



Revitalization of Investigative Activities by Independent Projects: Case of Japan Association of Home Economic Education's "The Research Projects on Contemporary Issues"

Japan Association of Home Economic Education(JAHEE) <http://www.jahee.jp/>
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I. Purpose

The Japan Association of Home Economics Education (JAHEE), established in 1958 to promote theoretical and practical investigative activities on home economics education, has 1086 members including 87 students. The purpose of this report is to analyze "The Research Projects on Contemporary Issues" organized by JAHEE, an attempted revitalization of investigative activities among members, and to examine how to empower investigative activities of JAHEE in the future by reflecting on the effects and outputs of this trial.

II. Method and Process

The analysis involved inspecting each project activity and examining the process and outputs of the research. In September 2008, JAHEE planned "The Research Projects on Contemporary Issues", and requested members to join the project. JAHEE advertised the theme of the project for members and following three themes were focused:
①contemporary issues on food and possibility of food education in home economics,
②home economics learning based on the community,
③significance and role of home economics education in senior high schools under the evolution of educational diversity.
The investigative period was two years from November 2008 to December 2010 and the obligations for the project were to submit the research plan and to present the findings at the annual meetings of JAHEE.

III. Research on Working Group

WG 1-1

Examination of Home Economics Classes for Change in Eating Behavior

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Objective: The purpose of this research is to clarify the acquisition of knowledge and skill about dietary life, and the change in students' eating consciousness and behavior through an improvement in their self-efficacy. Moreover, it aims to clarify the characteristics of a Home Economics class on dietary life.

Method: We conducted the classes shown in Table 1 for 142 junior high school students, and analyzed questionnaires and class records.

Results:
1) Many students discussed class topics with their family and friends and practiced what they learned in everyday life.
2) Students who practiced what they learned in everyday life have better "problem management skills" and are more independent in their self-efficacy. From the above, we think that as a result of attending class for one year, students develop greater self-efficacy (★ ★ in Figure 1) and begin to practice what they learn in everyday life.
3) Classes that increased students' self-efficacy and conviction involved "cooperative learning with teachers and students"; and class scene of student's considering actively and the contents and teaching materials with which a student can project himself.

Conclusion: The Home Economics class on "dietary life" increased students' self-efficacy, enabled them to practice what they had learned in everyday life, and brought about a change in their consciousness and behavior. Moreover, the study revealed that it is important for teachers to consider the background of students and have a complete understanding of them.

Figure 1. Home Economics study at the point of formation in self-efficacy

Community
Change in family life (change in behavior toward the family)
Change in family consciousness
Recommend to the family "Tell the family"
Have discussions with one's family (change of student's consciousness)
Formation of self-efficacy (dynamics of behavior modification)
Ability to utilize (Acquisition of knowledge and skill)
Class is pleasant → I can understand class
Consciousness of usefulness and conviction

Table 1. Class on "Dietary Life"

Class Topic	Class Topic
1. Fried noodles (meaning of cooking practice)	8. Food situation in Japan
2. Nutrients contained in food	9. Comparison between a commercial item and a handmade one
3. Chemical seasoning	10. To plan a menu for meal, and cooking practice
4. How to make nature stock	11. Cooking using flour (madeleine)
5. How is cacao gathered?	12. Up to one drop of blood (DVD)
6. Fair trade	13. cooking sardine by hand (meunier)
7. Why do you eat alone?	A total of 35 hours

WG 1-2

The Present Situation with Regard to Food Preparation and the Attitudes of Home Economics Teachers

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Objective: We examined the present situation with regard to food preparation and the attitudes of home economics teachers.

Methods: We analyzed questionnaires filled out by 503 teachers from elementary, junior high, and senior high schools in 2009.

Effects and Findings:
1) More than 50% of the teachers spend 30% of home economics classes focusing on eating habits.
2) The average number of classes on food preparation, in descending order of frequency, is as follows: "Katei Sogo" (5.0 times), elementary school (4.3 times), junior high school (4.1 times), and "Katei Kiso" (3.9 times).
3) The common learning objectives at all school levels are "learning basic cooking methods and handling cooking utensils," "cooking safely and hygienically," and "experiencing happiness from cooking." These objectives were similar to those revealed by a survey that was conducted ten years ago.
4) About 30% of the teachers attached greater importance to the experiences of handmade cooking than to the learning skills, although in the previous survey, 30% of the teachers selected the learning skills. (Fig. 1)
5) Many teachers pointed out the limited number of hours allotted to classes as a problem. Junior high school teachers, in particular, pointed out many issues (Fig. 2).

Fig. 1 Attitudes toward cooking skills

Fig. 2 Problems in food Preparation class

WG 2

Home Economics Learning Based on the Community

Project Member: Y. Hikage (Hiroaki University), K. Aoki (Aichi University of Education), M. Watanabe (Former principal of the prefectural high school in Yamagata), N. Watase (Iwate University), M. Otake (Tokyo Gakugei University), K. Horiuchi (Yokohama National University), K. Ono (Hokkaido University of Education), K. Mochizuki (Akita University), N. Sasaki (The Principal of Omonogawa High School), S. Naganuma (Akita University), T. Suzuki (Akirudai High School), I. Sato (Honjo High School), R. Kamo (Meitokukan High School)

Objective: The home economics curriculum typically takes into consideration the community to which students belong. The concept of community, however, has been an ambiguous one. This research project aimed to reconsider the meaning of this concept in the home economics curriculum from historical and practical perspectives.

Methods:
1. Analyzing the practical and theoretical components pertaining to the community in the home economics curriculum
2. Analyzing of the curriculum with respect to Vocational homemaking in 1951 and the historical practices of "Future Homemakers of Japan".
3. Conducting research on junior high school students' recognition towards the community.
4. Developing community-focused practices in home economics classes at the elementary and high school levels

Effects and Findings:
The concept of the community was defined as the living field built on human coexistence and the creation of a specific culture. Educational activities pertaining to changing lifestyles in the community were introduced in the home economics curriculum. The aim was to employ a new perspective from which examine various lifestyles in the community. Home economics teachers were instructed by themselves in a "learning community".

WG 3-1

Home Economics Credits Reduction and Teachers' Views on the Curriculum: The Case of Japanese Senior High Schools

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Aims
The purpose of the study is to clarify the effects and problems of the reduction in home economics credits at the senior high school level and also to investigate teachers' views on the home economics curriculum as it now stand.

Method
Questionnaires were sent to 1311 Senior High schools in Japan and 621 replies were analyzed.

Effects
1) About 70% of teachers had experienced the decrease of required credits in home economics. Because of this, teachers were forced to cut down the learning hours of practical and investigative learning which caused a decline in students' living skills, and also caused the decline of the subject's value in school.
2) Teachers think "Independent living" and "Living together" are indispensable concepts of home economics and they try to nurture in students the knowledge and skills of living, problem solving literacy and human relations' literacy.

Conclusion:
The reduction of home economics credits is a serious problem because it may well deny the possibility to nurture living competencies and citizenship among students. We should widely proclaim the uniqueness and indispensable value of the subject to other professions and make networks among home economics teachers all around Japan.

Fig. 1. Indispensable Concept of Home Economics

WG 3-2

Home Economics and Education Reforms in Japanese upper secondary Schools : The Focus on Vocational Education

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Objective In Japan, due to the upper secondary school educational reforms, many schools and courses are merged or abolished. This study examines the current situation of the vocational (specialized) courses of home economics under such educational reforms.

Method Archived documents and materials are analyzed.

Findings

Fig. 1 Number of Independent Upper Secondary Schools by Type of Course (Full-time Course in Public School)

Fig. 2 The Courses of Upper Secondary Schools and the Number of Students enrolled in each Course (Public School)

1. The number of upper secondary school students who opt for home economics has significantly decreased.
2. In some prefectures where upper secondary school reforms are carried out, the number of home economics courses has drastically decreased. For instance, many upper secondary schools which newly founded various subjects and courses do not keep the name 'Kateika' (home economics) anymore.

WG 3-3

Home Economics Curriculum Development and Practice focusing on Poverty Issues Related to Work and Welfare

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Objective
The study aims to develop a home management curriculum within the area of Home Economics that will encourage high school students to consider how to achieve and maintain a financially independent future in the context of the present "income-gap society."

Methods
Two research methods were employed in this study.
1) A survey of the current living conditions and part-time job of high school students
2) A trial implementation of the curriculum & collection of feedback to identify areas of the curriculum needing improvements

Results and Findings
1) Survey of high school students
① There are students who are trying to make ends meet by working part-time and are in danger of not being able to continue their studies because of the poor financial state of their families.
② Living in poverty deprives students of hope for the future and results in increased anxiety regarding their educational advancement, employment potential, ability to marry and achieve financial independence, etc.
2) Trial implementation of curriculum & identification of improvements
① The class helped students develop their ability to seek out and access available resources to help improve their living situation.
② The class also helped students develop personal and family resource management skills that will enable students to live with dignity.
③ It is important to take the approach of focusing on poverty as a socio-economic issue rather than one of personal responsibility.
④ This curriculum would encourage student to strive to become an active citizen and help create a society in which society members can live with a sense of security.

Fig. 1 The reason for doing a part-time job

Survey of Japanese Junior High School

Examination of the Actual Conditions of Home Economics Teachers in Japanese Junior High Schools

N.Takagi, T.Akatsuka, Y.Nakanishi, Y.Shimura, 27 other research partner

Objective: The purpose of this study is to clarify the present conditions of Japanese junior high school Home Economics teachers. Moreover, on the basis of our findings, we aim to introduce environmental management in order to improve Home Economics education.

Methods: Using a questionnaire administered to Home Economics teachers in all prefectures of Japan, we collected data on the situation and formed research partnerships.

Findings: 1) Of the Home Economics teachers in junior high school, 75.5% were full-time and 16% were part-time. (Fig. 1)
2) Further, of these teachers, only 75.6% were licensed, while the remaining 24.4% of teachers did not possess a Home Economics license. (Fig. 2)
3) Also, 58.1% of the Home Economics teachers take classes in other subjects. (Fig. 3)

Conclusion: The study revealed that there are few full-time teachers, and that about 25% of the teachers did not have a license to teach Home Economics in junior high school. Moreover, many Home Economics teachers taught various other subjects. Appealing against the increase in the number of full-time Home Economics teachers, implementing teacher training, and maintaining the quality of classes conducted by unlicensed teachers are considerations for the future.

Fig. 1 The percentage of teachers and lecturers in Home Economics

Fig. 2 Percentage of licensed and unlicensed teachers in Home Economics

Fig. 3 Percentage of teachers who teach other subjects in Home Economics

IV. Reflection of the Project Activity

The research project involved 52 members over six working groups under the three themes. Members were largely university's researchers and school teachers from all over Japan. Each group reported their working process and outputs twice at the annual meetings, by means of a research presentation in 2009, and by means of a poster presentation accompanied by attending the symposium in 2010. The research reports were available on the home-page of the JAHEE website, and were widely shared.

V. The Effects and Findings

The research reports were available on the home-page of the JAHEE website, and were widely shared. Most groups were very active in performing their investigative tasks, such as obtaining the government budget to conduct detailed studies on their topics, writing treatises in the journals of JAHEE, publishing books, and so on. As a result, their activities were far exceeded the expectation of JAHEE. From these facts, it can be concluded that the trial was a success in terms of facilitating investigative activity among members. The following are the two main reasons, for the success of this project: guaranteed independency and freedom that facilitates creativity for active investigation among project members, and sharing of the process and outputs of the projects with all members with information open to everyone.