

How Literacy Theory Has Been Developed? : Towards Fostering Competencies to Live a Better Life

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore a future possibility of “life literacy” in Japanese home economics education through the examination of the development of literacy theory.

In the late 19th century, the word, literacy, meant basic skills of reading and writing which were taught in common public schools. After this period, the meaning of literacy has been broadened and created conflicting views.

The theory of functional literacy points out the functionality of skills in the context of the ordinary social life. However, it is possible that the investigation of functionality of literacy lapse into blind adaptation to the given social structure which contains oppression and exploitation. The theory of critical literacy highlights critical consideration of the politics in the individual learner’s situations and creates the educational praxis for social change. It also advocates multiplicities of literacies. On the contrary, the theory of cultural literacy argues that there is a shared common knowledge in literate culture.

In these literacy arguments, the following two points are crucial ;

First, how we relate to social adaptation and critical resistance in the definition of literacy, and second how we consider the relationship between the common ground and multiplicities of educational contents. It is significant to consider these two points for the future development of “life literacy” in home economics education.

Key words; literacy, life literacy, functional literacy, critical literacy, cultural literacy
