

Maternal Instinct — Most Effective Soft Power for Promoting Global Prosperity

By Masako Watanabe

My Son's English Tutor Is a Wonderful Japanese Mother

Everyone has a passion in their life. Mine is education for my son, an elementary school boy. Though it is common in Japan for kids to study at a special coaching school to prepare for the junior high school entrance exam or take private lessons in subjects such as piano or calligraphy, he had never yet done so. However, one day when he was watching TV and saw a short promotional film about an English conversation school, he unexpectedly told me that it would be wonderful to go to that school, saying he could make friends with many pupils there. The tutor looked nice and the classroom looked beautiful.

Having often wished that he would take an interest in learning something in particular, I jumped at this opportunity and after a trial lesson he was able to enter that school. Aside from my interest in my son's progress in his English language skills at school, I became fascinated by his tutor's charming personality and her passion for English education through my conversations with her during my regular school visits and in private consultations on my son's education. She is a working mother like myself, and this in particular drew my attention to her working style, since her classroom is a part of her home where she both teaches and at the same time spends her life with her family. We can see her running to the day care facility nearby after class or shopping in the neighborhood with her baby in her arms. The kids in her class occasionally hear her baby crying for milk next to the classroom. Such a work-life balance that I have observed in her has made me think about the merits of women as a potential working force.

Women Could Enhance Global Economic Growth Potential Enormously

Readers may remember that one of our cover stories last year on the highlights of "Abenomics" focused on the important role that women could play in upgrading the Japanese economy and society. The third arrow of Abenomics highlights enhancing the role of women in business and politics as one of the growth strategies. Japanese women's intelligence and enthusiasm for work could boost our growth potential.

I believe this could happen anywhere in the world, not just in Japan. There is a global consensus that a rise in women's participation in business, social and political activities would trigger higher growth in the world. But in Japan in particular, which has a more rapidly aging society than any other country and is seeing a significant decrease in its productive population, it will be crucial to take full advantage of the abilities and diligence of hard-working and well-educated women to stop this decline in the working population and reinforce our industrial competitiveness.

Although the Japanese government and business

firms are adopting a numerical target for the percentage of women working in high-level management, it seems to be very difficult to achieve it at this moment, as *Chart 1* shows the percentage of women continuing to pursue their career after bearing children is low. Once most Japanese women quit their jobs, it seems to be difficult for them to resume working. Even if they do manage to resume working, the majority are part-timers and thus the full working potential of Japanese women is not realised, which is part of the reason why Japanese economic growth has been low in recent decades.

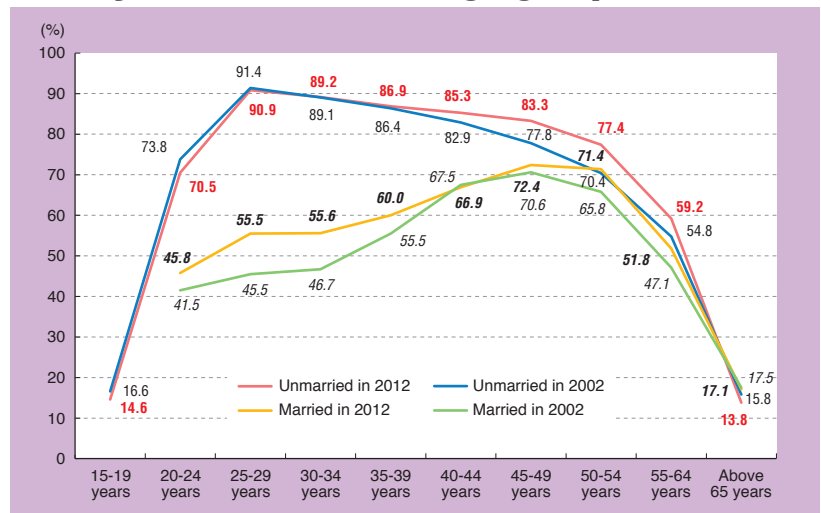
More regrettably, when they try to resume working outside their homes after many years' work as a housewife, their experience as a housewife is not valued at all by business firms. Instead, it is considered a period during which they have lost their professional abilities and been unable to acquire new knowledge or skills. I think this is a complete misjudgment. For one thing, working experience as a housewife teaches a woman to be extremely efficient in using time, since a housewife is often obliged to do many things at the same time. A housewife also needs to be very skillful in human relations in her neighborhood and needs to develop a good capacity for communicating with her kids' friends at school and their parents. These skills could be very useful in both corporate and political fields.

Above all, I believe that the experience of raising children could be invaluable in developing sophisticated management skills through the process of learning authentic love. Love is, needless to say, the most important factor in achieving business success through in-depth communication and team work.

It would be a nation's loss if such women's abilities are not fully utilized.

CHART 1

Japanese women's labor force participation rate by marital status & age group



Source: Statistical Review on Labor Force (2002, 2012), Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

CHART 2

Composition rate of number of employees by industrial sector & change of rate of women in total number of employees

Sector	Composition rate of number of employees (%)										Rate of women in total number of employees (%)					
	women					men										
	2008	2009	2010	*2011	2012	2008	2009	2010	*2011	2012	2008	2009	2010	*2011	2012	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	41.9	42.3	42.6	42.7	42.8	
Agriculture & forestry	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.0	45.7	46.0	45.3	41.5	42.6	
Fishing	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	25.0	25.6	16.7	16.7	20.0	
Mining	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	33.3	33.3	0.0	
Construction	2.9	2.8	2.6	2.6	2.6	11.5	11.3	11.0	11.0	11.0	15.3	15.4	15.1	15.0	15.1	
Manufacturing	13.9	12.9	12.5	12.4	12.4	23.5	22.8	22.5	22.3	22.2	29.9	29.3	29.3	29.3	28.8	
Electricity, gas, water supply	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.9	9.4	11.8	11.8	12.9	12.9	
Information & telecommunications	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	4.2	4.4	4.5	4.3	4.3	25.3	24.9	25.0	26.0	25.6	
Transportation & postal services	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.6	8.3	8.5	8.6	8.7	8.7	18.4	19.0	19.1	18.3	18.1	
Wholesale & retail	20.5	20.6	20.5	20.5	20.5	14.6	14.6	14.9	14.8	14.8	50.3	50.8	50.6	50.7	50.9	
Finance & insurance	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.5	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	51.6	52.2	52.5	52.6	53.5	
Real estate & leasing	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	35.7	36.1	36.5	35.7	35.7	
Academic research, professional & technology services	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.3	3.0	3.0	3.2	3.3	3.4	35.6	34.7	35.1	33.8	34.4	
Hotels, restaurants & other catering services	8.1	8.4	8.4	8.4	8.4	3.5	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.7	62.1	62.7	62.0	62.9	63.0	
Life support services & entertainment	4.5	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.6	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.4	58.4	59.3	59.7	59.0	58.2	
Education & learning support services	5.9	5.9	5.9	6.1	6.1	3.8	3.9	3.9	4.0	4.0	52.7	52.5	52.9	53.4	53.6	
Health care & wellbeing	19.1	19.9	20.7	21.3	21.3	3.8	4.1	4.4	4.7	4.6	78.2	78.1	77.9	77.3	77.1	
Combined services operations	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.8	1.1	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.8	39.3	39.2	44.4	41.9	40.4	
Other services	8.1	7.7	7.5	7.4	7.4	7.9	7.6	7.7	7.6	7.6	42.3	42.6	42.3	41.8	41.9	
Other public officials	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.2	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.5	5.4	22.9	23.4	23.6	23.1	24.1	
Unclassified industry	1.1	0.7	0.7	—	—	0.6	0.7	0.7	—	—	57.8	44.7	45.9	—	44.7	

Note: The sectors where the percentage of female employees is more than 50% are health care and wellbeing (77.1%), hotels, restaurants and other catering services (63.0%), life support services and entertainment business (58.2%), education and learning support services (53.6%), finance and insurance business (53.5%) and wholesale and retail business (50.9%).
Source Labor Force Survey, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. Compiled by Equal Employment, Children and Families Bureau.

In addition, an increase in the numbers of working women earning salaries would raise household revenue and thus boost consumption, which would create new business opportunities and encourage economic growth.

Home Teacher Is Mother's Job

My son's English teacher is called a "Home Teacher" in professional terms, since she teaches at her home. A Home Teacher must love kids as well as teaching English. Maternal love is the essential qualification for a Home Teacher, as the kids' English skills will develop well through sympathetic face-to-face communication, since English itself is means of communication. Ms. Ogawa, my son's teacher, mother of a one-year-old child and a housewife, told me that her school, ECC, is trying to produce not only fluent English speakers but also people who will be happy to help others in a spirit of goodwill. It is therefore important to provide them with opportunities to learn about love and friendship at the school.

Further, learning a foreign language provides an opportunity to learn about different ideas or ways of thinking in comparison to those acquired using one's mother tongue, since a language reflects a philosophy or a way of thinking indigenous to it. This experience can help develop the capacity to promote ideas to the world in accordance with the way of thinking relevant to that language. Ms. Ogawa told me that the 2020 Tokyo Olympics will be an invaluable opportunity for her young students to try to show Japanese hospitality to foreign visitors. She told them they should engage in volunteer activities then to use their English, which would encourage them to believe they are capable of creating happiness in society by themselves without being dependent upon the government or any other authority.

She believes that teaching English kids at ECC will eventually lead to such happiness, which I think is a wonderful dream.

Maternal Instinct Can Be Applied to Other Jobs

I think that Ms. Ogawa's dream can be shared by all women who have a

natural maternal instinct. Just as she believes that education with maternal love could produce a great contribution to the international community at the Tokyo Olympics, I believe that maternal love can help realize peace and prosperity in any context.

The maternal instinct is a gift from heaven to all women, whether they have a child or not, and men cannot have it no matter how much they might want to. It is a great soft power owned only by women. This selfless love could be utilized not only for English education, as in the case of Ms. Ogawa, but also for politics and business. You may need to be intelligent, though not necessarily intellectual, to qualify as a leader in government or business, and I believe such intelligence can often be acquired through selfless love.

With more women as leaders, we would be able to achieve a social evolution with a more caring spirit. We need it today much more than in the past as we are facing a rapidly aging society. In order to realize a society with more women in leading positions, men and women must share housework equally, including taking care of their children, to achieve an ideal work-life balance for women and let women continue to work even after bearing children.

I think this is also good for men, since they will understand the world better by doing daily shopping, cooking and washing, and by taking the kids to schools and joining in parents' activities more often. Without fulfilling such minimum responsibilities as a human being, they may not be qualified to be part of the decision-making process in business. My colleagues at the Japan Economic Foundation say that teamwork always creates a competitive edge, and this is true. Women can take the initiative in creating it through their maternal instinct, a soft power which still has great potential in Japan.

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Masako Watanabe is an editorial staff member of the Japan Economic Foundation.