INFORMATION SERVICE PROJECT FOR LIFELONG EDUCATION IN JAPAN

In promoting learning activities among the adult population, it seems necessary to satisfy three conditions. The first is to provide adults with a wide variety of learning opportunities. The second is to make it easy for them to take part in those learning opportunities. The third is to provide information to the public about available learning opportunities. These three conditions are (1) availability, (2) accessibility, and (3) information and consultation. This statement assumes that the first two conditions are present and describes ways in which information services have been provided for programs aimed at adult learners in Japan.

Social Correspondence Education

Correspondence education for the general public is provided mainly by nonprofit, private organizations. The Japanese Ministry of Education gives recognition, assistance, and guidance to organizations that meet established standards regarding the courses they provide. Forty-two organizations have been providing recognized social (or adult) education programs which include fifty-five clerical, seventy-six technical, and thirty-seven cultural courses. The Ministry of Education has assisted them by publishing 300,000 copies of Guidebook on Social Correspondence Courses since 1972. The guidebooks are distributed not only to the education authorities and institutions but also to industrial and commercial companies. The ministry also subsidizes newspaper publicity for these correspondence courses.

Educational Radio and Television Programs

Educational programs on radio and television are put on the air by two types of companies. One is NHK, or the Japan Broadcasting Corporation, which is supported by license fees. The others are commercial broadcasting companies. As the educational programs have been increasing in number, NHK issues a monthly newsletter entitled Anata-no Daial (Your Dial), which contains a classified schedule of programs, commentaries on the new programs, and an introduction to group activities making use of broadcasting programs. The newsletter is distributed free of charge.
to each local board of education, to social education institutions or Kominkans (citizen's public halls), agricultural extension offices, social education officers, local public libraries, members of viewers groups, etc. Each time 170,000 copies are printed for that purpose. Nihon Tampa Hoso (Japan Short-wave Broadcasting Company) issues a quarterly newsletter of the programs, which contains a pilot program for the Open University that is to start in the near future.

With the aim of furthering effective use of educational broadcasting programs, NHK held the first nationwide meeting in 1969 and had the ninth meeting this year. They have had the annual meetings successively for these nine years. Besides NHK, Commercial Broadcasters Educational Association (thirty-two companies are affiliated) has also been holding its own meetings of the same kind these years. In both cases, the participants include representatives of listeners and viewers, local education officers, and producers of the broadcasting companies, and they meet to exchange views and experiences. Regional meetings of the same kind are held prior to the national meetings.

Counseling Project on Infant Care

This project, with a newly devised multimedia approach similar to that of the British Open University, was initiated in 1972-73 to increase learning opportunities in the home, and the following approaches were employed:

1. Postcards or other printed materials were directly mailed to parents who recently had their first baby, conveying useful information about education in the home.

2. Parents received information on child care by means of commercial television programs with coverage of the entire prefecture. The programs are broadcast under the following conditions: (a) the content of the program must answer the questions most frequently addressed either to the team of counselors or to the committee in charge of mailed information, and (b) each program must be longer than fifteen minutes, with a total of twenty-six or more showings occupying at least B-time, and all showings must be in color.

3. A team of experts (doctors, child psychologists, etc.) met at a specified location within the prefecture to provide counseling services for parents with child care problems.

This project was adopted by twelve prefectures during the first year, by thirty prefectures during 1973-74, by thirty-eight prefectures during 1974-75, and thereafter by forty-two prefectures. Its annual cost is approximately 26 million yen per prefecture; half the expenses are state subsidized. The Ministry of Education has been giving a subsidy of 620 million yen for this project.

According to the information collected in 1974-75, 716,000 households throughout Japan were involved in the project, and postcards or printed materials were mailed to all participating parents an average of ten times a year. The teams providing counseling services were sent out an average of eighteen times annually and gave advice to an average of thirty individuals each time, bringing the total number involved to 531 parents in each prefecture.