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Japanese women to have more equality

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28 December, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Japanese women to have more equality

The Japanese government has endorsed a set of measures that aims to increase the number of women in top-level government posts to 30 percent from the current 21.5 percent by 2020. The ambitious plans also cater for working mothers as the government attempts to stem the tide of a shrinking workforce. Further plans aim to help more women into management. Only nine percent of managers in Japan are female, compared with 46 percent in the U.S. The new directives will allow full-time female civil servants to work shorter hours to cope with the demands of raising children. They recommend companies rehire women after their maternity leave ends to entice back to work a portion of the two thirds of mothers who leave the workforce permanently following childbirth. The government will also urge male civil servants to take paternity leave.

The new targets consolidate on the Gender Equality Basic Plan, which was introduced in 2000. They include many measures to address institutionalized inequalities, discrimination and harassment. One of the focal points is the drive to support female entrepreneurs by making available more information regarding business start-ups and introducing a mentor system to aid would-be businesswomen. Prime Minister Koizumi said he wanted “to create a gender-equality society in which men and women can have dreams and expectations by fully exercising their individuality and abilities”. Japan lags behind many industrialized nations in gender equality. It ranks a lowly 43rd among 80 countries in the 2005 United Nations Gender Empowerment Measure index.

WARM-UPS

1. EQUALITY: In pairs / groups, discuss how equal you feel in your society. Do you ever feel unequal because of your gender, race, color, religion, financial wealth...?

2. GENDER SWAP: For the next five minutes you have swapped genders. In pairs / groups, talk about your new life as a man or woman. What things are better? What don't you like?

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Japan / measures / government posts / ambitious plans / female managers / raising children / maternity leave / paternity leave / sexual harassment / businesswomen

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. SAME ROLES: Talk with your partner(s) about how acceptable you think each of the following is:

- Men crying watching sad movies
- Boys playing with Barbie dolls
- Men plucking their eyebrows
- Male nurses
- Househusbands
- Women asking men out on dates
- Women using foul language
- Female fighter plane pilots
- Female religious leaders
- Female boxing

5. DISCRIMINATION: Talk about the following in pairs/ groups. Are women discriminated against in these areas in your country?

- a. Salary
- b. Promotion
- c. Having to make the tea
- d. Hiring
- e. Work atmosphere
- f. Sexual harassment
- g. Titles of address (Mrs. / Miss / first name, etc.)
- h. Levels of respect from the opposite sex

6. GENDER: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "gender". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Japan's civil service will be 50 percent female by 2020. | T / F |
| b. New equality laws are to stem the tide of a shrinking workforce. | T / F |
| c. There are five times more female managers in America than in Japan. | T / F |
| d. Japan's government will not consider the idea of paternity leave. | T / F |
| e. Japan's firms hide female workers' addresses to prevent harassment. | T / F |
| f. A mentor system will start to encourage female entrepreneurs. | T / F |
| g. Japan's Prime Minister wants to create a gender-equality society. | T / F |
| h. Japan ranks next to last in a UN index comparing gender equality. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|-----------|
| a. endorsed | trails |
| b. cater for | decrees |
| c. stem the tide | persuade |
| d. directives | poor |
| e. entice | curtail |
| f. strengthen | potential |
| g. mentor | approved |
| h. would-be | reinforce |
| i. lags | coach |
| j. lowly | help |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a. endorsed a set | demands of raising children |
| b. stem the tide | to take paternity leave |
| c. cope with the | support female entrepreneurs |
| d. entice | institutionalized inequalities |
| e. urge male civil servants | 43 rd among 80 countries |
| f. measures to address | of a shrinking workforce |
| g. the drive to | individuality and abilities |
| h. a mentor system to aid | of measures |
| i. fully exercising their | would-be businesswomen |
| j. It ranks a lowly | back to work... |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

WRONG WORD: Delete the incorrect or least likely word from each pair in *italics*.

Japanese women to have more equality

The Japanese government has *endorsed / enclosed* a set of measures that aims to increase the number of women in top-level government posts to 30 percent from the *current / currant* 21.5 percent by 2020. The ambitious plans also *cater / canter* for working mothers as the government attempts to stem the *pride / tide* of a shrinking workforce. Further plans aim to help more women into management. Only nine percent of managers in Japan are female, *compared / complementary* with 46 percent in the U.S. The new *directors / directives* will allow full-time female civil servants to work shorter hours to cope with the demands of *elevating / raising* children. They recommend companies *retrench / rehire* women after their maternity leave ends to entice back to work a *portion / proposition* of the two thirds of mothers who leave the workforce permanently following childbirth. The government will also urge male civil servants to take *maternity / paternity* leave.

The new targets *commiserate / consolidate* on the Gender Equality Basic Plan, which was introduced in 2000. They include many measures to *telephone / address* institutionalized inequalities, discrimination and harassment. One of the *local / focal* points is the drive to support female *entrepreneurs / interpreters* by making available more information regarding business start-ups and introducing a *mental / mentor* system to aid would-be businesswomen. Prime Minister Koizumi said he wanted “to *recreate / create* a gender-equality society in which men and women can have dreams and expectations by fully *working out / exercising* their individuality and abilities”. Japan *logs / lags* behind many industrialized nations in gender equality. It ranks a *slowly / lowly* 43rd *among / humungous* 80 countries in the 2005 United Nations Gender Empowerment Measure index.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Japanese women to have more equality

The Japanese government has _____ a set of measures that aims to increase the number of women in top-level government posts to 30 percent from the current 21.5 percent by 2020. The ambitious plans also _____ for working mothers as the government attempts to stem the _____ of a _____ workforce. Further plans aim to help more women into management. Only nine percent of managers in Japan are female, compared with 46 percent in the U.S. The new _____ will allow full-time female civil servants to work shorter hours to cope with the demands of raising children. They recommend companies _____ women after their maternity leave ends to _____ back to work a portion of the two thirds of mothers who leave the workforce permanently following childbirth. The government will also _____ male civil servants to take _____ leave.

The new targets _____ on the Gender Equality Basic Plan, which was introduced in 2000. They include many _____ to address institutionalized inequalities, discrimination and _____. One of the focal points is the drive to support female entrepreneurs by making available more information regarding business start-ups and introducing a _____ system to aid would-be businesswomen. Prime Minister Koizumi said he wanted "to create a gender-equality society in which men and women can have dreams and expectations by _____ exercising their individuality and abilities". Japan lags behind many industrialized nations in gender equality. It ranks a _____ 43rd among 80 countries in the 2005 United Nations Gender _____ Measure index.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'stem'** and **'tide'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. WRONG WORD: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "GENDER EQUALITY" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about gender equality, discrimination and harassment.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|------------|---------------|
| • set | • consolidate |
| • cater | • address |
| • compared | • mentor |
| • cope | • dreams |
| • entice | • lags |
| • urge | • lowly |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What is your image (or experience) of gender equality in Japan?
- c. How equal is your society regarding gender?
- d. Do you think a 30 percent target for women in top-level government posts is a good one?
- e. How could the system of maternity and paternity leave in your country be improved?
- f. Do you think men or women make better managers?
- g. How else could Japan stem the tide of its shrinking workforce?
- h. Do you think new mothers should be enticed back to work?
- i. Do you think your country will ever achieve perfect gender equality?
- j. Are there areas in your society where gender inequality hits men?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What kinds of institutionalized inequalities exist in your country?
- d. What kind of harassment do women complain about in your country?
- e. Would you say your country was a male-dominated one?
- f. What do you think of the idea of a mentoring system for would-be female entrepreneurs?
- g. Are you surprised that Japan ranks a lowly 43rd in the world in the United Nations index of gender equality?
- h. Have you ever felt hard done by because of discrimination?
- i. Which countries do you think are at the top of the UN index and why?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

HARASSMENT: In pairs / groups, agree on a score for the examples of sexual harassment that might occur in the workplace.

- 5 = That's criminal. The guy should go to prison.
- 4 = The guy should receive a warning and lose his job if he doesn't change.
- 3 = That's a difficult one. Case by case.
- 2 = I think the women need to be a little less touchy.
- 1 = That's totally OK.

Talk about the punishments a male and female boss might give in each of the examples

| | HARASSMENT | SCORE | MALE PUNISHMENTS | FEMALE PUNISHMENTS |
|----|--|-------|------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | Being the object of dirty jokes or sexual banter | | | |
| 2. | Being touched up | | | |
| 3. | Being asked questions about boyfriend or private life | | | |
| 4. | Being invited for a meal or a date | | | |
| 5. | Being told that's "typical of a woman" and other sexist language | | | |
| 6. | Being leered at | | | |
| 7. | Being the object of malicious rumors about one's personal life | | | |
| 8. | Posters, screensavers, etc. of naked women posted in work areas | | | |

Change partners and tell you new partner(s) the scores you decided with your old partner(s). Compare the kinds of punishments male and female bosses might give.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on Japan's new gender equality measures. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. GENDER EQUALITY: Make a poster outlining the measures that need to be taken in your country to achieve perfect gender equality. Show your posters to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar ideas?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. Tell him what you think of his government's new plans. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone write similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. T d. F e. F f. T g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|-----------|
| a. endorsed | approved |
| b. cater for | help |
| c. stem the tide | curtail |
| d. directives | decrees |
| e. entice | persuade |
| f. strengthen | reinforce |
| g. mentor | coach |
| h. would-be | potential |
| i. lags | trails |
| j. lowly | poor |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a. endorsed a set | of measures |
| b. stem the tide | of a shrinking workforce |
| c. cope with the | demands of raising children |
| d. entice | back to work... |
| e. urge male civil servants | to take paternity leave |
| f. measures to address | institutionalized inequalities |
| g. the drive to | support female entrepreneurs |
| h. a mentor system to aid | would-be businesswomen |
| i. fully exercising their | individuality and abilities |
| j. It ranks a lowly | 43 rd among 80 countries |

WRONG WORD:

Japanese women to have more equality

The Japanese government has *endorsed* / ~~enclosed~~ a set of measures that aims to increase the number of women in top-level government posts to 30 percent from the *current* / ~~current~~ 21.5 percent by 2020. The ambitious plans also *cater* / ~~cater~~ for working mothers as the government attempts to stem the *pride* / ~~tide~~ of a shrinking workforce. Further plans aim to help more women into management. Only nine percent of managers in Japan are female, *compared* / ~~complementary~~ with 46 percent in the U.S. The new *directors* / ~~directives~~ will allow full-time female civil servants to work shorter hours to cope with the demands of *elevating* / ~~raising~~ children. They recommend companies *retrench* / ~~rehire~~ women after their maternity leave ends to entice back to work a *portion* / ~~proposition~~ of the two thirds of mothers who leave the workforce permanently following childbirth. The government will also urge male civil servants to take *maternity* / ~~paternity~~ leave.

The new targets *commiserate* / ~~consolidate~~ on the Gender Equality Basic Plan, which was introduced in 2000. They include many measures to *telephone* / ~~address~~ institutionalized inequalities, discrimination and harassment. One of the *local* / ~~focal~~ points is the drive to support female *entrepreneurs* / ~~interpreters~~ by making available more information regarding business start-ups and introducing a *mental* / ~~mentor~~ system to aid would-be businesswomen. Prime Minister Koizumi said he wanted "to *recreate* / ~~create~~ a gender-equality society in which men and women can have dreams and expectations by fully *working-out* / ~~exercising~~ their individuality and abilities". Japan *lags* / ~~lags~~ behind many industrialized nations in gender equality. It ranks a *slowly* / ~~lowly~~ 43rd among / ~~humungous~~ 80 countries in the 2005 United Nations Gender Empowerment Measure index.