

Meanings of Home Economics Education Based on Richards' *Euthenics* : A Model for the Sustainable Future¹

Shoko Nishino, Kazuko Sumida² and Harumi Kagawa³

Purpose and method

In today's world, we are beginning to notice about the close relationship between the health of the ecosystem and the optimal human development. It can be best understood by focusing on daily life because thinking about the way of living in the social/ecological context has influence not only on the earth and human beings' health but also on arising ethical behavior with responsibility. In this sense, the role of home economics education has become even more important.

The purpose of this study is to clarify today's meanings of home economics education with regard to its values, ethics and key concepts for practice by analysis of the educational thought of Ellen H. Swallow Richards (1842–1911). She is the America's first woman chemist and is known also as a founder of

¹ 本稿は、2012年7月開催の International Federation for Home Economics 2012 World Congress (Melbourne, Australia) に於いて公表された研究発表資料(ポスター発表)に、若干の修正を加えたものである。アメリカ初の女性化学者、エレン・リチャーズの最晩年の著作『*Euthenics* (ユーセニクス)』は、我が国において家庭科固有の教科理論と認識されながらも、それに対する詳細な研究は、我が国のみならず世界的にみても行われていない(詳細は別稿にゆずる)。

² Ellen Richards Researcher

³ Sanyo Gakuen College



Figure 1 Portrait of Ellen H. Richards (1842 – 1911)

home economics. (→Cf. Figure 1, Table 1)

Based on the philosophy of human ecology, she left a lot of achievements of interdisciplinary research related to health, human development and social wellbeing. Among those achievements, we focus on her writing “*Euthenics*” (1910) – the remarkable fruit of her thought about education.

Table 1 : Chronology of Richards' Life

| year | age | events |
|------|-----|---|
| 1842 | 0 | Dec. 3 Born in Dunstable, Massachusetts |
| 1859 | 17 | Attends Westford Academy. (~63) (At first, she is educated at home.) |
| 1863 | 21 | Helps her father in the store, Littleton. |
| 1864 | 22 | Teaches at an elementary school. |
| 1865 | 23 | Moves to Worcester, and teaches. |
| 1868 | 26 | Accepted to Vassar College. (~70) |
| 1871 | 29 | Accepted at MIT as a special student in chemistry. |
| 1872 | 30 | Tests of Massachusetts water with MIT's Prof. Nichols. (~73) |
| 1873 | 31 | Graduates from MIT (S.B.). Vassar College awards her A.B.. Ellen applies for membership in the American Association for the Advancement of Science (A.S.). |
| 1875 | 33 | Ellen marries Robert Richards and their marriage organizing a house in Jamaica Plain. |
| 1876 | 34 | Foundation of the Woman's Laboratory in MIT. Created the first consumer home testing laboratory. Organized the Boston Chapter of Vassar Alumnae. Ellen visits the laboratory shrine of Ernst Haeckel. Invited to a symposium on science training. Becomes the science section manager in the Society to Encourage Study at Home. |
| 1878 | 36 | Elevated from member to Fellow in A.S. MIT's catalogue openly list biology. MIT recognizes Ellen as an assistant instructor. |
| 1879 | 37 | Addresses Poughkeepsie women's club. Organizing Women. Launched the consumer-environment movement. |
| 1880 | 38 | <i>First Lessons in Minerals</i> |
| 1881 | 39 | Summer Seaside Laboratory opens in Annisquam, Massachusetts. Engaged in foundation of the Association of Collegiate Alumnae. (→the American Association of University Woman) |
| 1882 | 42 | The Chemistry of Cooking and Cleaning Edward Atkinson appoints Ellen industrial chemist. |
| 1885 | 43 | The second appeal to the A ³ S. Asks the society to add a "post-graduate course" in sanitary science. |
| 1886 | 44 | MIT opens the Sanitary Chemistry Laboratory. Made a member of the American Public Health Association's important Laboratory Committee. Ellen is named to the MIT faculty. <i>Food Materials and their Adulterations</i> |
| 1887 | 45 | Ellen analyzes the water and sewerage in Mass. (~89) She creates the Normal Chlorine Map. |
| 1888 | 46 | Summer Seaside Laboratory is moved to Woods Hole at Buzzards Bay. |

| year | age | events |
|------|-----|--|
| 1890 | 48 | At MIT the Department of Biology is formed. (MIT's first course in bacterial-laboratory) Teaches sanitary engineering. (air analysis, water analysis, sanitary chemistry) The New England Kitchen opens. |
| 1892 | 50 | The Christening of Oekology. (in Vendome Hotel) |
| 1893 | 51 | The Rumford Kitchen is an enormous success in the World's Columbian Exposition. "Scientific and educational exhibit" of kitchen procedure. Nutrition lunch program → It develops into a school sanitary reform. |
| 1896 | 54 | Ellen asks the American Public Health Association to assist with a school sanitary reform issue. Ellen organizes a citizens committee. |
| 1897 | 55 | Ellen organizes the Naples Table Association. (→ Association to Advance Scientific Research by Woman) |
| 1898 | 56 | Ellen meets Melvil Dewey. (an American librarian and educator, inventor of the Dewey Decimal system of library classification) An address to the National Education Association. (Name change with home economics from ecology) |
| 1899 | 57 | Ellen organized the Lake Placid Conference. (~1908) <i>The Cost of Living as Modified by Sanitary Science</i> <i>Plain Words about Food : the Rumford Kitchen Leaflets</i> |
| 1900 | 58 | Brew of an Environmentaculture. Ellen does the best for the spread of Euthenics. (~11) <i>Air, Water, and Food : From a Sanitary Standpoint</i> |
| 1904 | 62 | <i>The Art of Right Living</i> |
| 1907 | 65 | <i>Sanitation in Daily Life</i> |
| 1909 | 67 | First president of the American Home Economics Association. |
| 1910 | 68 | <i>Euthenics</i> |
| 1911 | 68 | Addressing in Boston's Ford Hall, "Is the Increased Cost of Living a Sign of Social Advance?" <i>Conservation by Sanitation : Air and Water Supply, Disposal of Waste</i> Draft the address for MIT's fiftieth anniversary. Mar. 30 Died at home in Jamaica Plain. |

Results and Discussions

1. Richards' View on Human Beings

"Man is a part of organic nature, subject to laws of development and growth, laws which he cannot break with impunity."

(Euthenics, Chapter III, p.39)

“The man considered in these pages is the man in community environment, and the discussion is as to what controls this community life.”

(Euthenics, Chapter VII, p.119)

Holistic and Ecological Grasp = All are connected and mutually related.

*Based on her viewpoint which grasps a human development in ecological context, responsibility and ethics will be asked naturally.

2. Richards' View on Family Life

“We beg the leaders of public opinion to pause before they condemn the efforts making to teach those means of social control which may build yet again a home life that will prove the nursery of good citizens and of efficient men and women with a sense of responsibility to God and man for the use they make of their lives.” (Euthenics, Chapter IX, p.162)

“Most human efficiency is the result of habits rather than of innate ability. These habits of mind, as well as of body, are developed by the home life at an early age. The home is responsible for the upbringing of healthy, intelligent children. Here is the place for fostering the valuable and suppressing the harmful traits.” (Euthenics, Chapter V, p.81)

“The whole question of the child in the home is one of ethics, ..”

(Euthenics, Chapter V, p.83)

“The care of the fixed habitation, the foresight needed of to prepare the things for the family life in the weeks and months to come, the cooperation of all family toward one common end — all tend toward high human ideals.”

(Euthenics, Chapter VI, p.93)

“The teaching of domestic economy in the elementary school and home economics in the higher is intended to give the people a sense of control over their environment and to avert a panic as to the future.”

(Euthenics, Chapter IX, p.158)

“To feel one’s self in command of situation robs it of its terror.”

(Euthenics, Chapter V, p.87)

*Family life with social awareness is the best training place for responsibility and ethics toward good citizens.

3. Today’s Meanings of Home Economics Education

As a result of analysis, some significant concepts for sustainable living and global wellbeing were explained in relation to human development, which was expressed in figure 2: “Sustainable Future Based on Ellen Richards’ *Euthenics*”. This framework for education enables us to integrate each practise as a lifestyle, since it involves responsibility and ethics.

In highly industrialized societies, control of artificial environments, particularly physical environments, becomes a big problem. This is controlled by outcomes of consumption in daily life, which is in fact, influenced by control of mind.

For example, the problems surrounding waste (Figure 2), the pursuit to excess of convenience and comfort, entrusted to one’s own desires, can be understood as contradicting with one’s place as a member of a sustainable society. In Japan, the dispute over whether nuclear energy could continue to be used arose as a result of the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident on March 11th, 2011. In that dispute, the focus tended to be on the safety of nuclear power technology, and how Japan’s humid summer would be overcome. Actually the most important viewpoint, however, is considering how our daily consumption relates to the unthinkable negative legacy of high-level radioactive waste being left for future generations.

In other words, no matter what kind of social problem it is, thinking about it on a daily family life level can influence the minds of people, and through that comes true education for raising citizens who will have a sustainable future.

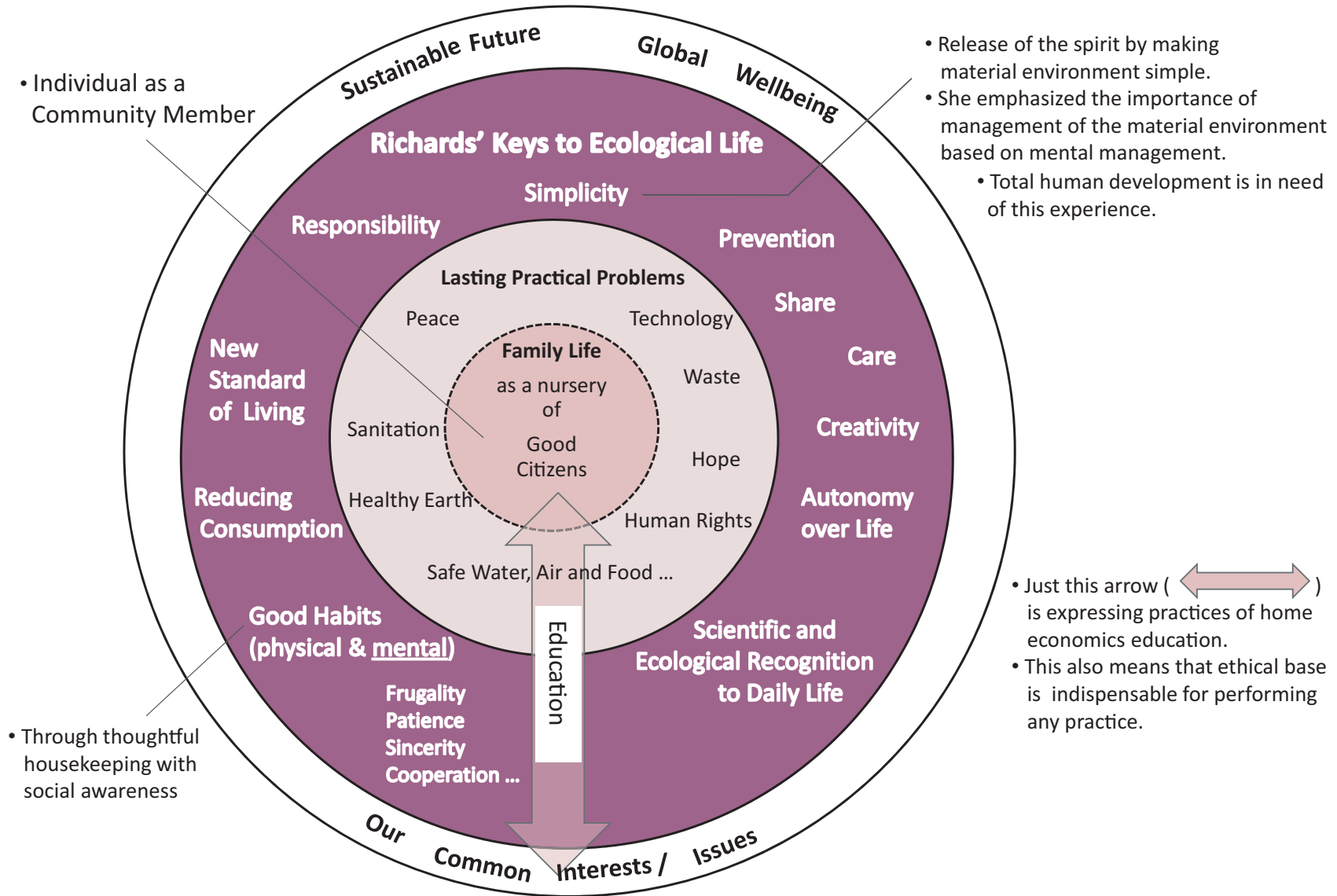


Figure 2 Sustainable Future Based on Ellen Richards' *Euthenics*

Conclusion

Even the viewpoint shown in the IFHE's position statement UN millennium develop of goals 2011 of "The ultimate goal is the improvement of the quality of everyday life through education in resource management and sustainable consumption," can be confirmed within Richards' thought from over a hundred years earlier.

Richards sought the sanctity of life, and she strove for the realization with consideration for the environment that nurtures life. Accordingly, her education was not simply for environmental improvement, but for something that was indispensable to the growth of humans as environmentally harmonious beings.

The big problems faced by the environment and society are intimately connected with the tiny systems of family life. Environment begins at home. The key to mature civilization is in family life.

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(shoko-n@seinan-gu.ac.jp)

Division of Childhood Education

Department of Human Sciences

Seinan Gakuin University