

2 Home Economics Education in the 2008 & 2009 Course of Study

2-1 Educational Reform and Basic Rational of the Newest Course of Study

The course of study (abbreviating as COS), announced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (abbreviating as ECSST), defines the learning objectives and contents of each subject at all schools in Japan. The COS is revised almost every ten years in accordance with social changes and educational needs. Based on the COS, textbooks are written by textbook publishing companies, and class plans are created at individual schools. The latest COS for elementary schools and junior high schools was announced in 2008, and implemented into elementary schools in spring 2011, and junior high schools in spring 2012. The new COS for senior high schools was announced in 2009, and planned to be implemented into schools in spring 2013. In this chapter, 2008 & 2009 COS signifies the course of study announced in 2008 and 2009.

In Japan, the Central Council for Education has an essential role as an advisory body for the Ministry of ECSST and writes important reports for educational reforms. This council consists of members chosen from diversified fields and has addressed important suggestions to make changes in educational policies.

In 2005, the Minister of ECSST requested the Central Council for Education to conduct an educational reform in order to improve the education for children living through the 21st century. Along with this request, the fundamental law of education was amended and the following three goals were set for the next decade of Japanese education.

Japanese education will facilitate students to become;

- Independent human beings who have a balance of knowledge, virtue and healthy body and develop themselves for lifelong self-actualization
- Citizens who proactively participate in construction of the country and society with a respect of public-mindedness
- Japanese nationals who live within an international society on the basis of Japanese heritage and culture

Further, following the amendment of the fundamental law of education, the school education act was partly revised. The revised school education act defines the ideal

academic achievement as follows;

Basic knowledge and skills need to be acquired in order to cultivate the base of lifelong learning. Education should be meant to develop the necessary ability to think, judge and express in order to solve problems by applying those knowledge and skills, and foster attitude to become proactive learners. (School Education Act, Article 30, Clause 2. This is an elementary school prescript, but is applied to junior and senior high schools as well.)

Based on the revised school education act, the following six fundamentals were woven into revision of the 2008 & 2009 COS:

1. Reflecting the rational of “Zest for living.”
2. Acquiring basic knowledge and skills.
3. Developing the ability to think, judge and express.
4. Securing necessary class hours in order to establish solid academic achievement.
5. Enhancing learning motivation and establishing study habits.
6. Improving instruction to develop a healthy spirit and body.

“Zest for living” was the key rational in the 1998 & 1999 COS, and carried into the 2008 & 2009 COS. The reason why “Zest for living” was promoted was that there was a social concern that children living in through radical social changes have little ability to develop interrelationships and sociability, and a sense of moral code. The educational focus before the 1998 & 1999 COS was put more on the accumulation of knowledge and less on creativity of their own life. Therefore, the amount of teaching contents of each subject was reduced and the five-day-week system was implemented when the 1998 & 1999 COS was implemented in 2002.

According to the Ministry of ECSST, “Zest for living” means solid academic achievement, rich humanity, and health and physical fitness. However, from the view point of home economics education, “Zest for living” should be “Literacy for living,” which encompass comprehensive and practical skills and thoughts for living. It can be also said that it is the literacy Japanese home economics education has always aimed to accomplish through home economics classes. As well, such literacy can take an important role for “Zest for living.” On one hand, home economics should be in charge of education for “Zest for living.” On the other hand, home economics was not an exception in the reduction of class hours. This is a contradiction Japanese home economics education has been suffering for over 10 years.

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2-2 Overall Characteristics of Home Economics Education in the 2008 & 2009 Course of Study

2-2-1 Limited Class Hours

The home economics class hours have stayed with the same limited hours since the 1998 & 1999 COS was implemented in 2002. Comparing to the 1998 & 1999 COS and 2008 & 2009 COS, the 1989 COS offered the most affluent class hours for home economics education at all school levels, as Table 2-1, Table 2-2 and Table 2-3 show.

The elementary school home economics had 70 class hours for each of Grade 5 and 6 with the COS 1989. Then, the class hours have been reduced to 60 for Grade 5 and 55 for Grade 6 with the 1998 & 1999 COS and 2008 & 2009 COS.

Table 2-1 Home Economics Class Hours per year at the Elementary School Level

Grade	1989 COS	1998 & 1999 COS	2008 & 2009 COS
Grade 5	70	60	60
Grade 6	70	55	55

The class hours for the 1st and 2nd year of junior high school Technology & Home Economics have remained the same. The 3rd year had between 70 and 105 class hours with the 1989 COS, but the COS 1998 & 1999 and COS 2008 & 2009 assigned only 35 class hours.

Table 2-2 Technology & Home Economics Class Hours per year at the Elementary Junior High School Level

Year	1989 COS	1998 & 1999 COS	2008 & 2009 COS
1 st Year	70	70	70
2 nd Year	70	70	70
3 rd Year	70-105	35	35

There have been three home economics subjects offered at the senior high school level. In the 1989 COS, all three home economics subjects required 4 credits. Two out three home economics subjects in the 1998 & 1999 COS and 2008 & 2009 COS are 4-credit subjects. However, "Basic Home Economics" in both the 1998 & 1999 COS and 2008 & 2009 COS requires only 2 credits. Each school is supposed to choose one of these three subjects. About 70 % of the senior high schools in Japan have been

offering the 2-credit “Basic Home Economics” instead of other 4-credit subjects. This has caused a problem. So called academic schools choose the 2-credit subject in order to have students take more credits from the entrance examination subjects, such as Japanese, English and Math, for higher education instead of credits from home economics. Japan still suffers from excessive competition to go on to universities and colleges. It has led to differentiations among schools.

Table 2-3 Home Economics Subjects and Credits at the Senior High School Level

COS 1989	COS 1998 & 1999	COS 2008 & 2009
General Home Economics (4 credits)	Basic Home Economics (2 credits)	Basic Home Economics (2 credits)
General Home Life (4 credits)	Comprehensive Home Economics (4 credits)	Comprehensive Home Economics (4 credits)
Home Life Skills (4 credits)	Home Life Skills (4 credits)	Life Design (4 credits)

2-2-2 Poor Placement of Home Economics Teachers in Schools

In order to meet individual student’s needs, some schools are able to minimize the class size down to 35, or less, students per class, implement team teaching and hire more teachers for differentiated guidance according to the level of proficiency. However, the minimization of the class size has achieved only for Grade 1 at the elementary school level. The maximum class size in Japan is still 40 students per class. Those teachers hired for the team teaching and differentiated guidance are unstable part-time teachers.

In particular, the number of full-time home economics teachers has been reduced due to the deduction of the class hours at the junior high school level and implementation of the 2-credit subject at the senior high school level. Some schools have only part-time home economics teachers. This has created a more difficult situation for home economics teachers. It is problematic that few part-time teachers give enough instruction to individual students only within the class hours. For example, some students require more instruction beyond the class hour.

Also, it is emphasized that individual assessment should be made more appropriately according to the COS. The Ministry of ECSST has instructed to apply the four evaluation criteria, a) Curiosity, motivation and attitudes, b) invention and creativity, c) skills, and d) knowledge and understanding. Teachers are supposed to assess students with their participation in class, submitted handouts and examinations by applying those four criteria. It is difficult to implement this evaluation when a

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teacher still has 40 students in one class. Especially, it is challenging for home economics not only because home economics has more lab work and hands-on activities than other subjects, but also because a school has fewer full-time home economics teachers, as mentioned above. For example, one home economics teacher can be in charge of evaluating over three hundred students in one term.

2-2-3 Challenge in Relation with Integrated Study

All three school levels, elementary, junior high and senior high, have Integrated Study as a part of their education. And, each school is supposed to create its own curriculum for Integrated Study. It is expected to include cooperation among the teachers as well as from the community around the school. In fact, it is not easy to gain cooperation from the community. Some schools allot their class hours of Integrated Study to other subjects that have reduced class hours.

In relation to Home Economics, Integrated Study has similar objectives and themes and activities to ones of Home Economics. For example, like Home Economics, Integrated Study has the objectives to develop problem-solving ability and explore how to plan a person's future life. As well, it is suggested that Integrated Study deal with themes concerning environmental problems and social welfare, and include hands-on activities. These objectives, themes and learning activities are always instructed in Home Economics and not something new for this subject. However, Integrated Study also has differences from Home Economics. The COS for Integrated Study does not specify the details of contents, and the four themes indicated in the COS are only suggested themes, and each school can define any themes as long as they are the students' interest or related to characteristics of the school or the community.

Because of some similarities, some home economics educators fear the pending threat to the existence of home economics education. Further, there is a concern that Integrated Study can sometimes appear like Home Economics, which could cause a problem. For example, an elementary school set up a theme of Integrated Study, "International understanding" and had students cook dishes from other countries in order to instruct students about the diversification of food culture. The students did have cooking lab activities. However, they were not instructed on any cooking knowledge, skills, food hygiene or nutrition of the ingredients. They completed the cooking classes in safety, but there was pending danger. It can be also questioned as to what the students learnt through this cooking class. Did they cook just for an experience? These cooking classes appeared so similar to food lab activities in Home Economics. Students' knowledge and skills are integrated through the three school

stages of learning Home Economics. Yet, Integrated Study does not have consistent objectives through the three school stages. One theme dealt with at the elementary school level may not be developed or may be completely redundant at the junior high school level because each school creates its own curriculum for Integrated Study.

2-2-4 Challenge of Offering Elective Classes

The 2008 & 2009 COS gained back some hours for the total standard class hours, but the re-gained hours are not assigned to home economics. Further, the 2008 & 2009 COS does not allow junior high schools to have elective class hours. Only senior high schools can have elective classes.

Nevertheless, it is not easy to offer elective home economics classes even at the senior high school level. When a school has a full-time home economics teacher(s), they can usually offer an elective home economics class(es). However, as mentioned above, due to the limited home economics class hours and full-time home economics teachers, the actual number of elective home economics classes in Japan has been minimized.

2-3 Objectives and Contents of Home Economics Education at each School Level

In the accordance with the educational reform, the 2008 & 2009 home economics COS has a common emphases at all three educational levels, which is in actualizing development of the ability to think, judge and express.

One of them is having more problem solving learning activities. The problem solving learning has been implemented in Japanese home economics education for a long time. But, more emphasis is put on the problem solving learning in the 2008 & 2009 COS.

The other emphasis is placed on expressing thoughts orally and using charts and figures to examine issues and explain their learning.

The following explicate concrete objectives and contents of home economics education at each school level.

2-3-1 Elementary School Home Economics

1) Overall objectives and objectives for Grade 5 and Grade 6 (Table 2-4)

The goal of elementary school home economics is to acquire basic knowledge and skills by learning concrete family life activities related to food, clothing and housing. It is also aimed to develop attitude to improve their own family life as a family member. Through this learning, it is expected to nurture spirit to value family life and establish a

base of independent life for the future. Table 2-4 shows the overall objectives and grade objectives of elementary school home economics.

Table 2-4 Overall Objectives and Grade Objectives of Elementary School Home Economics

<p>Overall Objectives:</p> <p>To enable pupils to acquire basic and fundamental knowledge and skills necessary for everyday life through practical and hands-on activities relating to food, clothing and housing, to foster a sense of cherishing family life, and to develop a positive attitude towards a better family life as a member of the family.</p>
<p>Objectives for Grade 5 and Grade 6:</p> <p>(1) To enable pupils to become aware of their personal growth, to increase their interest in family life and to realize its importance through practical and hands-on activities relating to food, clothing, housing and family life.</p> <p>(2) To help pupils acquire basic and fundamental knowledge and skills necessary for everyday life, and to enable them to put these skills into practice in their everyday lives.</p> <p>(3) To help pupils take pleasure in leading a life in harmony with other family members and to develop a positive attitude towards a better family life.</p>

2) Contents of Elementary School Home Economics

As Table 2-5 and Table 2-7 displays, the similar four categories are used for the elementary and junior high schools in order to have coherence of the two school stages. Those four are “Family,” “Food and Cooking,” “Clothing and Housing,” “Consumption and the Environment.” This coherence is designed for the accumulation of development of basic knowledge and skills for family life management at the compulsory educational stages.

Table 2-5 Contents of Elementary School Home Economics

<p>A. Family and Family Life</p> <p>(1) Growth of pupils themselves and the importance of their family in its process</p> <p>(2) Family life and housework</p> <p>(3) How pupils can get along with their family and the people in their neighborhood</p> <p>B. Daily Meals and Basics in Cooking</p> <p>(1) Roles of meals</p> <p>(2) Well-balanced diet</p> <p>(3) Basics in cooking</p> <p>C. Comfortable Clothing and Housing</p> <p>(1) Pupils’ dressing and the maintenance of their clothes</p> <p>(2) How pupils can have a comfortable home</p> <p>(3) Pupils’ making items useful for living</p>

D. Daily Consumption and the Environment

- (1) How pupils can make good use of things and money and do shopping
- (2) How pupils can lead earth-friendly ways of living

2-3-2 Junior High School Home Economics

1) Objectives of Junior High School Home Economics

The actual junior high school subject including home economics is Technology and Home Economics. The subject consists of the technology field and home economics field. Table 2-6 shows the goals of the home economics field. It is expected to conduct practical and hand-on activities relating to food, clothing and housing and acquire basic and fundamental knowledge and skills necessary for an independent life. Further, it indicates the importance of family influence as life's foundation and the necessity of creativity for improving students' future life in order to live through a radically changing society.

Table 2-6 Objectives of Junior High School Home Economics

To enable students to acquire basic and fundamental knowledge and skills necessary for an independent life through practical and hands-on activities relating to food, clothing and housing; to deepen understanding of the functions of a family, and to look toward their future lives and to develop skills and attitude towards a better life with recognition of challenges.

2) Contents of Junior High School Home Economics

As mentioned above, the content of junior high school home economics has the four categories that are similar to the ones for elementary home economics (See Table 2-7). In order to promote the problem solving learning, independent study projects are supposed to be undertaken at the end of A, B and C categories. Students are expected to set project themes from one or two categories.

Table 2-7 Contents of Junior High School Home Economics

A. Family, Home and Child Growth

- (1) Growth of students themselves and their families
- (2) Students' home and family relations
- (3) Children's lives and their families

B. Food, Cooking and Independent Life

- (1) Lower secondary students' dietary habits and nutrition
- (2) How to select a daily menu and foods
- (3) Preparation of daily meals and regional food culture

C. Clothing, Housing and Independent Life

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) Selecting and caring for clothing(2) Function of housing and modes of living(3) Life techniques such as clothing habits and manner of housing <p>D. Daily Consumption and the Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) Domestic life and consumption(2) Domestic life and the environment |
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2-3-3 Senior High School Home Economics

1) Overall objective and Objectives of Each Senior High School Home Economics subject

Under the umbrella of home economics, there are three subjects at the senior high school level; “Basic Home Economics,” “Comprehensive Home Economics,” and “Life Design.” As mentioned before, one of the subjects is selected and taught at each senior high school. Senior high school home economics has an overall objective, and each subject has its own objective (See Table 2-8).

The overall objective is set for comprehensive understanding of lifelong development of human beings and life management. As well, based on the elementary school and junior high school education, it expects students to identify the meaning of family and acquire necessary knowledge and skills for life. It is especially characteristic for senior high school home economics to state the relation between families and society, gender-equal cooperation, and the construction of community life as well as family life.

The 2-credit subject, “Basic Home Economics” is to acquire basic and fundamental knowledge and skills necessary for human life, family and home, welfare, food, clothing, housing and consumption.

The 4-credit subject, “Comprehensive Home Economics” is to obtain necessary knowledge and skills for life more comprehensively than “Basic Home Economics.”

The other 4-credit subject, “Life Design” is to develop knowledge and skills for life by practicing more hands-on activities.

Table 2-8 Overall objective and objectives of each subject for Senior High School Home Economics

<p>Overall Objectives:</p> <p>To enable students to gain a comprehensive view of lifelong development of human beings and life management, to identify the meaning of family and home and the relation between families and the society, to acquire necessary knowledge and skills for life, and to develop creativity and positive attitude for proactively constructing family life and community life with gender-equal cooperation.</p>
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Objectives of Basic Home Economics:

To enable students to acquire basic and fundamental knowledge and skills relating to human life, family, home, welfare, food, clothing, housing and consumption, to proactively solve problems concerning the family and community, and to develop skills and attitude for enhancement and improvement of their life.

Objectives of Comprehensive Home Economics:

To enable students to comprehensively acquire knowledge and skills relating to human life, family, home, relationship with children and elderly people, welfare, consumption, food, clothing and housing, to proactively solve problems concerning the family and community, and to develop skills and attitude for enhancement and improvement of their life.

Objectives of Life Design:

To enable students to practically acquire knowledge and skills relating to human life, family, home, welfare, consumption, food, clothing and housing, to proactively solve problems concerning the family and community, and to develop skills and attitude for enhancement and improvement of their life.

2) Contents of Senior High School Home Economics Subjects

The common contents among the three subjects are promotion of a gender-equal society, understanding issues in an aging society with a low birthrate, relation between family and society, life planning throughout one's life, consideration of the global environment and construction of a sustainable society (See Table 2-9 and Appendix for details).

As well, all the three subjects have "Home Projects and School Home Economics Club Activities." This is to put students' learning into practice for improving their own family life and community life with a problem solving learning activity. At least half of the class hours of each subject are supposed to be assigned to lab work.

Table 2-9 Contents of Senior High School Home Economics

<p><u>Basic Home Economics</u> (1) Human Life, Family, Home and Welfare (2) Independent Life, Consumerism and the Environment (3) Home Projects and School Home Economics Club Activities</p>
<p><u>Comprehensive Home Economics</u> (1) Human Life, Family and Home (2) Relationship with Children and Elderly People, and Welfare (3) Financial Planning and Consumption in Life (4) Life Science and the Environment (5) Life Planning (6) Home Projects and School Home Economics Club Activities</p>
<p><u>Life Design</u> (1) Human Life, Family, Home and Welfare</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">(2) Lifestyle Establishment Concerning Consumption and the Environment(3) Planning and Creation of Life regarding Food(4) Planning and Creation of Life regarding Clothing(5) Planning and Creation of Life regarding Housing(6) Home Projects and School Home Economics Club Activities |
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The content of “Basic Home Economics” is divided into two, “(1) Human Life, Family, Home and Welfare,” which focuses more on people themselves, and “(2) Independent Life, Consumerism and the Environment,” which deals with food, clothing, housing, consumption and life planning.

The content of “Comprehensive Home Economics” consists of the five components, “(1) Human Life and Family and Home,” “(2) Relationship with Children and Elderly People, and Welfare,” “(3) Financial Planning and Consumption in Life,” “(4) Life Science and the Environment” and “(5) Life Planning.” The contents regarding food, clothing and housing are included in “(4) Life Science and the Environment,” and instructed for establishing a sustainable lifestyle.

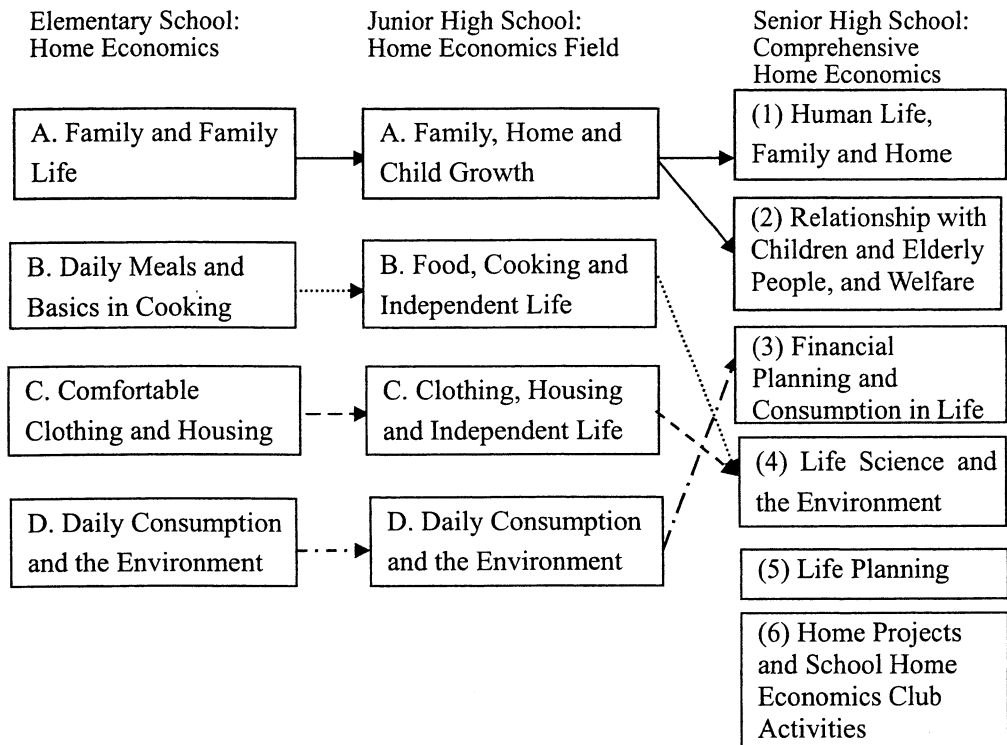
The content of “Life Design” also has five components, “(1) Human Life, Family, Home and Welfare,” “(2) Lifestyle Establishment Concerning Consumption and the Environment,” “(3) Planning and Creation of Life regarding Food,” “(4) Planning and Creation of Life regarding Clothing” and “(5) Planning and Creation of Life regarding Housing.” “Life Design” offers profound contents relating food, clothing and housing.

“Comprehensive Home Economics” and “Life Design” are supposed to enhance interest and inheritance of culture. This is a reflection of the revision of the fundamental law of education.

2-4 Relations of Home Economics Education in the Three School Stages with the 2008 & 2009 Course of Study

Figure 2-1 illustrates the relation of home economics education in the three school stages. This indicates that the learning contents at each stage are integrated with each other. As described before, the integration between the elementary school and junior high school was made clearly with the 2008 COS by forming the contents with the similar four categories. Figure 2-1 uses “Comprehensive Home Economics” as an example to compare its contents with the elementary and junior high school levels. The other two subjects, “Basic Home Economics” and “Life Design” also include contents regarding elderly people and life planning, which are characteristics of the senior high school home economics education.

Figure 2-1 Relations of Home Economics Education in the Three School Stages with the 2008 & 2009 Course of Study



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