

July 3, 2022

Statement of the 65th Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society for Home Economics Education

The Japanese Society for Home Economics Education is pleased to present the following statement at its 65th Annual Conference.

Home economics education has historically been deeply intertwined with the female gender as only females were required to study home economics. In transitioning from the former era and being one of the core elements in the theory, home economics education has taken a progressive approach as all students are now required to study the subject regardless of their gender, and textbooks now include content that addresses gender issues. This provides opportunities for children to think about the division with regards to gender roles as well as the nature and importance of gender equality.

The Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society was enacted almost 20 years ago. During this time, a compulsory requirement was placed on upper secondary schools to teach home economics to all genders. As a result, a generation of both male and female students who have taken home economics at all levels, from elementary level to secondary school, has emerged and is now playing a central role in society. However, out of 156 countries, Japan ranks 120th on the Gender Gap Index as of 2021. One of the reasons for this low ranking is the sluggish advancement of women in management, politics, and economics, which has been attributed to the current lack of sufficient progress in men's presence within the family dynamic.

While women are encouraged to advance in their careers and play an active role in society, efforts to encourage men to be more present within the family dynamic, such as taking childcare leave, have not yet resulted in sufficient changes that bring about the necessary awareness and development in society. Education is a future-oriented activity to nurture the next generation, and subjects such as home economics, which are based on family life, playing a part in society, and grooming the future generation of consumers, are subjects that can educate children to become aware about a gender-equal society and the need for it.

At the meeting held in December 2021, we invited home economics teachers from elementary level, junior high, and high schools to speak on the theme of “The Present and Future of Home Economics Education from a Gender Perspective.” They reported on the results of their classroom practices and how the gender perspective has been incorporated into home economics classes. Their feedback suggested what kind of skills and level of understanding will need to be developed through studying home economics for people to become leaders of a society in which they can be independent and coexist. The meeting further provided an opportunity to consider how home economics education can contribute to the realization of gender equality, based on the practices of our members.

The 65th Annual Meeting in July 2022, themed “The Potential of Home Economics Education from a Gender Perspective: Implications from Diverse Gender Approaches and Practices,” featured a symposium by speakers specializing in fields other than home economics education and who had engaged in gender-related research activities and practices. Researchers specializing in sociology of education, media theory, and education for special support discussed the achievements and challenges of home economics and highlight the importance of home economics education from the perspective of “what learning home economics means to men.” We were also reminded of the fact that each of us exists within a diverse gradation of genders that is not bound by the framework of a specific gender.

We, home economics educators and researchers, have a mission to understand the significance of home economics education for the realization of gender equality. We also promote children’s awareness and widen their learning in our daily educational practices, raising awareness within a society so that each individual is respected, and everyone can be themselves. The Japanese Society of Home Economics Education aims to develop and enhance the educational practice of home economics and home economics as a subject that questions the way of life and families. In order to contribute to the realization of gender equality, we will continue to disseminate the results of our efforts to societies at large, without limiting our efforts to those involved in home economics.