulsory home economics was in violation of Article 10, which obligates countries to end discrimination in education. Specifically, Japan was in violation of the following terms of that article: a) countries must provide access to curricula, and other means of receiving an equal education; and b) countries must eliminate stereotyped concepts of the roles of men and women. Coincidentally, this was also a time of social change in Japan with families having fewer children and an increase in the number of non-traditional families. And it was also a time of growing awareness of the need for parent training. A 1986 report on education states the necessity to "re-evaluate school subjects, such as home economics, from the standpoint of providing adequate education for future parents."

The above are all factors thought to have contributed to the establishment of co-educational home economics in Japan. In this way, the current curriculum was formed on a basis created by the gradual efforts of teachers and citizens in response to the needs of the nation for education related to the home and family. But, above all, it was thanks to the strong support provided by the ratification of the Women's Treaty at the international level. However, the question remains as to why only Japan implemented a co-educational program, even though the treaty was ratified by many other countries. In other countries, home economics was generally an elective course for both boys and girls, and therefore not discriminatory. In Japan, however, where sex roles were firmly well-established, there was a strong belief in the necessity of girls taking home economics and a national fear that, if the subject were made elective, then girls might choose not to take it. Another convincing argument that should not be overlooked is that many Japanese companies at that time were increasingly posting their male employees on solitary assignments, where they would need to take care of themselves at home.

Through this process, discrimination changed around, and Japan was able to realize a truly co-educational, senior high school home economics program unseen anywhere else in the world.

### **3-5-2 Various Problems Associated with the Implementation of Coeducational Home Economics**

Starting in the academic year 1994 and advancing each year, co-educational home economics was gradually put into practice; however, its realization was not without problems. First of all, there was a shortage of teachers. Second, there was also the problem of beginning home economics in boys' schools with no previous experience teaching the subject. And, third, there was the worry on the part of administrators and other teachers about whether or not home economics could be taught to boys by female teachers.

Regarding the first problem, most municipal governments responded to the shortage of home economics teachers simply by an increase in hiring. In addition to these new teachers, there were also a number of teachers from other fields, motivated by their own desire for change or the needs of their schools, who returned to university to take the new home economics license and start teaching. Some of these teachers were male teachers from other subjects, such as natural science, social studies, foreign languages (mostly English), Japanese language arts, and physical education. To deal with the needs of municipal governments to license new teachers, several universities offered special one-year courses.

Why did these male teachers switch to home economics? According to one teacher, Tadaharu Minamino, a senior high school English teacher who switched to home economics in 1993, "I believe that the knowledge one gains in home economics is key to bringing humans back together. It is the field that possesses the greatest potential of producing a methodology capable of rehabilitating humanity (Miyazaki 1999)." A former social studies teacher, Wataru Kumada, states that he decided to get a home economics license because he was "dissatisfied with teaching abstract subjects like social studies and economics that deal only with general notions." He continues: "After getting married and helping my wife with the housework, I became interested in issues, such as feminism, consumer advocacy, and caring for the elderly (Miyazaki 1999)." Both of these teachers had two things in common: 1) they had doubts about the value of the educational content of their own fields; and 2), they felt the limits of test-oriented education. At the same time, they were attracted to the holistic and practical aspects of home economics, with its focus on human life skills. After receiving their licenses, these qualified teachers brought a unique perspective to the teaching of home economics.

Regarding the second problem, that is, the lack of experience of boys' school at teaching home economics, the realization of the new subject was a huge responsibility.

The inclusion of home economics meant a reduction in study time for test preparation, and this made many schools understandably worried. While there are currently a number of enthusiastic teachers at these schools who occasionally report their activities in home economics journals, for the most part, these schools have a rather passive attitude towards the teaching of home economics. Many have not built facilities for cooking classes nor hired full-time home economics teachers, relying instead on part-time teachers from other schools.

Concerning the third problem, related to the worry about teaching boy students, it was discovered to be a simple matter of prejudice as soon as instruction began. Even if teaching home economics to boys could be said to be difficult, it is in fact no more difficult than in other subjects. Regardless of these concerns, teachers have reported in various journals that classes with both boys and girls are more active, they are more interested in the content of the classes, and the discussions more interesting.

### **3-5-3 The Spread of Coeducational Home Economics and its Effects**

It has been eighteen years since the foundation of co-educational home economics. The biggest change during this period, as stated in the previous section, has been the gradual acceptance of home economics as a subject worthy of study. This acceptance started with teachers and students and has spread to the community and all of society.

According to one study that looked at how home economics is perceived by senior high school students, it was found that among the eight principal subjects studied at senior high school, students ranked home economics number one in terms of "the ability to relax during class," number two in terms of "usefulness after graduation from school," and number three in terms of "wanting to continue to study later in life" (Saegusa 1998). Home economics ranked fourth in the study both as "a fun subject to study" and as "the subject most talked about with parents." From this study one can see that, within the high-pressure, test-taking world of Japanese senior high school education, home economics is perceived as a fun, relaxing subject that teaches skills useful throughout one's life.

So, how has the establishment of coeducational home economics affected the awareness of sex roles in Japanese society? Comparing before and after, one can see that both boys and girls have grown in their unbiased awareness of gender differences. Arai and Tsuruta, in a 1996 study, showed that this growth was particularly evident in boys (45). Furthermore, one can see the subtle beginnings of change at the post-secondary level, where a small but growing number of young men have chosen home economics as their major. While there are no national statistics on the actual number, at

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the author's university, about ten percent of all students who major in home economics are male, with most indicating a desire to become home economics or pre-school teachers. What these young men all have in common is a free-thinking attitude and the total lack of preconceived notions of home economics being just for girls. In the future, when these students will have graduated and taken their place in society as teachers themselves, one can reasonably expect that gender bias and the idea of "women's work" will gradually dissolve.

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