

# The Trend of Lifelong Learning in Japan



Lifelong Learning Promotion Division, Education Policy Bureau



文部科学省

MEXT

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,  
CULTURE, SPORTS,  
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY-JAPAN

# **1 . The Process and Present Situation of Promoting Lifelong Learning in Japan**

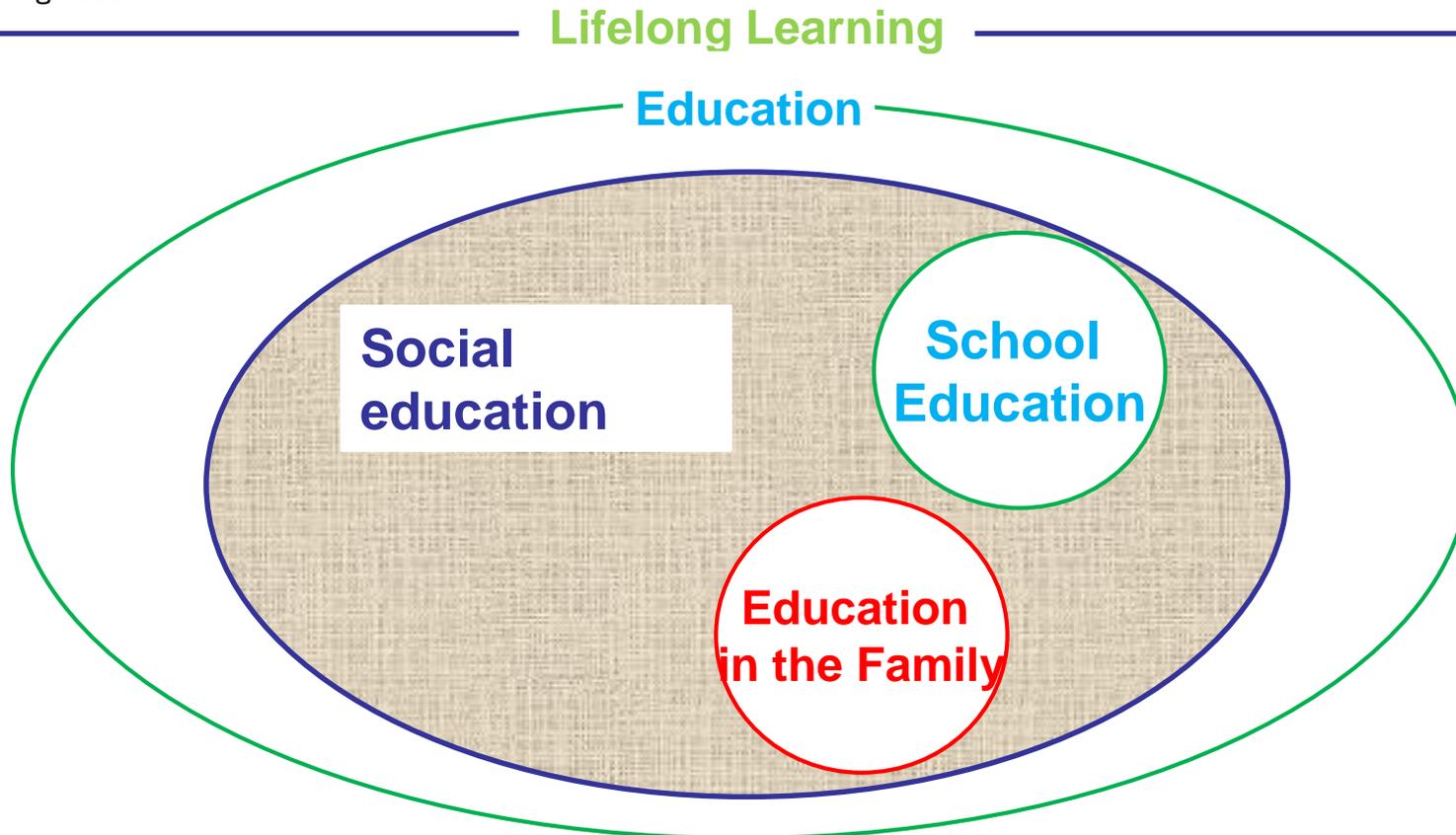
# How lifelong learning is regarded in Japan

Lifelong learning is a concept of learning which learners willingly learn whenever whatever, and however they want for self-enrichment and improvement of the quality of life depending on the needs at each step of life.

【A provision of Lifelong Learning】

**Basic Act on Education (Act No. 120 of 2006)**

Article 3 A society must be brought into being in which the people can continue to learn throughout their lives, on all occasions and in all places, and in which they can suitably apply the outcomes of their lifelong learning to refine themselves and lead fulfilling lives.



\*Social Education: systematic educational activities which is widely carried out in the society (excluding school education & education in the family)

# The process of Promoting Lifelong Learning

- 1924 · Foundation of Social Education Division at Ministry of Education
- 1929 · Foundation of Social Education Bureau
- 1947 · Enactment of Basic Act of Education
- 1949 · Enactment of Social Education Act
- 1981 · A report "About lifelong learning" from the Central Council for Education
- 1983 · Establishment of Open University of Japan
- 1988 · Establishment of Lifelong Learning Division
- 1990 · A report "Consolidation of Infrastructure of Lifelong Learning" from the Central Council for Education
  - Enactment of Act on Establishment of the System for Promoting Lifelong Learning
- 1991 · Establishment of Central Council for Lifelong Learning
- 2001 · Reorganization of Ministry of Education into MEXT
  - Reorganization of Lifelong Learning Bureau into Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau
  - Merged Central Council for Lifelong Learning into Subdivision on Lifelong Learning, Central Council for Education
- 2006 · Full revision of Basic Act of Education
  - Creation of the provision about philosophy of lifelong learning in the Basic Act on Education
- 2008 · The Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education
  - A report "Measures to Promote Lifelong Learning to Lead the New Era" from the Central Council for Education
- 2013 · The Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education
- 2018 · The Third Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education
  - Reorganization of Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau into Education Policy Bureau

## Part 2 Goals and Policies for the Next 5 Years

### 3. Learning for the Lifetime and Developing the Environment for Participating the Society

#### Goal 10: Promoting the Lifelong Learning looking ahead to the advent of “100-year life society”

- Promoting the Learning about the Tackling with the Social Problems
- Promoting Recurrent Education to Enhance the Gender Equality
- Promoting the Lifelong Learning of the Elderly People
- Promoting the Sports Activities Appropriate to the Life Stage
- Promoting Cultural and Artistic Activities for the Lifetime
- Preparing Environments for the Appropriate Evaluation of Learning Results

#### Goal 11: Promoting the Learning for Uplifting People’s Lives and Continuing Development of Society

- Making a Study for the Promotion of Social Education to make the New Community in the New Era
- Training the Core Persons Assuming the Human and Community Development
- Sustainable Operation of Social Education Facilities
- Improving the Community Education and Promoting the Cooperation between a School and Community

#### Goal 12: Promoting the Recurrent Education for Achieving the Knowledge and Skills Needed in the Job for Lifetime

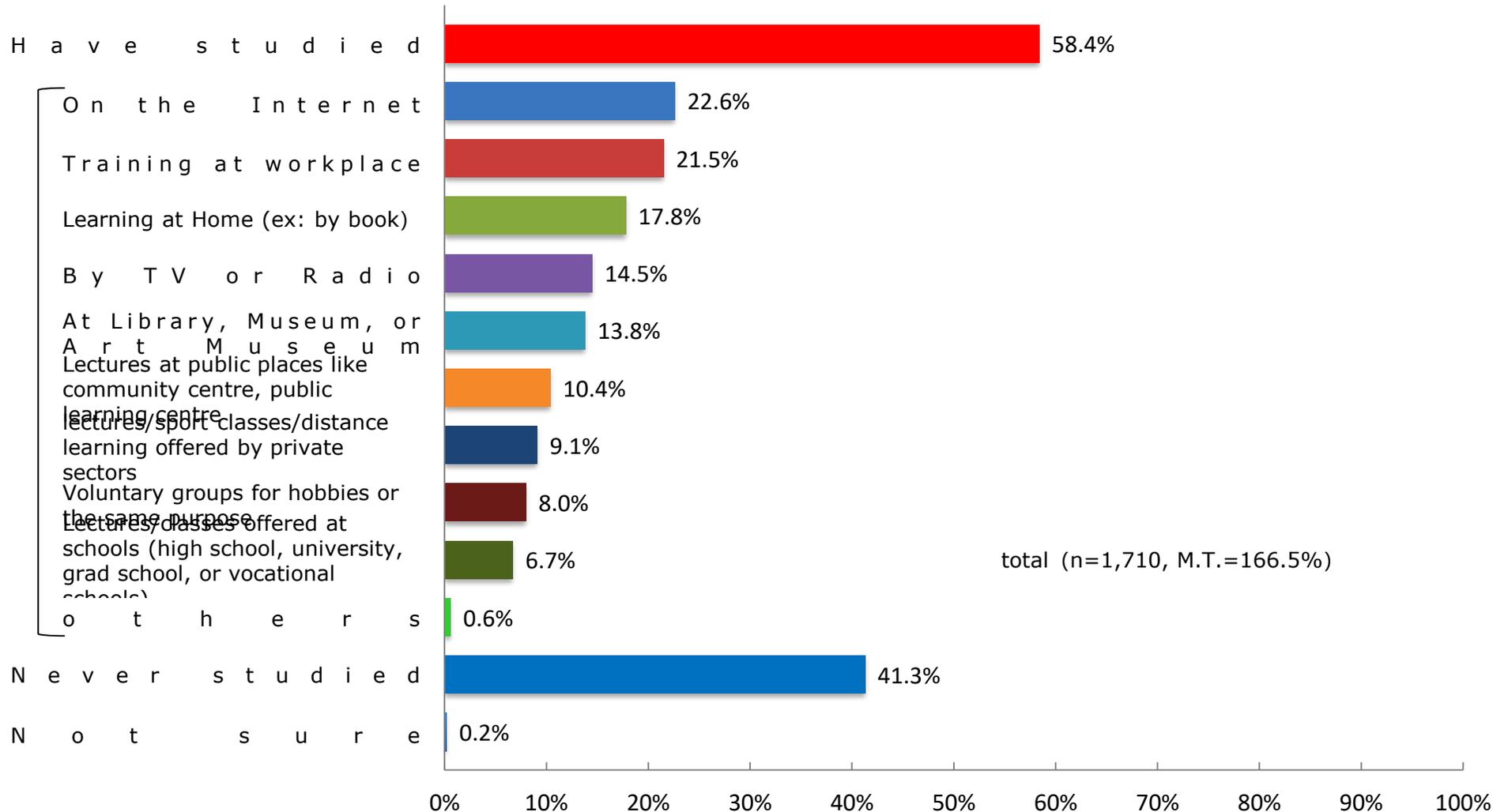
- Establishing the Practical Curriculum Cooperating with Industry
- Preparing Environments for Making Working Adults able to Learn while Working
- Providing Economic Support
- Promoting Companies’ Understandings
- Promoting Practical Vocational Education in Higher Education Institutions

#### Goal 13: Promoting Lifelong Learning of Persons with Disabilities

- Supporting the Learning of the people with Disabilities after Graduation from Schools
- Promoting the Cooperating between Community and a School
- Enhancing the Special Needs Education
- Enhancing the Students Support in the Universities
- Promoting the Sports and Cultural and Artistic Activities for the People with Disabilities

# Data about Lifelong Learning Activities

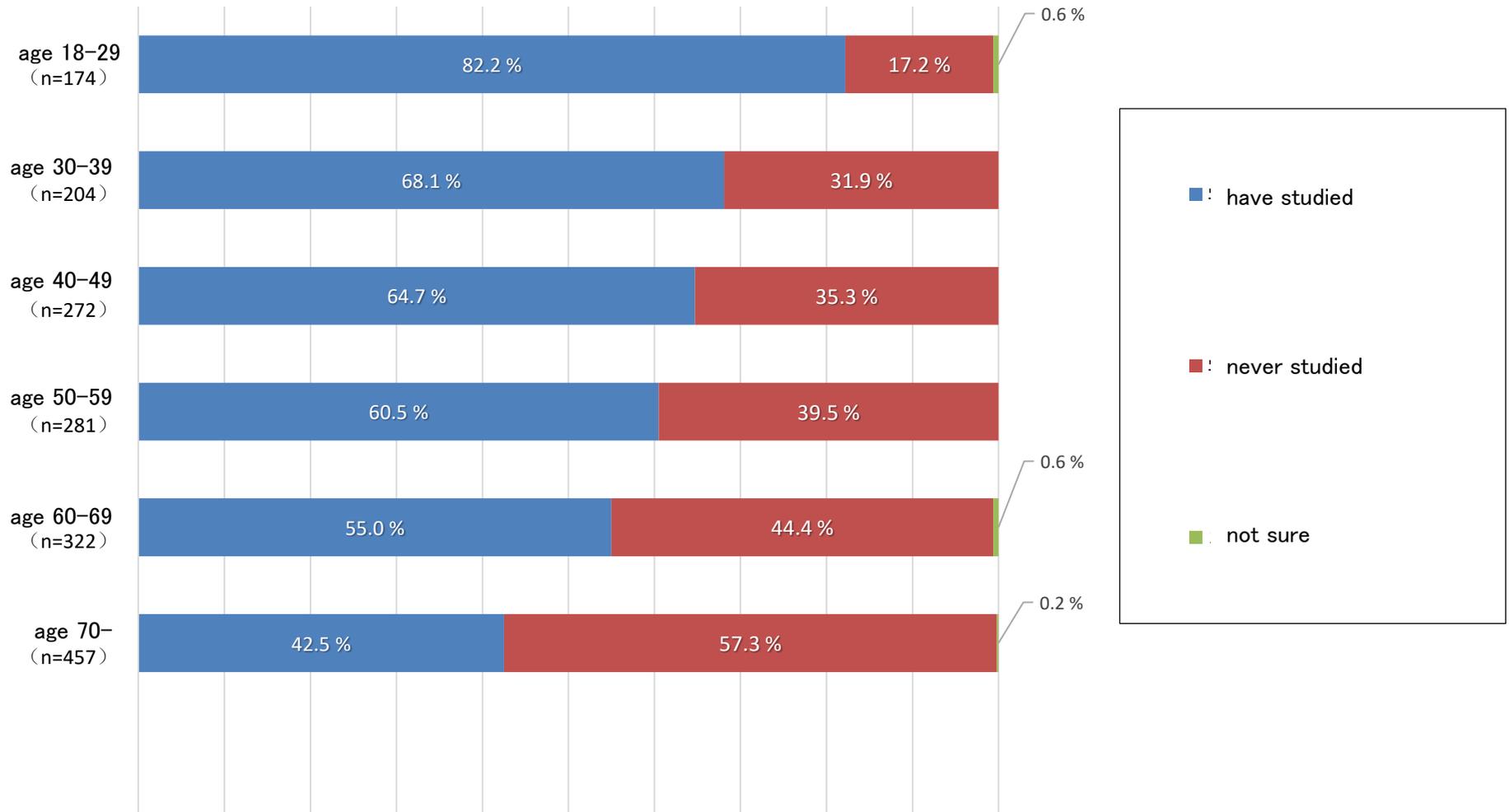
How and where have you ever learned in the last one year?  
Choose all choices you have. (multiple answers)



# Data about Lifelong Learning Activities

As being elder age group, the number of answers `never studied in the last one year` has increased.

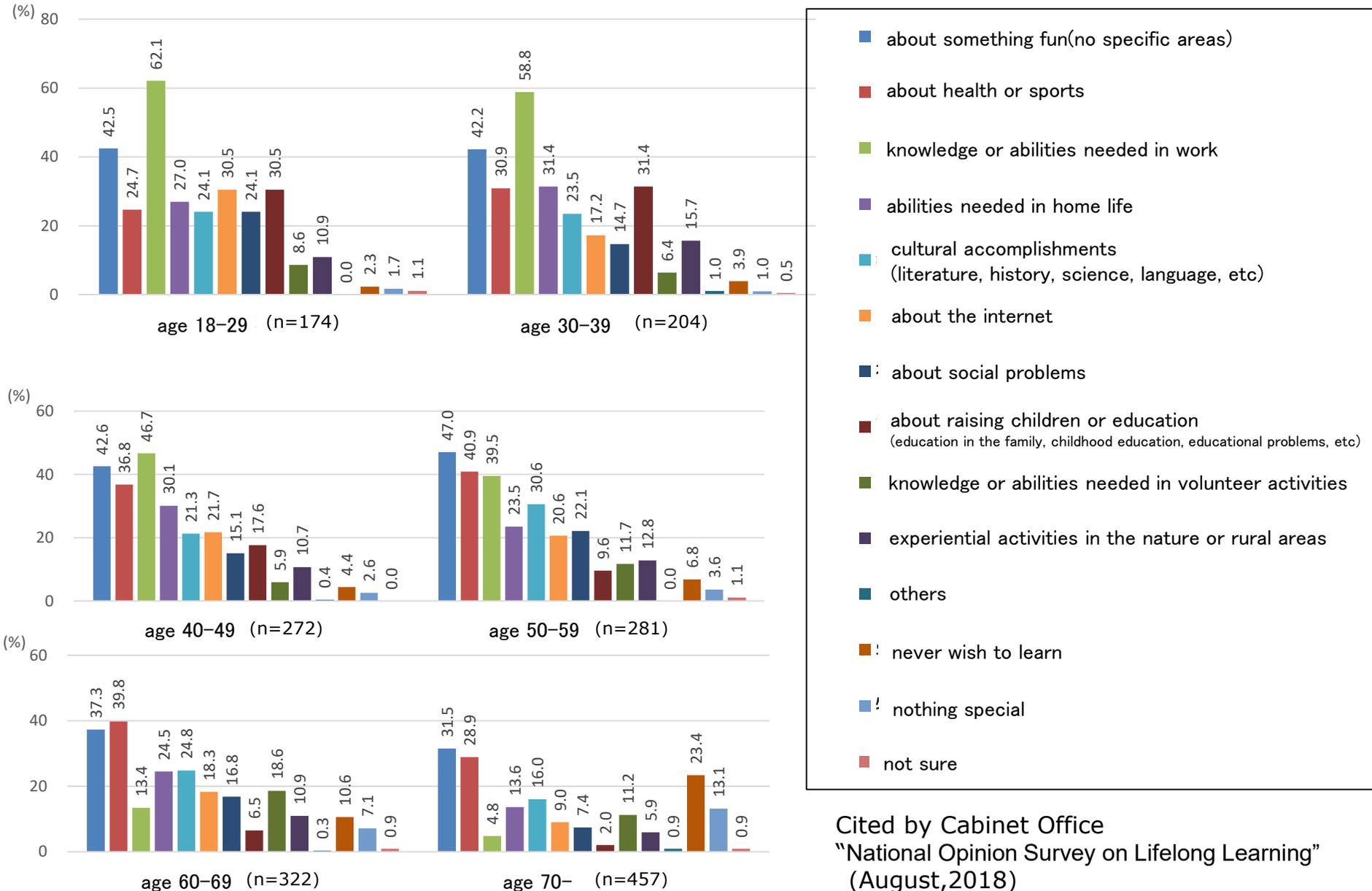
in the last one year, `have studied` `never studied` categorized by age group



Cited by Cabinet Office "National Opinion Survey on Lifelong Learning" (August, 2018)

# Will to Learn in the Future

○ What will you want to learn? answers categorized by age group(multiple answers)



Cited by Cabinet Office  
 “National Opinion Survey on Lifelong Learning”  
 (August, 2018)

**2 . The direction Japan is aiming  
for**

# The Direction Japan is Aiming for

◆ **Basic Policy on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform 2020 (July 17, 2020 Cabinet Decision)**

## **Chapter 2. Protecting People's Lives, Livelihoods, Jobs, and Businesses**

**1. Dealing with the pandemic and gradually ramping up economic activity: Economic strategy during the pandemic**

**(2) Maintaining employment and supporting livelihoods**

**(略)**

The government will also encourage telework and strive to upgrade recurrent education in response to the “New Normal Lifestyle” by developing online content for at-home learning, etc.

## **Chapter 3. Achieving the “New Normal Lifestyle”**

**3. Ramping up investment in people and innovation: Supporting the “New Normal Lifestyle” through improved productivity**

**(1) Development of human resources with creativity and the skills to identify and resolve challenges**

### **③ Recurrent education**

The government will promote remote and online learning, educational training benefits for working people, and human resources development support grants for business owners and will expand these programs at universities, while at the same time implementing recurrent education nationwide so that people of all ages can take up new challenges and help people who may be 40 or older to take stock of their careers. The government will strengthen practical programs that fortify partnerships and ties with the business community in a variety of fields, as well as bolstering e-learning so that people will not be hampered by the digital divide. To nurture human resources who create value and cannot be replaced by machines or AI, the government will support the development of educational programs that employ the latest IT, technologies, and cutting-edge teaching methods. The government is progressing with investigating systems to strengthen incentives that promote investment in human resources geared toward nurturing STEAM and digital specialists.

# Proposals, etc. Concerning Relearning by Adults (2)

## ◆ Action Plan of the Growth Strategy 2020 (July 17, 2020 Cabinet Decision)

### Chapter 2 Establishment of New Work Styles

#### 3. Fostering the Creativity of Working Adults (Continuing Education)

It is necessary to provide continuing education opportunities for working adults in their 20s and early 30s at large companies in order to refine and step-up their creativity.

It has also been pointed out that one of the reasons for the low markup rate in Japan is that Japanese manufacturing companies position art and design relatively far from management's focus, instead paying attention to cost and quality.

For this reason, there will be intensive and medium- to long-term support in order to develop educational programs that connect businesses to creative ideas based on customer needs and individual attitudes and to quickly construct a base of universities that put these programs into practice.

Specifically, it will establish an environment where the latest IT and technology necessary for the realization of ideas can be utilized and will be a small group program centered on project-type lessons in collaboration with companies, developing educational programs in collaboration with both domestic and overseas art universities that reflect education methods. Therefore, an environment in which it is easy to attend these classes will be created, such as by holding classes on weekday evenings or on holidays and by setting inexpensive tuition fees so that working adults from a diverse array of backgrounds can learn while working.

# Protecting livelihoods and lives, realizing a society where no one is left behind —lifelong education and social education connected through collaboration with various stakeholders and the utilization of ICT

## 1. Recurrent education: Current situation and issues

Summary of discussions at 10<sup>th</sup> Central Council for Education subcommittee on lifelong education (Sept. 24, 2020)

### ⊖ Achieving **social inclusivity**

- Social education is expected to play a very valuable role for building environments where diverse people around the world can mutually understand and live together with each other.
- Expanding learning opportunities in social education is essential for enhancing opportunities for people grappling with difficulties for various reasons to gain new knowledge and skills.

### ⊖ Lifelong learning and social education in the 100-year-life era

- In a multi-stage lifetime, people will need to grow by gaining the necessary information and skills at the necessary time and to be able to lead active lives while maintaining their physical and mental health. Moreover, since opportunities will likely increase for people to change their workplaces or occupations, providing opportunities that enable people to update necessary qualifications and capabilities is vital.

### ⊗ Lifelong learning and social education from now heading toward Society 5.0

- **Closing of the gap between those who can utilize ICT and those who cannot (digital divide) will lead to the protection of security and livelihoods of citizens.**
- Various learning styles utilizing new technologies that can mitigate space and time constraints will become possible.  
⇒ Further developing and enhancing efforts for **maximizing the advantages of learning using new technologies** will be required.

### ④ Promotion of regional revitalization

- Diverse stakeholders will need to collaborate and cooperate to learn together in order to promote fruitful learning in regional areas.

### ⑤ Promotion of multi-generational exchanges and the active engagement of children/young people in regional communities

- **The active engagement of children and young people in solving community problems** is vital for contributing to the fostering of a sense of ownership and the development of qualities and capabilities for building a better society. This engagement should be enhanced to go beyond the distinction between social education and school education.

## 2. Towards the spread and enhancement of lifelong learning and social education

### Learning styles in the new era

- Not only learning by inputting information received in lecture formats but also learning by having questions, identifying problems, expressing ideas, thinking together with others, and creating new ideas is a vital part of learning.
- People from different generations with diverse backgrounds building ties and learning together will lead to the creation of new ideas to solve problems and the realizing of a society where people will understand, accept, and live together with others.
- **Combining online learning utilizing new technologies with face-to-face learning will make learning richer.**

### Lifelong learning and social education for protecting lives

- Enhancing opportunities for gaining necessary knowledge and learning together to solve problems related to the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, etc., will be directly connected to protecting the lives of all people.
  - Providing necessary learning opportunities to a diverse range of people will be essential for realizing an inclusive society where no one is left behind.
- ⇒ **The view that lifelong learning and social education for protecting the lives and livelihoods of people through learning will become increasingly important from now.**

## Measures for promotion

Summary of discussions at 10<sup>th</sup> Central Council for Education subcommittee on lifelong education (Sept. 24, 2020)

### ⊖ **Fostering, utilization of persons for coordinating learning activities**

- Concrete examples of efforts and results of social education supervisors should be introduced and their activities promoted at various places.
- Securing opportunities for receiving lectures such as online programs and other conditions should be prepared so that a diverse range of people can receive short courses for social education supervisors.

### ⊖ **Expanding “ties” by utilizing new technologies**

- Greater promotion than ever before of the active utilization of MOOC, Open University of Japan, etc.
- Utilization of existing financial resources, devising of new ideas such as cooperation with private companies in order to promote the preparation of ICT environments at social education facilities.
- Enhancement of learning opportunities for people to acquire ICT literacy at social education facilities in order to close the digital divide.

### ⊗ **Creating and expanding cycle of learning and activity**

- Study of measures for promoting visualization of learning history using ICT, etc. in the field of lifelong learning.
- Promotion of unique initiatives such as the creation of point systems for volunteer activities as a scheme for getting as many people as possible to engage voluntarily in learning activities, which people can then use to contribute to schools or purchase items in the community.

### ④ **Promotion of recurrent education leading to growth of the individual and development of society**

- Development and enhancement of practical educational programs through collaboration between universities, professional training colleges, etc. and industry.
- Promotion of active utilization of remote classes for recurrent education at universities, professional training colleges, etc.

### ⑤ **Support and nationwide dissemination of excellent initiatives of each region**

- Provision of information in easy-to-understand formats of advanced and progressive examples and expansion of opportunities for practitioners to share know-how, etc.

# Measures by relevant ministries to enhance recurrent education

Under their different roles, relevant ministries and agencies are promoting the organic collaboration with and enhancement of their respective policies for **developing and rolling out their programs for recurrent education to facilitate individual career improvement and changes and contribute to raising the competitiveness of private-sector companies.**

## Support for vocational ability development and the preparation of work environments for facilitating the stability of occupations for workers and job seekers.

Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

### ● Support for career options responding to each person's lifestyle

- Enhancement of career consulting (support for introduction of "Self-Career Dock" system)

### ● Enhancement of recurrent education opportunities for workers, job seekers

- Development of vocational training for acquiring IT knowledge, skills
- Enhancement of vocational training courses for part-time workers who cannot get employment insurance; review of minimum training time
- Subsidies for companies' education and training for employees utilizing e-learning
- Enhancement of education and training benefits (Increase in number of target courses for which benefits can be received for professional training, setting of designated standards regarding specified general education and training)
- Fostering of guidance personnel and trainers for education and training

### ● Further preparation of environments for brushing up skills

- Subsidies to companies introducing long-term leave systems for education and training
- Development of effective and highly needed education/training programs as a new and practical employment measure

### ● Establishing of flexible labor market and corporate practices so that job changing is not a disadvantage

- Formulation of "Guidelines for promoting the acceptance of job changing and re-employment regardless of person's age"

## Creating conditions, fostering momentum for strengthening Japan's competitiveness

Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry

### ● Strengthening, optimal utilization of human resources as the source of value creation

- Formulation of "Essential Skills of a Working Adult in the Era of the 100-Year Life"
- Support for fostering human resources who will lead SMEs' overseas ventures
- Development of practical skills development programs through solving of social problems

### ● Support for expansion of IT/IT utilization fields

- Fostering of IT personnel, promotion of IT skill transfer (Increase number of METI Minister-certified practical education courses under the Fourth Industrial Revolution Skills Course System)
- Implementation of national test for assessment of IT skills

## Enhancement of recurrent education programs at universities, professional training colleges for acquiring practical skills

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

### ● Support for strengthening of recurrent education programs at universities, professional training colleges, etc.

- Support for development of practical programs through industry-university collaboration (including short-term, online programs)
- Recruitment/fostering of teachers with practical experience and specialists for promotion of recurrent education
- Promotion of MEXT Minister-certified practical, short-term programs (Brush-up Programs for Professionals [BP], career development programs, etc.)

### ● Development of learning infrastructure for promoting recurrent education

- Integrated support for women's career formation and skills improvement for improving women's careers
- Improving access to training course information for working adults

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With an eye on the era of 100 years of life and the progress of technological innovation, we **will** build a society in which anyone can take on new challenges at any age by promoting exit-integrated recurrent education through the development of infrastructure for recurrent education that meets the needs of society and the expansion of practical programs through industry-academia collaboration.

## New development, expansion of practical programs for adult learners

### Human Resource Development for Society 5.0

#### ○ Development of value-creating human resources

Development of educational programs and formation of centers for connecting creative ideas to business

#### ○ Development of recurrent education programs at specialized training colleges

- recurrent education programs across disciplines, with a focus on short-term learning
- Development and demonstration of restart programs through industry-academia collaboration, etc.

#### ○ Development and implementation of programs at universities to support employment and career change

- Promotion of smooth employment and career change by providing highly effective and high-quality educational programs at universities to support non-regular workers, the unemployed, and young people who have not been able to find their desired jobs.

※ In addition, recurring cost subsidies for universities that promote the systematic acceptance of working people, and the systematization of "professional universities that provide practical vocational education (to be enforced in April 1991) have been implemented. "

#### ○ Enhancement of practical-based Open University of Japan programs

- Creation of content related to mathematics, data science, and AI education

#### ○ Development of human resources in information technology through industry-academia collaboration

- Formation of a practical educational network through industry-academia collaboration
- Development and implementation of short-term programs to improve and renew the skills of IT engineers in security and other fields

#### ○ Implementation of recurrent education programs related to the teaching profession

- Continued implementation of the program developed with the supplementary budget for fiscal year 2019, targeting those who had to give up their teaching careers despite having a teaching license.

#### ○ Implementation of educational programs for local retention through industry-academia-government collaboration

- Implementation of educational reforms and educational programs that are integrated with places of employment to cultivate human resources required by the region through collaboration between industry, academia, and government.

## Development of learning infrastructure for the promotion of recurrent education

- Integrated support for women's education, career formation
  - Establishment of a model to provide comprehensive support for raising awareness, providing information, developing a consultation system, and designing study programs for career advancement and career change
  - Organization of a network to support women's career development through relearning, and disseminate and raise awareness through familiar media such as SNS and events
- Improvement of information access for adults
  - Enhancement of portal sites enabling effective access to information on courses and various support systems, etc.
- Development of management model for recurrent courses
  - Conducting an “Empirical Study on a Sustainable Management Model for Recurrent Courses in Universities”

## Developing professional human resources to support recurrent education

- Training of practitioner teachers
  - Establishment of a system to develop and utilize practitioner faculty members who support practical education, including relearning by working adults.

### ★Certification of practical, short-term courses offered by universities, special training colleges

“Brush up Program for professionals”(BP) and “Career Development Promotion Program”

⇒ The number of accredited courses has been further enhanced to expand learning opportunities and reduce learning costs for participants.

As of May 2020: 282 BP courses, 19 Career Development Promotion Program courses

March 2015, Recommendations of the Education Rebuilding Implementation Council (6<sup>th</sup> proposal)

**“Education for realizing an inclusive society that enables continuous learning and revitalizes local economies”**



Study of certification requirements, etc. by advisory panel

From FY2015, the MEXT Minister began certification of **practical and specialist programs conducted at universities and other institutions that meet the needs of working adults and companies** designated as "Brush up Programs for Professionals (BP)"

## Aim

To expand opportunities for working adults to upgrade skills necessary for their occupations through practical programs

## Certification requirements

- Must be **regular courses or special certification courses** offered at universities, graduate schools, junior colleges, or colleges of technology.
- **Target occupation categories and skills that can be acquired are clearly specified and announced.**
- Educational courses enable attendees to acquire the knowledge, techniques, and skills necessary to perform the business practices of the target occupations
- Lessons must be conducted by at least two of the educational methods below for a fixed number of the total course hours (50% or more as a guide).

**① Classes led by faculty with practical experience or current professionals**    **② Discussions 2-way or multi-directional**

(Generally, at least 5 years practical experience in specialist field)

(Problem-identification/solving-type learning, workshops, etc.)

**③ Field activities**

(internships, study abroad, local surveys, etc.)

**④ Training in collaboration with companies, etc.**

(Field work, etc. with companies)

- Grade evaluation of students    ○ Self-monitoring/assessment, announcement of results (Employment situation of graduates, skills/abilities acquired, etc.)
- **Adopting mechanisms for systematically incorporating views of companies in related fields in organization of curriculum, self-monitoring/assessment.**
- Facilitating ways to make it easier for working adults to attend the programs (weekend/night, intensive, online/distance courses, use of IT, etc.)



Through certification: **1) visualization of options for working adults to brush up their skills, 2) increased attractiveness of programs at universities, etc. 3) increased understanding by companies, etc., and in conjunction with the MHLW's Training and Education Benefits Systems, promotion of brush-up training for working adults.**

※ No. of certified programs as of May 2020: **282 programs**

# **5. Actions Under the Covid-19 Pandemic**

# Cases under the Coronavirus pandemic(1)

- On April 7, 2020, the state of emergency was declared by the government in view of the fact that the nationwide and rapid spread of COVID-19 could have an enormous impact on people's lives and the national economy.
- On May 25, 2020, the declaration was lifted nationwide, and school activities at almost all elementary and junior and senior high schools were resumed on June 1.
- Under the declaration of the state of emergency, a lot of local governments had to cancel or postpone lifelong learning and social education courses and activities, but among them, some local governments and social education facilities took various measures to "keep learning alive."

## Naha City Wakasa Community Learning Center

- During the closure period, the Center's official YouTube channel was launched.
- The channel features videos of how to spend time at home, like writing Corona senryu poems, doing family artwork, gymnastics, and cooking.
- In order to support people who are facing difficulties due to the spread of the infection, the community center introduced support systems to people who are connected to foreign countries, and with the cooperation of companies and other organizations, provided drive-through groceries to those who wish to receive them at community centers.
- To answer questions from children about politics, the community center and the children's center co-hosted an online talk event, "What is Politics?"



## Susono City Lifelong Learning Center

- The center organized smartphone courses for seniors in cooperation with cell phone companies.
- In addition to basic operation, courses are offered for seniors to learn how to use smartphones safely and effectively in daily life, such as how to use cashless payment and disaster prevention applications.



# Cases under the Coronavirus pandemic(2)

## Online joint training for community center staff

- NPO connects Natori City and Matsue City
- Sharing of case studies from the two community centers in each city, and dialogue using Zoom breakout rooms (reflection and awareness, image of staff to aim for, etc.)
- It is an opportunity to come into contact with new values and stimulate each other because it is a place for learning that transcends regional boundaries.



### Effects

- ◎ Community center staff themselves continue to hold training sessions.
- ◎ Ongoing online training during COVID crisis, development of "Never stop learning" attitude.
- ◎ Expanding the possibilities of Online Training to "Mutual Learning Across Regions"

## Examples of initiatives for libraries that are closed

### Lending books by reservation

- The user reserves the book by fax, e-mail, or phone, and the library and the user arrange the pick-up date in advance.
- The user contacts the library again just before the pick-up date, and the library prepares and delivers the reserved book.

### Delivery lending by mail

- Users can reserve books over the Internet.
- The library delivers the reserved books to the user's home by mail or by the staff.

### Provision of video content

- The library posted videos of picture-story shows and storytelling by volunteers on the library's website and SNS.
- The library introduced a variety of reading-related content over the Internet.
- ※ Care taken for proper handling of copyrights .

# Cases under the Coronavirus pandemic(3)

## Case of Brush up Program for professionals

### The University of Kitakyushu

#### Contents

- In cooperation with local companies and local communities, students study case study lectures on the use of IoT by VOD (Video on demand) and specialized lectures on information technology for industries with special characteristics.
- In addition, practical exercises are carried out to utilize them, and students acquire knowledge and skills in new information technologies such as artificial intelligence and robotics.

#### Features

- Students deepen their understanding of the importance of design thinking and management by learning through case studies introducing AI, IoT, and robotics.
- Students gain the knowledge on information technology in manufacturing and acquire the skills to use it in the field.

#### Upgrading skills for employed persons

VOD and online classes, exercises and practical training are offered on Saturdays and Sundays.

#### Responding to COVID-19

Shifting instruction to online classes (ZOOM) and lending practical equipment to realize online classes.

## Case at specialized training colleges

### Development of a cross-disciplinary recurrent education program for garment retail workers



#### Overview

- In the garment industry, where sales via the Internet are expected to grow, garment salespeople are required to offer coordination suggestions via SNS and to serve customers using the Internet, in addition to their conventional face-to-face service.
- For this reason, we have developed an educational program for acquiring knowledge and skills in online customer service, which uses ICT to sell products, and to cultivate online customer service skills that have never been experienced before.