

Treatment of Housework in Home Economics Education : Relationship with Social Issues and the Government Policies

Yukiko SATO

Faculty of Education, Ibaraki University

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to show how home economics has changed the way in which it treats housework according to national and social demand, and to consider the relationship between home economics and the government policies of today by examining measures to counter the falling birthrate, and to point out the issues home economics needs to address. A content analysis of high school home economics textbooks from the 1960s onward, and an outline of countermeasures for a society with a declining birthrate were conducted to determine how home economics has been treating housework and the situation regarding measures to counter the falling birthrate. The analysis confirmed that in each era, home economics taught the meaning of housework in a way that had changed to suit that era, and that in recent years home economics has been attempting to foster—through housework—the ability to build a symbiotic relationship whose core is self-reliant individuals. In addition, it was established that knowledge about housework and its skills is positioned as an essential component of today’s measures to deal with the falling birthrate. However, it is only in the context of countermeasures to the falling birthrate that the necessity of such knowledge and skills is emphasized. Hence, when teaching home economics, instructors must see matters from the perspective of self-reliant individuals and from a perspective that respects the diversity of the outlooks for life courses.

Key words; home economics education, housework, measures to counter the falling birthrate, high school home economics textbooks, content analysis
