



★ NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Japanese Citizenship Education

The 22th Japanese Association for Civic Education Annual Conference

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The conference entitled "Improvement of language activities in civic education: on the viewpoint of comparison of Japan and USA" took place on 18th June 2011 at the Faculty of Education, Ehime University, Japan. More than 120 participants contributed to the educational programme.

The Fundamental Law of Education in Japan was revised in 2006, and the Course of Study was revised in 2008. The new educational practices on the basis of this new course of study started in April 2011. Regarding the current state in this country, it has been said that our society is facing a major crisis. It points out that

- 1) changes for the lives of individuals in the population composition due to a declining birth rate and an aging society and changes in families and local society are causing a decline in vitality in our society.
- 2) The quantity of information provided to society, transferring knowledge to society, progress in globalisation, advances in science technology and severe global environmental issues have all increased.
- 3) Although there has been a slight improvement, the prolonged stagnant economy and the course of changes in industrial and working structures has resulted in a rapid increase in the number of people leaving or retiring from work, there are now difficulties for new graduates in obtaining employment, and difficulties in maintaining stable employment. Due to such situations, as illustrated by typical examples of the increased number of Neet, Freeter (permanent part timer), Hikikomori (social withdrawal) individuals, we are seeing that people's values, which have thus far been directed toward supporting their lives and society, are changing and there are more and more people having a feeling that their future is being "blocked" and losing their sense of ethics or social mission which encourages them to support their own way of living.

Now, fundamental reform of political, economical and social structure is progressing in order to come out of such confusion and establish a foundation for the long-term development of our society. Reform in education is especially important, as it is a basis for the established existence of our society. Only education can provide the motivational power to overcome the various difficulties, which our society will face in the future, to realise dreams and the prosperity of the country and the need of the further promotion of drastic review and reform of education for our country to become creative, vigorous and open to the world.

The new course of study emphasises the following viewpoints:

- 1) Establishment of reliable school education. Promotion of educational reforms to lead towards a Century of Knowledge.
- 2) Restoration of the ability of families to educate children and promote cooperation/collaboration of schools, homes, and communities.
- 3) Self-actualisation of individuals and fostering individuality, ability, and creativity of individuals.
- 4) Fostering proactive will and attitude to participate in the public. Fostering a sense of civic mindedness in the terms of active participation in the formation of a society, morals and values, and autonomy.
- 5) Fostering respect for Japan's tradition and culture, love for our homeland and country, as well as the consciousness of being a member of the international community.
- 6) Realisation of a lifelong learning society, response to changes in time and society.
- 7) Emphasize sensitivity and involvement with nature and the environment.
- 8) Clarification of the relationship between occupational life and education.
- 9) Contribution to a gender-equal society.





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15 publications on these challenges in civic education were presented at the conference, and participants discussed each presentation. Keynotes were held by Professor Walter Parker, University of Washington and Professor Sheila Valencia, University of Washington, USA. Their subjects were “Deliberation in Civic Education” and “Instructional Strategies to Improve Student’ Reading Comprehension”.

More information:

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