

A PRACTICAL STUDY: CURRENT STATUS OF EDUCATION IN HOUSING AND LIVING, WHICH MAKES FULL USE OF HISTORICAL MUSEUMS, AND EXTENSION OF SUCH EDUCATION IN THE RAPIDLY AGING SOCIETY WITH LOW BIRTHRATE

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[SYNOPSIS]

Museums in Japan are classified into several subtypes, such as historical museums, general museums, art museums, science museums, aquariums, zoos and botanic gardens. A total of 270 million Japanese citizens visit those museums (5,600 in total in Japan) annually. The number of visits per person, 2.1 times, is larger than those for other types of facilities (e.g. 1.7 times for community centers and 1.1 times for libraries), which suggests that museums are the familiar and accessible lifelong learning facilities for citizens. Public historical museums (3,600 in total), which makes up two-thirds of all museums, have the least visitors per museum. This is why a prescription for resuscitating historical museums in this low birthrate, rapidly aging society. Public historical museums have focused on presenting special exhibitions and neglected to make most of permanent exhibitions and to provide lifelong learning opportunities to citizens. However, with the arrival of the low birthrate, rapidly aging society, historical museums started carrying out various activities to support learning. With this situation in mind, I conducted a nationwide survey on learning support activities provided by public historical museums to clarify the goals and problems and further investigated those goals and problems from the viewpoint of education in housing and living. Furthermore, I held practical workshops at the Osaka Museum in Housing and Living, which has achieved forward-looking activities in this area, to reveal the results of the study and problems. Details of the study are described below. The study of 100 major public historical museums showed that although learning support activities for children are relatively broad-ranging, there are virtually no such activities for high-school or university students and elderly people. The study also revealed that there were few programs which made full use of permanent exhibitions. Furthermore, the study points to the fact that although historical exhibitions have a plenty of learning materials for the housing-and-living education, those materials are not sufficiently used in learning about housing and community in the home economics course or the integrated learning. Based on the results of nationwide survey, I re-summarized and reviewed learning support activities provided by the Osaka Museum in Housing and Living, developed a new interactive learning program based on the evaluation of the Museum's exhibitions by visitors, and held workshops for both children and adults. The paper is concluded by emphasizing that historical museums should focus on enriching programs for various age groups and making full use of permanent exhibitions in their lifelong learning activities in order to respond to the low birthrate, rapidly aging society.