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The Quality and Attitude of High School Teachers of Economics in Japan: An Explanation of Sample Data

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Students' economic literacy depends on the content they learn in school as well as at home. It also depends on teachers' ability to teach and explain economic concepts and principles in a way that students can understand them. But, it is very doubtful whether all the high school teachers of civics who teach economics have adequate knowledge and good teaching skills in economics. The authors know that only a few civics teachers in Japan have studied economics as a major subject when they were undergraduate students.

In order to investigate these views, the authors conducted a nationwide survey using a questionnaire concerning personal attributes, attitude toward economic issues, and thinking about economy and economics of high school teachers of civics in Japan in 2009. 1,574 samples were collected out of around 14,000 civics teachers from every prefecture in Japan, and their answers were turned into data set for analysis. These samples proved to have high external validity representing their population, and the results of our analysis reveal the characteristics of Japanese high school teachers of civics teaching economics.

The findings of our survey will help improve the quality of economic education in Japan, especially the quality and attitude of economics teachers in high school.

1 Introduction: the purpose of the survey

The authors conducted the Test of Economic Literacy, the third edition (TEL3), Form A for high school students in Japan in 2001. The test was developed by Dr. William B. Walstad, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, and Dr. Ken Rebeck, St. Cloud University, and was administered for high school students in the United States in 1999 and 2000. The authors analysed and compared the test results in Table 1 between Japan and the United States, and found out some features of economic literacy among Japanese high school students.

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Japanese students got a lower score than American students by around three points in overall test scores, and got an even lower score than American students who had studied economics (with economics) in school, in particular. Japanese students showed almost the equal score as American students who had not studied economics (without economics), and the difference between them is only one point. This is because, the authors think, some economic concepts and principles, which are asked in items of TEL3, were taught to American high school students, but not in Japan. It is proved by the test results in the United States that students' experience in learning economics (with/without economics) in high school has a significant effect on their economic literacy.

In contrast to the United States, Japanese students learned such economic content in school as economic systems, the role of households and firms, the function of the market economy and financial sector, postwar economic growth of Japan, and international trade and international economic regime in the postwar period, as well as some facts and problems Japan faced, such as energy, agriculture and food, environment, and social security. They had scarcely learned fundamental economic concepts and principles, for example, scarcity, trade-off, choice, opportunity cost, etc., in school except the law of demand and supply, and the principle of comparative advantage; therefore their test performance may have been worse than American students with economics.

Besides students' experience in learning economics, there may have been other factors which had some effect on their economic knowledge and understanding. The authors found out that students' general scholastic ability, which can be judged alternatively from the social prestige of their schools, had heavier weight with their test performance than their learning experience in economics in Japan. Then the authors thought that teaching

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ability or skill of economics teachers may have been related to students' understanding of economic contents in class. It is quite doubtful whether the Japanese high school teachers have ample economic knowledge and better teaching skill in economics, because the authors know that only a few of them had studied economics as a major subject when they themselves were undergraduate or graduate students.

To prove this, we conducted a nationwide survey in 2009 by distributing questionnaires to economics teachers in high schools and secondary schools[1] in Japan. This article tries to explain some sample data collected by the survey and reveal the real image of high school economics teachers in Japan for the first time.

	United States	Japan
Number of students (Samples)	3.288	2.631
with economics	2.619	—
without economics	669	2.631
Mean Score (Full mark is 40)		
Overall	23.85	20.8
with economics	25.07	—
without economics	19.05	20.8
Coefficient α	0.89	0.81
Standard Error of Measurement	2.76	2.87

Table 1: Results of TEL3, Form A

Source: For US data, Walstad, William B.; Rebeck, Ken. 2001. Test of Economic Literacy, Third Edition, Examiner's Manual. New York: National Council on Economic Education. For Japanese data, Asano, Tadayoshi (2003) Economic Literacy of Japanese High School and University Students: An International Comparison Based on TEL3. In: The Bulletin of Yamamura Gakuen College, No.15, 1-59.

2 The range of the survey

We sent out the questionnaires to 5,178 high schools and secondary schools in total, three copies of questionnaire per school, by post between August and October in 2009. It is thought that every high school and secondary school has one to three teachers who are qualified to teach economic contents in the individual subject of 'Contemporary Society' and/or 'Politics and Economy.' These two subjects and 'Ethics' belong in the subject area of 'Civics,' and students are required to take either 'Contemporary Society' only or a couple of subjects: 'Politics and Economy' and 'Ethics.' Before 'Civics' was separated from 'Geography and History' in 1989, 'Social Studies' had combined these two areas into one. In 1994 the teacher's certificate of 'Social Studies' was divided into 'Geography and History' and 'Civics.' Those who had obtained a teacher's certificate of 'Social Studies' were qualified to teach economic content even after the division of the subject area 'Social Studies,' and their qualification is still effective.

Since 1994 when the teacher's certificate of 'Social Studies' was divided into two subject areas, only those who obtained a teacher's certificate of 'Civics' have been qualified to teach economic content. Accordingly those who have a teacher's certificate of 'Social Studies' or 'Civics' are qualified to teach economic contents today. This confuses measurement of the exact number of economics teachers, the population of the questionnaire survey, who actually teach economic contents in high school and secondary school in Japan, and nobody knows the real figure. Even the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT)[2] does not have an exact statistic of it, and the authors estimated it by the number of civics teachers who teach any subject of 'Civics' area on the government report (MEXT 2009a).

The total number of high school teachers in Japan was 215,023 in 2009 and among them the percentage of civics teachers was 6.4 %; consequently the number of civics teachers in high school was 13,761. As for secondary schools, its total number of teachers was 1,029 and among them the percentage of civics teachers was 3.5 %, therefore the number of civics teachers in secondary school was 36. The sum of civics teachers in high school and secondary school was 13,797. The respondents (samples) to the survey are 1,574, and the sampling fraction (the sampling rate) is 11.4 %, which is 1,574 divided by 13,797. But, the government report classifies even non-civics teachers, who teach any one subject in 'Civics' area as well as their proper subject(s), as civics teachers. Actually some economics teachers who have a teacher's certificate of 'Social Studies' belong in non-civics areas such as 'Geography and History,' while they are, at the same time, counted in the 'Civics' area, too. This complicates an exact counting both of the civics teachers and of the population of economics teachers, and also the computing of the sampling fraction.

The authors could collect responses to the survey questionnaire from every prefecture of the country; the smallest number of responses (respondents) is eight from Saga prefecture and the largest one is 145 from metropolitan Tokyo. The average number of responses from one prefecture is 33.5 and this is one of reasons why the collected samples of this questionnaire survey have external validity, which means that the samples are quite representative of the population.

3 Contents of the survey questionnaire

The survey questionnaire on quality and attitude of high school economics teachers consists of 29 questions, which are classified into five categories: their present position, their career, their learning experience in economics as undergraduate students, their instructional practice, and their personal attributes and qualities of their school. Individual questions are shown in Table 2.

In this paper, the authors have picked out 18 questions for analysis by simple tabulation. These questions are Nos. 1, 2 and 3 which relate to respondents' present position, Nos. 4 and 5 which relate to respondents' career, Nos. 6, 7, 10, 11 and 12 which relate to respondent's educational background, No. 22 which relates to respondents' thinking about economy and economics, and Nos. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29 which relate to respondents' profile (demographic information) and characteristics of their schools.

Question	Question Formats
I. About your present post	
1 What subject do you teach?	partially close-ended (precoded)
2 Do you have a homeroom class now?	yes/no
3 How many years have you worked as a teacher?	modified open-ended
II. About your career	
4 Did you have another job prior to becoming a teacher?	yes/no
5 What kind of job did you have prior to becoming a teacher?	partially close-ended (precoded)
6 What kind of school did you graduate from last?	partially close-ended (precoded)
7 What subject did you major in at the above school?	partially close-ended (precoded)
8 What division and/or major field did your department in the school have?	open-ended
9 What was your course of study and major when you were a graduate student?	open-ended
III. About your learning experience	
10 Have you learned "economy" or "economics" at the higher education level?	close-ended (precoded)
11 What kind of economics did you learn, when you learned it at the higher education level?	partially close-ended (precoded)
12 Which subject did you take in the area of economics?	partially close-ended (precoded)
13 What did (do) you do for learning economics, besides taking a class in an educational institution?	partially close-ended (precoded)
IV. About your instructional practice	
14 What kind of textbook do you use for teaching economics this year?	open-ended
15 Do you use any teaching materials or aids besides a textbook?	partially close-ended (precoded)
16 Do you feel easy or hard to teach the following topics in an economics textbook?	partially close-ended with rating on a scale of 1-4
17 Why do you feel hard to teach the above specific topics?	open-ended
18 What do you do for teaching economics in your class besides giving a lecture?	partially close-ended (precoded)
19 What difficulties or dissatisfactions do you have in the economics class?	partially close-ended with rating on a scale of 1-4
20 What do you expect students to acquire as a result of learning economics?	close-ended with rating on a scale of 1-4
21 What is your pleasure of teaching economics to students?	close-ended with rating on a scale of 1-4
22 There are different opinions or thinking about economy or economics. What do you think about the following issues?	close-ended with rating on a scale of 1-4
V. About yourself and your school	
23 Gender	close-ended (precoded)
24 Age	close-ended (precoded)
25 Type of school foundation (national, public, or private)	close-ended (precoded)
26 Location of your school	partially close-ended (precoded)
27 Type of school course (day school, evening school, or correspondence school)	close-ended (precoded)
28 Type of curriculum course of your school	partially close-ended (precoded)
29 Percentage of students going on to four-year college or university after graduation from your school	close-ended (precoded)

Table 2: Questions of the survey

4 Results of the questionnaire survey

4.1 Respondents' profile

Table 3 shows respondents' distribution by gender. Among economics teachers, about 13 % are female and 87 % are male. This corresponds to the gender ratio for public high school economics teachers in metropolitan Tokyo; 12 % are female and 88 % are male (n=259) in 2009 (Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education 2009). One of the features of economics teachers in Japanese high school is that the overwhelming majority of them are male.

Gender	Responses	Percentage
Female	203	12,9
Male	1.371	87,1
Total	1.574	100,0

Table 3: Respondents by gender

Age	Responses	Percentage
20's	169	10,7
30's	405	25,7
40's	511	32,5
50's	448	28,5
60's	39	2,5
Unknown	2	0,1
Total	1.574	100,0

Table 4: Respondents by age

Table 4 shows respondents' distribution by age. Teachers in their 40's occupy about one third of the total samples, and teachers in their 30's and 50's amount to a little more than one fourth respectively. Teachers of these ages make up 86.7 % of all the samples. The authors can ascertain the fact from the official statistics of the distribution by age of civics teachers that the sum of high school civics teachers in their 40's and 50's makes up more than 70 % of civics teachers of all ages, and that the sum of secondary school civics teachers in their 30's 40's and 50's takes more than 80 % of civics teachers of all ages in secondary school.

Figure 1 shows a working period (tenure) as an economics teacher. The shortest period is one year and the longest period is 50 years[3]. The mode (the highest value in frequency distribution) is 25 years for 85 respondents, the median (the middle value) is 20 years for 82 respondents, and the mean is 18.6 years for all the samples (n=1,560, no response for 14 respondents). The government report (MEXT 2009a) discloses that the average working period of a high school teacher as a fulltimer is 19.4 years and 14.2 years for a secondary school teacher. This average value among high school teachers in all the subject areas, in particular, is close to the mean value of all the samples in the questionnaire survey.

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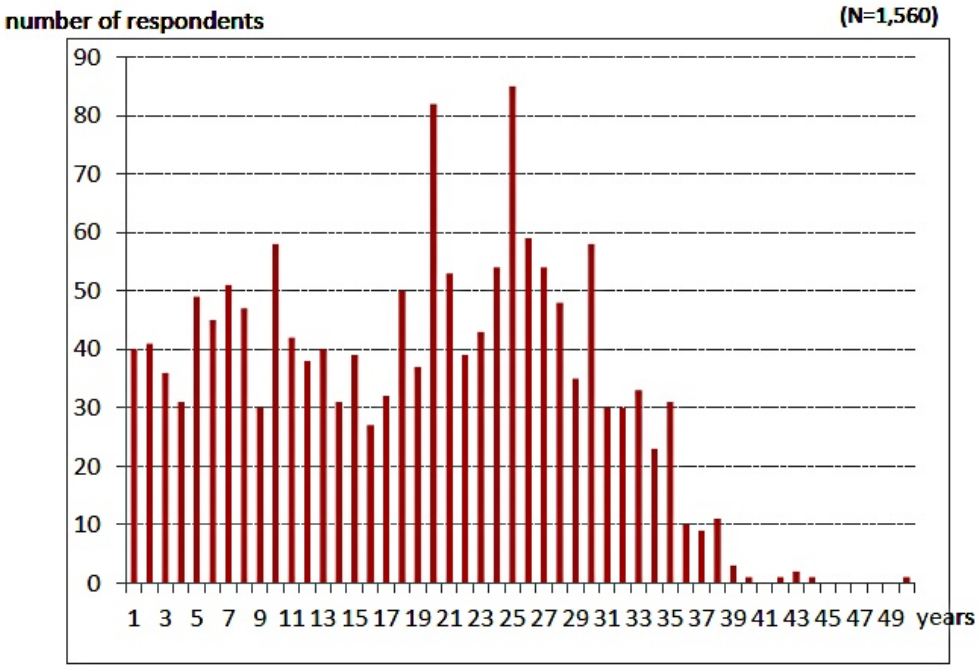

Figure 1: Working period as an economics teacher

Table 5 shows the number of respondents who had any other job prior to becoming an economics teacher. About one fourth of respondents had previous jobs, and the rest of them became a high school teacher soon after graduating from university. The previous jobs are shown in Table 6.

	Responses	Percentage
Yes, had another job	401	25,5
No, did not have another job	1.148	72,9
No response	25	1,6
Total	1.574	100,0

Table 5: Working experience

Industry	Responses	Percentage
Agriculture & Fishery	4	1,0
Mining & Construction	13	3,2
Manufacturing	49	12,2
Public services	4	1,0
Information & Communication	28	7,0
Finance & Insurance	53	13,2
Transportation	10	2,5
Wholesale and retail	68	17,0
Real estate	3	0,7
Medical & Welfare service	9	2,2
Education	104	25,9
Civil service	51	12,7
Other	78	19,5
Total	401	100,0

Table 6: Previous jobs

4.2 Present post and school characteristics

The 'Civics' area in high school consists of three subjects: 'Ethics,' 'Contemporary Society' and 'Politics and Economy.' Some teachers teach all these three subjects and some teach economy-related subjects only: 'Contemporary Society' and 'Politics and Economy.' Some teachers who have a teacher's certificate of 'Civics' as well as that of any other subject area or have former teacher's certificate of 'Social Studies,' whether or not they are in the 'Civics' area, are qualified to teach any subject in the 'Civics' area.

Table 7 shows subjects which respondents taught in their high school or secondary school at the time of the questionnaire survey. The two largest subjects are 'Contemporary Society' and 'Politics and Economy' in the 'Civics' area, which include economic content. It is apparent that a considerable number of economics teachers also teach some subject(s) in the area of 'Geography and History': 'Japanese History,' 'World History' and 'Geography,' because they have a teacher's certificate of both 'Civics' and 'Geography and History' or that of 'Social Studies' only. This implies that there is not the least number of economics teachers who belong in the subject area of 'Geography and History,' not in 'Civics.'

Only ten percent of economics teachers teach 'Ethics,' because, the authors think, it has quite different content from 'Contemporary Society' and 'Politics and Economy.'

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(n=1,574)

Subject	Responses	Percentage to n
Contemporary society	1.131	71,9
Politics and economy	714	45,4
Japanese history	415	26,4
World hisotry	533	33,9
Geography	299	19,0
Ethics	165	10,5
Other	146	9,4

Table 7: Teaching subjects

Table 8 displays the respondent's position as a homeroom teacher, and Table 9 displays the grade of their homeroom class. 683 respondents have a homeroom class and their grade is divided almost evenly among the first (Year 10), the second (Year 11) and the third grade (Year 12) of high school.

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	683	43,4
No	888	56,4
No response	3	0,2
Total	1.574	100,0

Table 8: Homeroom teacher

Grade	Responses	Percentage
1	249	36,5
2	209	30,6
3	209	30,6
4*	16	2,3
Total	683	100,0

Note *: The fourth grade in high school is for evening school and correspondence school.

Table 9: Grade of homeroom class

This survey reveals some characteristics of respondents' schools. Table 10 shows the type of the foundation of school and Table 11 shows the type of the course of the school. 70 % of the respondent's schools are publicly founded by local governments like prefecture and city, and 30 % are private. In reality, public schools make up 74.1 % and private schools make up 25.5 % among the total number (5,225) of high school and secondary school in Japan according to the government survey (MEXT 2009b). The distribution of responses by the type of the foundation of school has likeness to its actual statistics of high school and secondary school in Japan, which reinforces the external validity of this questionnaire survey.

The distribution of responses by the type of the school course also reflects the actual fact of Japanese high school. As for secondary schools, there were 42 day school courses only in 2009, of which four schools are national, 25 schools are public and 13 schools are private.

Japanese high school has various curriculum courses, which are categorized mainly into three types: general education course, vocational course, and integrated course. Table 12 shows the distribution of responses (respondents) by the type of the curriculum course in high school. the vocational course is broken down into subcategory, such as commerce, industry, and others. General education

	This Survey		Actual Statistics*	
Type	Responses	Percentage	Schools	Percentage
National	1	0,1	20	0,4
Public	1.099	69,8	3.871	74,1
Private	470	29,9	1.334	25,5
Other	3	0,2		
No response	1	0,1		
Total	1.574	100,0	5.225	100,0

Note *: Actual statistics are cited from the MEXT. 2009. School Basic Survey 2009.

Table 10: Type of the school

	This Survey		Actual Statistics*	
Course	Responses	Percentage	Schools	Percentage
Day	1.511	96,0	4.493	93,3
Evening	42	2,7	192	4,0
Corresponder	19	1,2	87	1,8
No response	2	0,1		
Total	1.574	100,0	4.772	100,0

Note *: The source is the same with Table 10. The values are sum of high school and secondary school, but combined school is excluded from this statistics.

Table 11: Type of the school course

course takes the most, 62.8 %, and its actual percentage is 56.1 % of the entire total (7,090) of high school curriculum courses in Japan; that of commerce course is 10.1 %, that of industry course is 8.1 %, that of integrated course is 4.7 %, and so on, based on the government survey (MEXT 2009b). Responses to this question of the survey are also thought to be representative of the characteristics of the population.

Course	Responses	Percentage
General education (GE)	988	62,8
Vocational	198	12,6
Commerce	67	4,3
Industry	82	5,2
Other	49	3,1
Integrated	117	7,4
Combined GE and vocational	216	13,7
Other	54	3,4
No response	1	0,1
Total	1.574	100,0

Table 12: Type of the curriculum course

One item of the survey questionnaire asked recipients about the percentage of their students who went on to four-year college or university after graduation. This question has a relationship with the social prestige of their school itself; the higher the percentage, the higher the prestige of their school. Table 13 shows the percentage and it gives us an interesting result. Responses were distributed almost evenly to every percentage range but 'more than 90%,' which suggests that respondents came almost equally from different high schools and secondary schools at every level of education (students' achievement) and social prestige.

Percentage range	Responses	Percentage
less than 10 %	263	16.7
10-29 %	290	18.4
30-49 %	195	12.4
50-69 %	213	13.5
70-89 %	212	13.5
more than 90 %	364	23.1
Don't know	31	2.0
No response	6	0.4
Total	1.574	100.0

Table 13: Students going to 4-year university

4.3 Learning experience of economics

The authors know that only a few economics teachers have learned economics in university, but it has never been proved with concrete and positive data. This questionnaire survey is expected to prove it. Table 14 displays respondent's educational background, which proves that about 70 % of economics teachers have a bachelor's degree of four-year university as their highest educational qualification, and that only 11 % of economics teachers graduated from a four-year teachers college.

Table 15 displays respondent's major field in their highest educational institution. Economics majors are 23.7 %, a little less than one fourth, of respondents of economics teachers in high school and secondary school. About three fourths of respondents have notlearned economics as a major field, and this would have more or less effect on student's understanding of economics.

(n=1,562)

School	Responses	Percentage
2-year College of Technology	2	0.1
4-year Teachers college	169	10.8
4-year University	1.070	68.5
Graduate school (Master)	273	17.5
Graduate school (Doctor)	36	2.3
Other	12	0.8
Total	1.562	100.0

Note: "No response" is excluded in this table.

Table 14: Educational background

(n=1,574)

Major	Responses	Percentage
Education	266	16.9
Economics	373	23.7
Management/Business administration	62	3.9
Commerce	38	2.4
Politics	107	6.8
Home economics	4	0.3
Literature	171	10.9
Law	254	16.1
Sociology	150	9.5
Foreign languages	4	0.3
Other	315	20.0
History	124	7.9
Philosophy	51	3.2
Geography	44	2.8
Total*	1.744	110.8

Note *: 135 respondents have more than two major fields, and the total number of responses exceeds the actual number of respondents.

Table 15: Major field

Table 16 displays respondent's learning experience of economics at the higher education level. 40% of the respondents have learned economics as a major subject, and 45% of them have learned economics not as a major subject, but as a general education subject. Worst of all, 12% of them have never learned economics, and it may be because the Teachers License Act has allowed a college student to take and learn sociology instead of economics for becoming a social studies or civics teacher.

(n=1,574)

	Responses	Percentage
Yes, learned economics as a major	630	40.0
Yes, learned economics not as a major	715	45.4
No, never learned economics	186	11.8
No response	43	2.7
Total	1.574	100.0

Table 16: Learning experience of economics

Table 17 displays the type of economic theory which the respondents learned at the higher education level. Two thirds of the respondents (n=1,343) learned modern or mainstream economics[4], and about 20 % of them learned Marxian economics only. Any elements of Marxian economics are not included in a textbook of high school and secondary school, but the Marxian way of thinking and the Marxian thinking of economics may have some influence on their instruction in class.

(n=1,343)

Type	Responses	Percentage
Modern (Mainstream) economics	867	64.6
Marxian economics	246	18.3
Both Modern and Marxian economics	119	8.9
Other	111	8.3
Total	1.343	100.0

Table 17: Type of economic theory learned

(n=1,345)

Subject	Responses	Percentage
Microeconomics	433	32.2
Macroeconomics	598	44.5
Principles of economics	1.045	77.7
Economic Policy	472	35.1
International economics	478	35.5
Econometrics	88	6.5
Finance	366	27.2
Monetary economics	356	26.5
Statistics	279	20.7
Japanese economy	437	32.5
Labour economics	211	15.7
Home economics	11	0.8
Other	130	9.7
Total*	4.904	364.6

Note *: Respondents can respond to every applicable choice, so the total number of responses exceeds the actual number of respondents.

Table 18: Economic subjects learned

Table 18 displays economic subjects the respondents (n=1,345) have learned. 78 % of them took 'Principles of Economics,' which has been standard as an introductory subject for both

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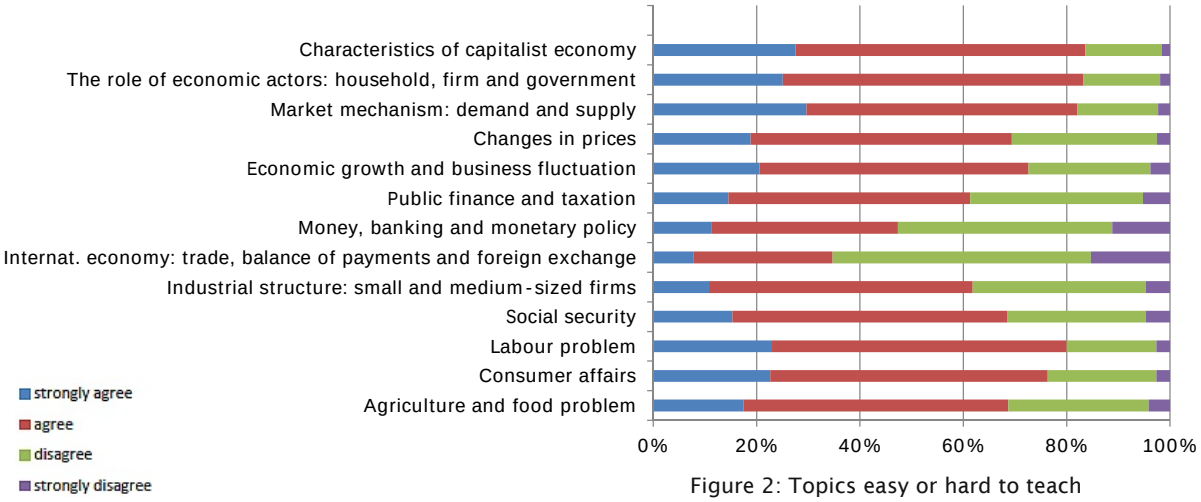

Figure 2: Topics easy or hard to teach

economics majors and non-economics majors. It should be noted that some subjects called 'Principles of Economics' fall under Marxian economics depending on the curriculum of college and university. 'Microeconomics' and 'Macroeconomics' are the core of modern or mainstream economics, and 'Economic Policy' and 'International Economics' are typical subjects of applied economics in modern economics.

4.4 Teacher's quality and attitude toward economic issues

Some questions in the questionnaire are asked to find out high school and secondary school teacher's quality, thinking about economy, and attitude toward some economic issues. Figure 2 shows economic topics in a textbook which economics teachers themselves think easy or hard to teach.

The majority of the respondents think the topics of 'Money, banking and monetary policy' and 'International economy' are difficult to teach. This corresponds interestingly with the results of assessment tests of economic and personal financial literacy which the authors conducted several times to Japanese high school students[5]. The test results showed that the students had relative weakness in monetary and international economic problems.

More than 60% of respondents think the topics of 'Changes in prices,' 'Public finance and taxation,' 'Industrial structure,' 'Social security,' and 'Agriculture and food problem' easy to teach. More than 70% of them think the topics of 'Economic growth' and 'Consumer affairs' easy to teach. More than 80% of them think the topics of 'Characteristics of capitalist economy,' 'The role of economic actors,' 'Market mechanism,' 'Labour problem,' and 'Pollution and environmental problems' are easy to teach.

Figure 3 shows some difficulties and dissatisfactions they had in class and expected to be solved for better economic education and learning. The biggest difficulty and dissatisfaction is about 'Shortage of class hours.' One class hour (period) lasts 50 minutes and 70 hours are allotted to any course in the 'Civics' area by the present Course of Study (National Curriculum). Regarding the subject of 'Politics and Economy,' half the course hours, that is, 35 hours at the maximum are allotted to teaching economic contents in a year.

The majority of the respondents agree with the

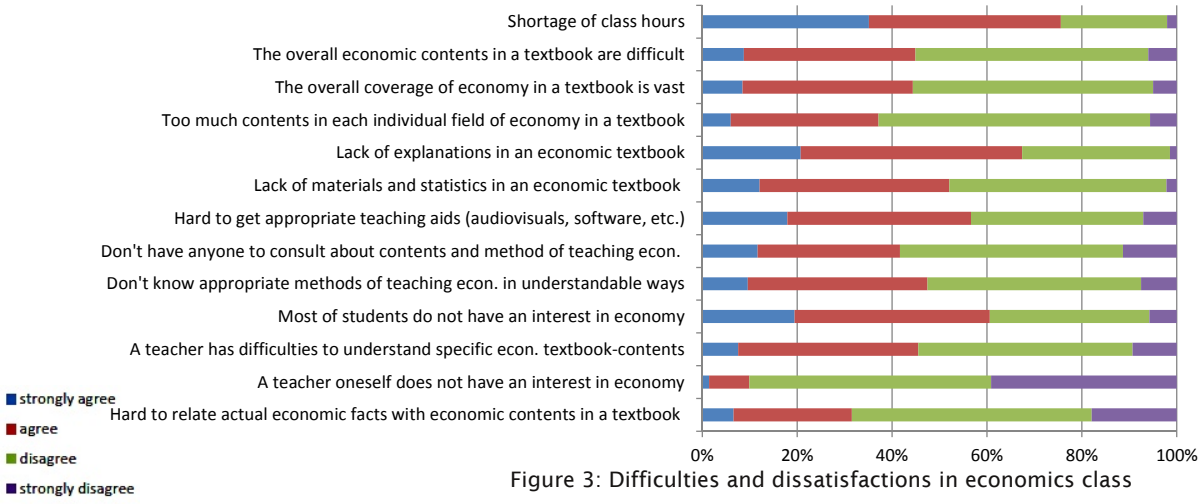

Figure 3: Difficulties and dissatisfactions in economics class

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statements 'Lack of explanations in an economic textbook,' 'Most of students do not have an interest in the economy,' 'Hard to get appropriate teaching aids (audiovisuals, software, etc.),' and 'Lack of materials and statistics in an economic textbook.' 46-47 % of them agree with 'Do not know an appropriate method of teaching economics to students in the understandable way,' and 'Even a teacher oneself is unable to understand specific content in a textbook.'

Figure 4 shows their attitude toward some typical economic issues which have been discussed among not only teachers and scholars, but also economists, politicians, business people, and common citizens in Japan.

First, more than 70 % of the respondents agree that 'The freedom of economic activities should be secured for both people and firms,' whereas more than 80 % of them disagree that 'All economic transactions should be left to the market mechanism.' Similarly, 45 % of the respondents agree that 'Both firms and consumers gain from economic transactions,' whereas more than 70 % of them agree that 'Consumers will suffer damage by unrestrained activities of firms.' Consequently, their thinking sometimes has inconsistency within themselves.

Secondly, while more than 70 % of the respondents agree that 'The freedom of economic activities should be secured for both people and firms,' more than 60 % of them disagree that 'Inefficient firms should be eliminated from the market through competition.' This suggests that the majority of them have ambivalence about the function of the market, because they have sympathy with the precondition of free and competitive market on the one hand, whereas they do not have sympathy with its consequences on the other hand. However, more than 80 % of them disagree that 'All economic transactions should be left to the market mechanism,' and about 70 % of them agree that 'The market mechanism is not good enough because it brings economic disparity.' This implies that they are skeptical about the market mechanism and they have a view against it, therefore they have ambivalence about it as is mentioned above although they understand it as the core of the capitalist economic system. In a sense, they are considered to be a kind of Keynesian.

Thirdly, 53 % of the respondents disagree that 'Profit-maximisation is most important for a firm,' and 54 % of them agree that 'Excessive money-making is not desirable for people or for a firm either.' The majority of them (53-83 %) agree that 'The higher rate of income tax should be imposed on a high-income earner,' 'The market mechanism is not good enough because it brings economic disparity,' 'Disparity in lifetime income caused by different educational background is not desirable,' 'People's living standard should be equal as much as possible,' and 'Economic justice and equity should be preferred to efficiency through competition.' This means that the majority of economics teachers are equality- and equity-oriented in Japan. They are idealists and egalitarians rather than realists, and they are often critical of government policies.

Fourthly, a small percentage of the respondents (17-26 %) agree that 'People had better not invest their money in stocks,' and 'Investment in stocks should not be taught to high school students.' More

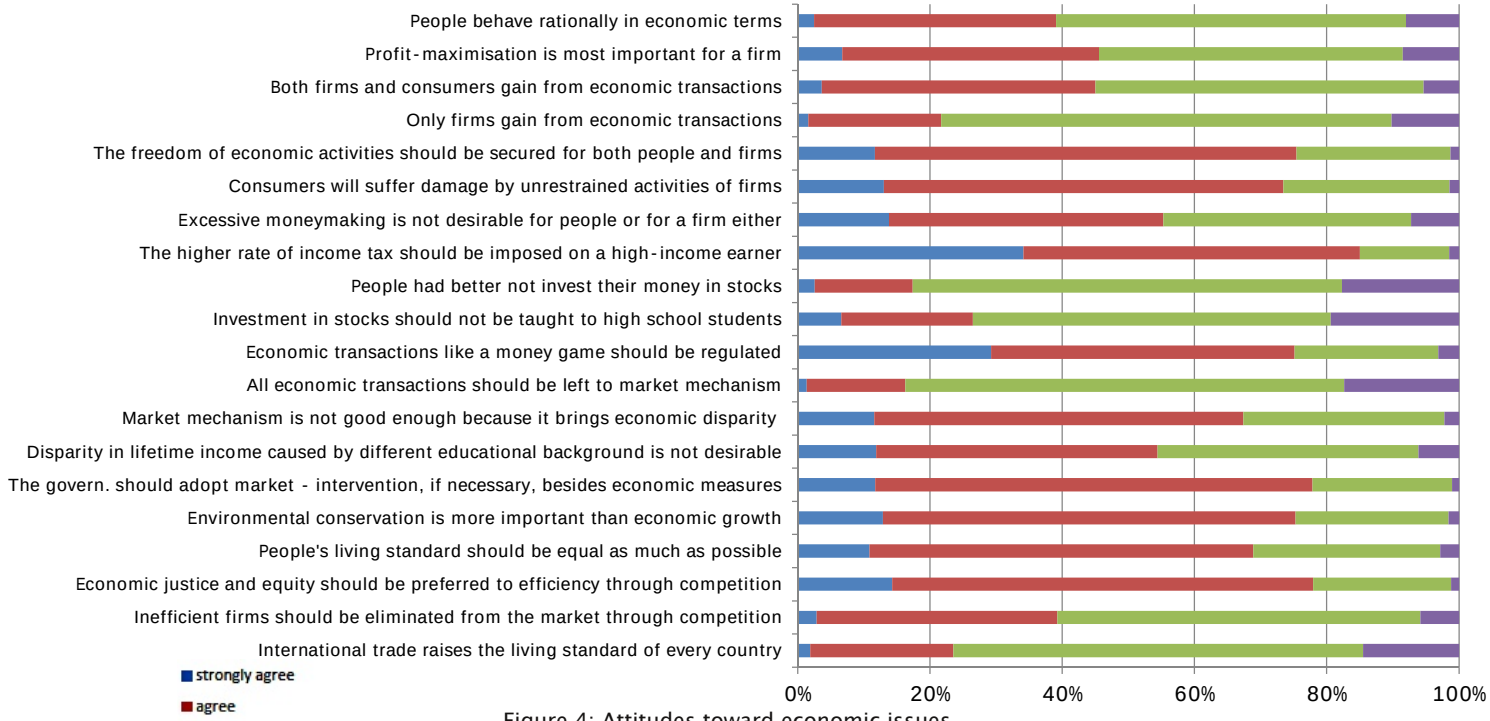

Figure 4: Attitudes toward economic issues

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than 70 % of them agree that 'Economic transactions like a money game should be regulated,' and 'The government should adopt intervention in market transactions, if necessary, besides taking economic measures.' This means that most of them are friendly to investment in stocks but critical of money games or speculation.

Fifthly, more than 70 % of them agree that 'Environmental conservation is more important than economic growth,' and 'Economic justice and equity should be preferred to efficiency through competition.' This implies that they do not stand up firmly for the idea that economic growth should have priority over any other economic policies.

Lastly, 70 % of them agree that 'Both firms and consumers gain from economic transactions.' Only 23 % of them, however, agree that 'International trade raises the living standard of every country.' These two statements have a different expression but the same connotations, and the respondents have an inconsistent view between domestic trade and international trade.

5 Conclusion

The questionnaire survey was projected to disclose the real nature of economics teachers in high school and secondary school in Japan. The authors could gather enough samples (respondents) to form a true image of those teachers. Their standard profile and characteristics as economics teachers, their qualities, thinking about economy, and attitude toward some economic issues were revealed for the first time based on the statistical data by this survey as is mentioned above.

A few of the economics teachers have never studied economics at all in college or university, and many of them have had difficulties in teaching economics in class. In general, they have an egalitarian view about economic issues, such as people's income and living standard in particular, they are critical of money game and moneymaking, they do not have much trust in the market mechanism, they consider government's intervention in the market to be correct or want to prevent such undesirable results of the free market transactions as economic disparity and money game, and they have inconsistent opinions between a free, competitive market and its consequences and between domestic trade and international trade.

Such characteristics, qualities and attitudes of economics teachers may have more or less effect on their economic instruction and, in turn, on students' understanding of economy. For instance, teacher's poor knowledge and understanding of monetary problems and the international economy may cause student's low literacy in the topics of the same field. Therefore, continuous training to teachers is necessary to improve their economic literacy and teaching skills as well as student's economic literacy.

Moreover, the questionnaire survey discloses that civics teachers have difficulties in and dissatisfactions with teaching students about the economy, especially in class hours and with the textbook. Class hours are limited for the volume of economic contents to teach, and the contents of a textbook are unsatisfactory both in volume and in description. Explanations of economic themes in a textbook are reduced to a minimum, and a certain school inspector in the MEXT has stated before that economics teachers should read between the lines in a textbook and teach what they read to students. But it may be relatively hard for those teachers with less economic literacy to do so. Improvement in description of economic contents in a textbook as well as in their literacy is necessary to better economic instruction for teachers and to better economic learning for students.

As for Japanese high school students, they like 'Civics' least of all the subject areas (25.8 %, n=4,464), and they also understand what they learn in the 'Civics' class least of all (24.6 %).[6] Consequently it is indispensable to make the subjects ('Contemporary Society' and 'Politics and Economy') more interesting and understandable to students. The accomplishment of this mission depends entirely on civics teachers.

In conclusion, improvement in teachers' competence for their task, increased class hours and textbook for economic instruction, and heightening students' interest in and understanding of economic matters should be encouraged for better economic education and learning.

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Endnotes:

[1] A high school is a three-year school for students aged 16-18 years, and a secondary school is a combined school of junior and senior high school for students aged 13-18 years. See the MEXT. 2006. Japan's Education at a Glance 2006.

[2] It is properly called the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

[3] The working period of 50 years for one respondent is too long and exceptional.

[4] The basics of modern or mainstream economics are Keynesian economics and the neoclassical economics.

[5] The authors have conducted assessment tests ten times in Japan from 1996 for measuring students' economic and personal financial literacy in mainly high school and university. The Test of Economic Literacy, the third edition (TEL3), Form A conducted in 2001 is one of them.

[6] See Benesse Educational Research and Development Center. 2006. Dai 4 kai Gakushuu Kihon Chousa Houkokusho, Koukousei Ban. [Report of the Fourth Learning Basic Survey: High School Students]. Figures 2-1-1 and 2-1-2.