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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 agreed on plans that will increase the number of women in top-level government posts. The aim is to move from the current level of 21.5 percent to 30 percent by 2020. The government will also give help to working mothers to try and stop the workforce from shrinking. 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 government will encourage companies to re-hire women after their maternity leave ends. Currently, two thirds of women never return to work after childbirth.

The new targets strengthen the Gender Equality Basic Plan, which was introduced in 2000. They include many measures to reduce sexual discrimination and harassment. There will be a drive to encourage businesswomen to start their own companies. 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 is behind many industrialized nations in gender equality. It ranks a poor 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 / plans / government posts / working mothers / female managers / raising children / maternity leave / sexual harassment / businesswomen / United Nations

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 wearing make-up
- Male nurses
- Househusbands
- Women asking men out on dates
- Women using bad 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 aim to prevent the workforce from shrinking more. T / F
- c. There are five times more female managers in America than in Japan. T / F
- d. One third of Japanese women do not work again after childbirth. T / F
- e. Japan's firms want to measure levels of sexual harassment. T / F
- f. Female entrepreneurs will learn to drive. T / F
- g. Japan's Prime Minister wants to create a gender-equality society. T / F
- h. Japan is next to last in a UN index comparing gender equality. T / F

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

- | | |
|---------------|------------------|
| a. increase | campaign |
| b. aim | becoming smaller |
| c. shrinking | using |
| d. encourage | reinforce |
| e. leave | help |
| f. strengthen | elevate |
| g. measures | lowly |
| h. drive | vacation |
| i. exercising | target |
| j. poor | bills |

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

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. agreed | to start their own companies |
| b. stop the workforce | return to work after childbirth |
| c. plans aim to help more | among 80 countries |
| d. re-hire women after their | from shrinking |
| e. two thirds of women never | industrialized nations |
| f. many measures to reduce | women into management |
| g. a drive to encourage businesswomen | individuality and abilities |
| h. by fully exercising their | maternity leave ends |
| i. Japan is behind many | on plans |
| j. It ranks a poor 43 rd | sexual discrimination |

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 agreed on *spans / plans* that will increase the number of women in top-level government *posts / pots*. The aim is to move from the *current / currant* level of 21.5 percent to 30 percent by 2020. The government will also *give / ask for* help to working mothers to try and stop the workforce from shrinking. *Further / Farther* plans aim to help more women into *maternity / management*. Only nine percent of managers in Japan are female, compared with 46 percent in the U.S. The government will *discourage / encourage* companies to re-hire women after their maternity leave ends. Currently, two thirds of women never return to work *after / before* childbirth.

The new targets *strangle / strengthen* the Gender Equality Basic Plan, which was introduced in 2000. They include many *tapes / measures* to reduce sexual discrimination and *harassment / harmony*. There will be a *drive / ride* to encourage businesswomen to *start / finish* their own companies. Prime Minister Koizumi said he wanted “to create a gender-equality society in which men and women can have *nightmares / dreams* and expectations by fully *exercising / jogging* their individuality and abilities”. Japan is behind many industrialized nations in gender equality. It ranks a *rich / poor* 43rd among 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 _____ on plans that will increase the number of women in top-level government posts. The aim is to move from the _____ level of 21.5 percent to 30 percent by 2020. The government will also give help to working mothers to try and stop the workforce from _____. Further plans aim to help more women into management. Only nine percent of managers in Japan are _____, compared with 46 percent in the U.S. The government will encourage companies to _____ women after their maternity _____ ends. Currently, two thirds of women never return to work after childbirth.

The new _____ strengthen the Gender Equality Basic Plan, which was introduced in 2000. They include many measures to _____ sexual discrimination and harassment. There will be a _____ to encourage businesswomen to start their own companies. Prime Minister Koizumi said he wanted "to _____ a gender-equality society in which men and women can have dreams and expectations by fully exercising their individuality and _____". Japan is behind many industrialized nations in gender equality. It _____ a poor 43rd among 80 countries in the 2005 United Nations Gender Empowerment Measure _____.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

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

- 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:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| • agreed | • strengthen |
| • current | • reduce |
| • shrinking | • drive |
| • compared with | • Prime Minister |
| • re-hire | • behind |
| • return | • poor |

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?
- 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 leave in your country be better?
- f. Do you think men or women make better managers?
- g. How else could Japan stop its workforce from shrinking?
- h. Do you think mothers should work?
- i. Do you think your country will 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 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 encouraging female entrepreneurs?
- g. Are you surprised that Japan ranks 43rd in the world in the United Nations index of gender equality?
- h. Have you ever felt 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 more understanding.
- 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 talk			
2.	Being touched			
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 stared at			
7.	Being the object of evil 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 explaining 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 about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

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

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------|------------------|
| a. increase | elevate |
| b. aim | target |
| c. shrinking | becoming smaller |
| d. encourage | help |
| e. leave | vacation |
| f. strengthen | reinforce |
| g. measures | bills |
| h. drive | campaign |
| i. exercising | using |
| j. poor | lowly |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. agreed | on plans |
| b. stop the workforce | from shrinking |
| c. plans aim to help more | women into management |
| d. re-hire women after their | maternity leave ends |
| e. two thirds of women never | return to work after childbirth |
| f. many measures to reduce | sexual discrimination |
| g. a drive to encourage businesswomen | to start their own companies |
| h. by fully exercising their | individuality and abilities |
| i. Japan is behind many | industrialized nations |
| j. It ranks a poor 43 rd | among 80 countries |

WRONG WORD:

Japanese women to have more equality

The Japanese government has agreed on ~~spans~~ / *plans* that will increase the number of women in top-level government ~~posts~~ / ~~pots~~. The aim is to move from the *current* / ~~currant~~ level of 21.5 percent to 30 percent by 2020. The government will also *give* / ~~ask for~~ help to working mothers to try and stop the workforce from shrinking. *Further* / ~~Farther~~ plans aim to help more women into ~~maternity~~ / *management*. Only nine percent of managers in Japan are female, compared with 46 percent in the U.S. The government will ~~discourage~~ / *encourage* companies to re-hire women after their maternity leave ends. Currently, two thirds of women never return to work ~~after~~ / ~~before~~ childbirth.

The new targets ~~strangle~~ / *strengthen* the Gender Equality Basic Plan, which was introduced in 2000. They include many ~~tapes~~ / *measures* to reduce sexual discrimination and ~~harassment~~ / ~~harmony~~. There will be a *drive* / ~~ride~~ to encourage businesswomen to *start* / ~~finish~~ their own companies. Prime Minister Koizumi said he wanted "to create a gender-equality society in which men and women can have ~~nightmares~~ / *dreams* and expectations by fully *exercising* / ~~jogging~~ their individuality and abilities". Japan is behind many industrialized nations in gender equality. It ranks a ~~rich~~ / *poor* 43rd among 80 countries in the 2005 United Nations Gender Empowerment Measure index.