

## **Home Education from Gender Perspective**

### **Ms. Junka BEKKERS (the Netherlands)**

<Blue is for boys and pink for girls.> this is a stereotypical perception on colors in the Netherlands. Living in this country, I find that Dutch people's way of thinking is basically free from gender bias. For this reason, such a stereotypical perception drew my attention and I decided to research if they have stereotyped perception on vocations in society. I prepared questionnaire targeting group 8 children (6th grade at elementary school in Japan, hereinafter called the 6th grade children) of elementary schools and randomly selected guardians. The questionnaire included the following questions: which gender do you imagine for certain vocations? What do you think about equal opportunities by gender in school education and career? I would like to share the result below.

First, the 6th grade children described what kind of household chores their parents do in response to the question about gender roles at home. According to their answers, it seems that their fathers and mothers cooperatively do almost the same domestic duties. The one who is free cooks or cleans the house and both share duties equally. Nevertheless, there are exceptions which are mainly handled by fathers: taking care of their gardens and repair works. It was surprising that they handle all the other chores in turn from day to day. The same result was found from the guardians' answers: the father cooks and cleans on the days when the mother works outside. If one of them works part-time and the other works full-time, the one with part-time job covers more house chores. This result fits the said tendency that the one who has free time does more house chores. In addition to that, all the guardians share common ideas: "There is no gender role division at home. It depends on the living environment of the family, but the point is family members should live with mutual agreement and support."

Next, I would like to show the survey result about images of vocations in society. There are some notable and interesting points among numerous types of jobs. The vocations that are considered for men by relative majority of both children and guardians are: carrier, firefighter, pilot, military personnel, construction worker and repair worker. Especially, 100% of the 6th grade boys and girls, 100% of male guardians and 75% female guardians consider that construction work is for men. Similarly, 100% of male guardians and 75% of female guardians regard carrier and repair worker are for men while about 90% of the children answer the same. On the other hand, vocations that are considered for women by both groups are beauty care job and nursery teachers. Here is an interesting observation which is common for both groups: teachers of elementary school

or higher are regarded as both genders' vocation, but the ones of nursery school are women's. Furthermore, both groups assume that politician is for both genders. This is reasonable, because we have more female ministers or high officials in politics in the Netherlands than in Japan.

Now let us look at the case where different perception is seen in each group. Cleaning job is regarded as women's by 85% of the 6th grade boys and girls, but it is regarded as both genders' by 75% of male guardians and 50% of female. Besides, as already mentioned, household chores are actually handled by both genders in a cooperative manner, but 87% of the 6th grade boys and 64% of the girls regard as women's job and 50% of the male and female guardians consider it for both genders. This seems to be reflecting what children see at home: namely, mothers who have part-time job and more free time automatically handle more house chores, because in reality, fathers work full-time and mothers part-time in many families. Regarding computer-related vocation, it is considered for men by 100% of boys and 64% of girls while it is considered for both genders by 75% of male guardians and 50% of female. The image gaps between the children and the guardians in vocations of cleaning and computer-related is representing how much they know and face the social reality. Another interesting point is regarding the response about nurse. 100% of the 6th grade boys and 94% of the girls think it is both genders' vocation, including homebound nursing and care for the elderly. On the other hand, as for hospital nurse, 75% of the male guardians and 50% of the female consider it for both genders while homebound nursing and care for the elderly is regarded as women's vocation by 75% of the male and female guardians. My observation about this difference is the followings: people may have strong image that homebound nurse and care for the elderly covers something similar to housekeeping, which lead to the idea of women's vocation; or men tend to pursue jobs which they can employ their professional knowledge.

Questionnaire survey result indicates the overview images that vocations which require physical strength or engineering skill are for men, and caring people or beauty care jobs are for women.

With regards to the equal opportunity in school education and career, both the 6th grade children and the guardians responded it was natural to be equal. To the question "do you feel uncomfortable if a man become a househusband?" all the guardians answered "No," and 96% of the children "No" and 4% "Yes." Although "Ikumen" are increasing in Japan, I assume that there is still a large gap between the two countries regarding the perception of househusband.

My observation from this questionnaire survey is that society is an extension of a

family and home education can change society in a favorable way. Especially looking at the children's answers, it seems that their parents' actions and attitudes at home have influence on the image about types of jobs in society. In other words, children's image toward society is formed by their parents. Whatever the image they have for any job in society, it is important for the children to be flexible enough to accept and understand difference in ideas. This can change society for better. This is a matter of course, but we become unaware of it in our daily life. That means, thinking about gender issue can remind us of the importance of home education which we tend to forget in these days. The home education is the base on which we build our future. In this aspect I believe that the survey was useful.



The elementary school is a miniature of diverse cultures of the Netherlands. I look forward to their future development.