Curriculum Trends and Bilingual Education Issues and Reforms in the United States as a Reference for Response to Demographic Changes in Japan

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Abstract

This report assesses curriculum trends and the changes in classroom demographics in the United States and how the government has responded by reforming bilingual education through the NCLB act which ultimately repealed programs such as NABE. The author believes that bilingual education in Japan also needs to be assessed as demographic changes continue in Japan. International students are part of the author’s Environmental English Communication course in the Faculty of Environmental Science at Nagasaki University. Knowledge of education issues, trends and reforms is relevant for Japanese education institutes as demographic changes continue throughout the country. Governmental imposed changes in education standards and curriculum in the United States and the advantages and disadvantages of the NCLB act serve as a model for Japan.

Key Words: curriculum trends, bilingual education, NCLB, NABE, education issues

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge of the different trends and issues concerning education helps one see and define education in better perspective. As classrooms in the United States are becoming more ethnically diverse, changing demographics has become an issue in education. States such as Texas, California, and Hawaii are good examples of rapidly changing American demographics and distribution. Educators find that immigration is filling classrooms with higher numbers of children other than native English speakers that may depend on extra help for work. Many Polynesian and Spanish speaking students have joined public schools. Population densities are increasing the number of school-aged children; therefore, posing cultural differences and balancing can widen the rural, suburban, and urban learning gaps due to socioeconomic differences.

The article titled “English Language Learners in a Comprehensive High School” is among many articles contained in the Bilingual Research Journal archives. The Bilingual Research Journal (BRJ) is supported by the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE) official site. Unfortunately, bilingual education has been losing support in spite of demographic changes suggesting a need for program support. Lack of support for bilingual education is an issue concerning the future of education in classrooms in both the United States and increasingly in Japan.

The Bilingual Research Journal article “English Language Learners in a Comprehensive High School” maintains a narration of data suggesting a qualitative research method of research. Although qualitative research was used as the primary research method, the information presented was thoroughly presented in a 335 page dialog on an intensive analysis of eight English language learners in a comprehensive high school. Statistical information was provided by explaining ethnic proportions and school budget and tuition costs. The
authors present the argument that high school traditions and structures consign English language learners to marginal positions and inferior academic opportunities (Coulter & Smith, 2006). The study provides valuable information on the challenges faced by English learners in a high school environment.

New program standards such as tax base sharing are being introduced to ease cultural, economic, and gender differences by providing a balanced influence on schooling between districts. Demographic changes also present a challenge at the school the author is currently employed. Although demographic changes are more evident concerning declining population rather than variations in the international population, Japan monogenic society is slowly changing as cultural diversity does exist at my high school. Expatriates who reside with their families for an extended amount of time in Japan are faced with finding a school that accepts enrollment or offers assistance for internationals. The secondary and advanced education institutes that the author is employed at accepts international students and are participant schools of international exchange programs. In Japan, as the current population declines, educational standards are also challenged by changes in demographics. Academic competition has only become fiercer with the declining population. The author has noticed that bureaucracy of standards is a challenge when children need supplemental instruction to ensure equity. Especially international students need to have support with their studies as some students are not able to keep up with their Japanese classmates.

International students at the author’s current education institutes are dominantly from neighboring Asian countries. Malaysia and Singapore send students to the author’s secondary education institute through the Lions Club student exchange program. Exchange students are much like the eight participants described in the article. Finding group acceptance to be challenging and having a fear of inability to achieve makes many exchange students avoid actively participating in school events and building relationships with classmates. The author’s advanced education institute includes employment teaching English Conversation and Business English courses in the Faculty of Economics and Environmental English Communication courses in the Faculty of Environmental Science. International students are prevalent in these classes as part of the author’s classroom demographics. Most of the international students are from Asian countries—predominantly China and Korea, but also Thailand, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia.

As Japan’s population declines, an increase in immigrant labor is predicted to be needed in order to save the economy. Continuing demographic changes are predicted as the foreign community increases. Legislation is divided as immigrant increase is also seen as a social risk. The foreign community has grown and culture diversity does exist in Japan. The future of this island nation might follow the United States if immigration laws are changed an even greater amount of cultural diversity will be noticeable. The author believes that bilingual education will also become more of an issue in Japanese schools in response to the foreign community.

In the United States, the equal rights movement of the 1960s changed societal standards for racial equality including changes in education. Education reforms are focused on providing quality education to all members of society. Reforms continue as demographic changes continue to change the social landscape. Competition, labeling, prejudices, stereotyping and discrimination have caused groups to separate. Cross-cultural and multinational understanding of other cultures is needed to ensure quality and fairness for all societal members. This is especially true when one considers the quality of education standards.

Bilingual education struggles to gain political support. Politicians fear that government recognition or acceptance of minority language might be misinterpreted as being overly supportive to immigrants, encouraging expatriates to live in the country without conforming to national ways. Although some of the objections to bilingual education are warranted, many objections simply reflect ethnic stereotypes or class biases. Unfortunately, such biased opinions reflect a pervasive ignorance about how bilingual education works, how second languages are acquired, and how governments have responded to multi-nationals (Bilingual Education, 1998).

Both parents and educators alike are presented with the challenge of providing a nourishing educational environment for youth. Through knowledge of issues
concerning education and by gaining an understanding of
the attitudes of instructors, students, and parents
concerning issues in education, perspective on issues can
be acquired. Demographic changes preset challenges but
through meeting challenges and reassessing standards,
education quality is improved. The article “English
language learners in a comprehensive high school”
(Coulter & Smith, 2006) provided a model example of
how demographic changes are acknowledged within high
schools and provides researchers with source material to
expand on such case studies in order to promote
involvement and perhaps formulate potential solutions.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP OF CURRICULUM AND
INSTRUCTION

The definition of instruction and curriculum is
subjective. Both curriculum and instruction may take on
different meanings based on the purpose or interpretation
whether political, social, or educational. Curriculum is
what is taught in schools, instruction is how curriculum
is delivered and learning is what knowledge or skill has
been acquired (Wiles et al, 2002). The most common
definition of curriculum is based on overt curriculum
which supports an intentional instructional agenda of an
educational institute (Wilson, 2005). Furthermore,
curriculum is the content of what is being taught and
instruction is the implementation of teaching according
academic curriculum.

According to Random House© (2016), the term
instruction is derived from the late Middle English word
instructioun meaning to provide structure and direction.
Curriculum is derived from the Latin word currere which
is associated with the idea of running a racecourse
(Hlebowitsh, 2005). This author, as a marathon runner,
finds interest in this comparison. Running an open course
with a direction or goal in mind maintains more interest
than the boredom of running around a track. The changes
in scenery and terrain, curves and straights, inclines and
declines in conjunction with weather changes make an
open course more interesting. Likewise, changes disrupt
and redirect the course of curriculum development
making the course which curriculum takes more
interesting than circling a predictable track. Curriculum
closely follows or is imposed to counteract the influence
of changes—especially social forces have a profound
influence on curriculum (Wiles et al, 2002). Changes
alter conventional wisdom as new fields of knowledge
are constantly being developed. Technology is an
example of such changes. Technology is always
changing and has a direct influence on curriculum trends
and development. Political agendas might also have an
influence on curriculum development. Changes in
curriculum also coincide with paradigm shifts in
knowledge and the necessity of knowledge. For example,
learning shorthand is no longer a skill that is necessary in
this age. Such programs are removed from curriculum
that was once considered standard decades ago.
Environmental changes have also sparked curriculum
such as “Green Education” in schools around the world.
“Peace Education” is a curriculum standard in Japan.
Demographic changes and globalization also influence
curriculum as in the case of bilingual and ESL education
in the United States.

The relationship between curriculum and instruction is
intimate. The relationship being so intimate that
curriculum and instruction is often said as though the
terms are one word. Yates (2000) further introduces
curstruction and instriculum as morphed words to
describe the seemingly inseparable relationship between
curriculum and instruction. One of the views Hlebowitsh
(2005) provides describes curriculum as providing
structure, outline and purpose to experiences in school;
however, the author does not limit curriculum to this
single definition.

This author would describe the relationship between
curriculum and instruction as a parent and child
relationship. Curriculum takes the role of a parent who is
independent and may function without instruction;
whereas, academic instruction is inherently dependent
upon curriculum—much like a child is dependent upon a
parent. Curriculum provides direction for instruction
since instruction is the method of delivering academic
curriculum. Instruction may exist without curriculum but
would serve no direct purpose. Curriculum and
instruction must be compatible and maintain a close
relationship in order to maximize student learning. The
design of curriculum influences student learning.
Curriculum is a vessel that helps learners gain
knowledge, develop skills and broaden understanding
and has outcomes that may be measured (Yates, 2000).
Instruction, on the other hand, is as capricious as an
unpredictable child. The design of instruction is
influenced by an educator’s philosophy and instructional beliefs. Instruction design is developed according to curriculum but maintains individuality while being dependent upon curriculum and standards. The prioritization of information found in overt curriculum and what instruction techniques are used is reflected by a teacher’s philosophy. Teachers are individuals composed of different biases, attitudes, and personal philosophy—this human element plays a role in instructional practices. Teachers instruct according to their personal philosophy.

Curriculum and instructional design alters according to society and is influenced by new technology and information. The parent-child relationship of curriculum and instruction suggests opportunity for growth as both the parent and child learn from each other. Knowledge of the relationship between curriculum and instruction may help educators strive to provide a quality education to students.

3. CURRICULUM TRENDS

Curriculum development is a process where the learning experience for students are made then activated through a set of coordinated activities. Curriculum answers to what will be learned and how students will learn. Education curriculum is constantly influenced by technology, society, budgeting, and political agendas (Wiles et al, 2002). Technology and social forces have a profound influence on curriculum trends. In the 1950s radio, as a social influence, altered education curriculum by introducing mass communication. This was further noticeable with the influence of television in the 1970s and the introduction of the Internet in the 1990s (Wiles et al, 2002). Until the Internet, schools had a monopoly on information. The treatment of knowledge changed with the advent of new technology and has served to change and redefine curriculum. Conventional wisdom takes on new meaning as new fields of knowledge are constantly being developed. A deeper understanding of the process of learning and of learning theories has also further influenced curriculum and curriculum trends.

When one considers what curriculum trends will continue to have an impact over the next few years, the current curriculum trends of technology in the classroom, home schooling, charter schools, and the standards movement come to mind. Technology is an ongoing trend, which is certain play an even larger role in years to come. As technology will obviously continue to be a curriculum trend and will most likely be a topic of continued research, the author would rather focus on changes in curriculum that will more directly affect his own career in education. The author previously introduced Cyber Classrooms as a method of supplementing classroom instruction in response to technology changes in the classroom (Flake, 2011).

Demographic changes will make bilingual and ESL/EFL education a continued trend in education as multicultural classrooms will continue over the next decade both in Japan and in the United States.

3.1 Predicted Trend: Bilingual Education

As classrooms in both the United States and Japan are becoming more ethnically diverse, changing demographics has become an issue in education curriculum. States such as Texas, California, and Hawaii are good examples of rapidly changing American demographics and distribution in the United States.

In 2003, there were 1,915,030 registered foreigners in Japan, representing 1.5% of Japan's population of 127 million. Most of them live in the Kanto (800,000 or 42%), Chūbu (400,000 or 21%) and Kansai (451,000 or 23.5%) regions (Wa-Pedia, 2005).

Tokyo has the highest percentage of foreigners (2.8%), followed by Osaka (2.4%), Aichi (2.3%), Kyōto (2.1%) and Mie (2.1%). The greatest part of the foreigners living in Japan come from Asia (74%), with Korea (32%), China (24%) and the Philippines (10%) leading. Whereas the Korean population has been steadily decreasing over the past 15 years, the number of Chinese residents has tripled over the same period. In fact, there are now 10 times more Chinese and almost 40 times more Filipinos than two decades ago. The Koreans are more numerous in Osaka and Kobe, while the highest number of Chinese and Filipinos reside in the Greater Tokyo. South Americans make up the second largest group (18%). Many of them are Nikkei, or second generation Japanese who returned to Japan after their parents immigrated to South America after the Second World War (Wa-Pedia, 2005).

Changing demographics are noticeable in Nagasaki, where the author resides. The elementary school the author’s children commute has expatriated children of
mixed lineage including families of one parent being Japanese or both parents are expatriates. Countries such as Russia, Korea, Canada and America are represented.

Educators find that immigration is filling classrooms with higher numbers of children other than native speakers that may depend on extra help for their studies. In the United States, many Polynesian and Spanish speaking students have joined public schools. Population densities are increasing the number of school-aged children; therefore, posing cultural differences and balancing can widen the rural, suburban, and urban learning gaps due to socioeconomic differences.

Unfortunately, bilingual education has been losing support in many districts in the United States, in spite of demographic changes suggesting a need for program support (Coulter & Smith, 2006). Bilingual education is almost non-existent in Japan, with the exception of foreign run private schools and U.S. military Department of Defense Schools (DoDS) or International Schools. Accreditation and recognition of these schools is a separate and important issue that demands more research. Professional organizations in support of bilingual and ESL education have been nullified through NCLB legislation. The lack of support in contrast with the growing need for addressing demographic changes in the classroom as non-native English learners will continue to increase in the years ahead.

4. BILINGUAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN THE UNITED STATES

The Federal Bilingual Education Act (BEA) was established in 1965 with Title VII enacted in 1968 allocating funds from the government to provide for the needs of English Language Learners. This was the governmental answer to multiculturalism in classrooms in the wake of the Civil Rights movement. As the BEA gained support, the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) was founded in 1976. In the year 2000, the introduction of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and LEP (Limited English Proficiency) programs were established (TESOL, 2007).

The author is an avid member of the NABE and considers his ties to the organization an asset for his professional development and supportive professional affiliation. The National Association for Bilingual Education was founded in 1976 to advocate English language learning minority students and develop bilingual and English-as-a-second-language (ESL) education. ESL refers to English language education in an English speaking environment, where the speaker uses English for daily communication while maintaining the speaker’s mother language. ESL contrasts English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL), which is the study of the English language in a non-English speaking environment to aid or supplement communication. The purpose and use of English as a target language is inherently different between ESL and EFL education since the criteria and purpose is environmentally determined.

NABE supports multiculturalism, which is the preservation of cultures or cultural identities within a unified society and bilingual education defined as a two-way or dual language education designed to help native and non-native English speakers become bilingual and biliterate (NABE, 2016). The organization NABE gained momentum and support until the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and 2004 repealed and replaced the Bilingual Education Act somewhat nullifying NABE as a professional organization. In December 2015, President Barack Obama signed a new K-12 education law that ended the No Child Left Behind Act (Taylor, 2015). The House version is known as the Student Success Act (SSA); the Senate version is called the Every Child Achieves Act (ECAA) of 2015 which is now renamed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (ESSA, 2016). President Obama declared that "With this bill, we reaffirm that fundamentally American ideal—that every child, regardless of race, income, background, the zip code where they live, deserves the chance to make of their lives what they will." However, as one reads through the stipulation of laws and guidance as explained on the official government webpage found at the URL http://www.ed.gov/ESSA, that bilingual education is again placed on the backburner as English remains the imposed standard for education. Moreover, as reported by national media including Huffington Post (2016), congress has since voted to reauthorize 'No Child Left Behind' through 2020 which is an unprecedented expansion by the federal government into education. Many educators, including this author feel that this re-authorization legislation is a missed opportunity for the United States Congress to empower parents and put
children first. If one were to examine the origins of the NCLB Act, correlation with the Goals 2000 Act of the 1990s can be noticed. Standards-based education reforms were introduced to counter school violence and increase high school graduation rate in the United States.

Lack of support for bilingual education is also an issue concerning education curriculum. Over the next 10 years, as limitations of the NCLB program are further exposed, the author predicts a retro movement toward civil rights and bilingual education will once again gain public and administration interest. Furthermore, the author predicts that over the next 10 years the National Association for Bilingual Education will become more prevalent as a professional organization. NABE will also have an increasing influence on bilingual and ESL education as a professional organization in the United States.

Through the NCLB, a system of accountability and assessments was established. Pressure was put on teachers and school districts to create quality lessons and to meet average yearly progress standards. There have been breakthroughs in education provided to special education and math students. Inclusive classrooms were created to produce the least restrictive environment for students to learn. However, meeting the needs of bilingual students has been debatable.

4.1 Demographic Evidence Supporting the Continued Need for Bilingual Education

Since the 1960s, students who were minority language speakers entering into the United States public school system has risen. During the 1989-1990 school years alone, there were approximately 2,028,880 limited English proficient (LEP) students in grades K-12 (NCELA, 2007). The United States Government Census report provides evidence of demographics and statistics on population in America. The United States Government Census report also provides data concerning the foreign-born U.S. population’s language spoken at home. The quantitative data is valuable evidence supporting the need for bilingual education. By order of content, tables one through three represent: the U.S. foreign-born population, languages other than English spoken at home, and the population of non-U.S. citizens 3 years old and over enrolled in schools in the United States. The total population for each table is represented as the sum of the table data by the symbols \( \Sigma n \). Refer to Table 1 for the published demographic results of the year 2000.

Table 1. U.S. Foreign-Born Population (\( \Sigma n=30,809,065 \))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Unit</th>
<th>Population Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English only</td>
<td>5,212,040 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages other than English</td>
<td>25,597,025 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English less than “very well”</td>
<td>15,672,815 (51%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Source: U.S. Government Census Table FBT-1, 2000]

Through the published results of the year 2000, 5,212,040 people, or 17% used only English at home. In contrast, 25,597,025 people, representing 83% of the foreign-born U.S. population, spoke language other than English at home. Further study of the foreign-born population’s English language proficiency suggests that 15,672,815 or roughly 51% of the population spoke English less than very well. The definition of what constitutes “less than very well” is based on criteria determined by the Government Census Bureau. According to the U.S. Government Census report, of the foreign-born population, Table 2 illustrates the common languages other than English spoken at home.

Table 2. Languages Other Than English Spoken at Home

Language Spoken at Home:

(A) Population of Speakers (\( \Sigma n=25,597,025 \)) (B) English Proficiency less than “very well” (\( \Sigma n=15,672,815 \))

Spanish:

(A) 13,340,265 (43.4%) (B) 9,589,200 (31.2%)

Other Indo-European Languages:

(A) 5,586,260 (18.2%) (B) 2,482,195 (8.1%)

Asian and Pacific Island Languages:

(A) 5,511,790 (17.9%) (B) 3,200,195 (10.4%)

[Source: U.S. Government Census Table FBT-1, 2000]

According to the U.S. Census, of the languages spoken at home, Spanish topped the study at 13,340,265 or 43.4% of the population, of this percentage 31.2% or 9,589,200 speak English less than very well (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Other Indo-European languages made up 18.2% or 5,586,260 of the foreign-born population. Of the other Indo-European Languages population, 8.1% or 2,482,195 speak English less than very well. Asian and Pacific Island languages make up the third largest total of...
the population at 17.9% or 5,511,790 individuals. Of this population 3,200,195 or 10.4% speak English less than very well (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Table 3. Non U.S. Citizen Population 3 yrs. and over enrolled in schools in the United States (Σn=4,192,575)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School and Grade</th>
<th>Population Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursery School &amp; Preschool</td>
<td>82,610 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>115,535 (2.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School (grds. 1-8)</td>
<td>1,384,700 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School (grades 9-12)</td>
<td>1,116,325 (26.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College or Graduate School</td>
<td>1,493,405 (35.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Source: U.S. Government Census Table FBT-1, 2000]

The non-U.S. citizen population three years and over enrolled in schools in the United States is 4,192,575. Nursery school and preschool aged students make up 2% of this population. Kindergarten age represents 2.8%. Elementary school aged students are composed of the largest population of non-U.S. citizens enrolled in schools in the United States for compulsory education—roughly 33% or 1,384,700 students followed by 26.6% or 1,116,325 in high school. College or graduate school represents 35.6% or 1,493,405 students, but many attend as expatriates and conditions for study demand for English language proficiency (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

4.2 Bilingual Education Curriculum Impact on Schools and Future Analysis

The Third National Research Symposium on Limited English Proficient Student Issues met in 2007 to discuss a pedagogical framework for bilingual education teacher preparation programs. Programs should be designed to impart to students a knowledge of culture associated with language. Efforts will be focused on establishing closer cooperation between the school and the home and introduce programs designed for ESL student dropouts or potential dropouts (NCELA, 2007).

According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, about 10% of the people living in the U.S. were born in other countries. In an even greater percentage of U.S. households—approximately 20%, a language other than English is spoken. Eugene Garcia (2002), author of the Student Cultural Diversity, has estimated that 25% of K-12 students will likely have limited proficiency in English by the year 2026 (Taylor, 2004). This estimate has a profound impact noting the importance of bilingual/ESL curriculum in the United States. Addressing the needs of culturally diverse student population is critical and can be accomplished through multicultural instructional strategies.

Scaffolding will be important for bilingual curriculum. Through introducing history and culture, language students are able to visualize and relate to established curriculum. NCLB funding from the Federal Government to subsidize English Language Learning programs will depend on the number of students who need assistance.

Risks are also important to consider when looking at the future impact of bilingual curriculum in schools. Immigrant children, in general, are at higher risk of failing academically than non-immigrants. Children who are raised in families whose income is below the poverty line are more likely to drop out of school. About 17% of immigrant households have incomes below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Many immigrant students are at risk of not completing high school because their parents did not. The correlation between the levels of educational attainment by parents and their children is well established. About 51% of the immigrants who are currently entering the United States come from Latin America, and almost 35% of these immigrants have less than a ninth-grade education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Only half have completed school. The drop-out rate for Latino students, about 34%, is higher than any other ethnic group (Taylor, 2004).

ESL and bilingual education issues and reforms are in direct response to current demographic changes in the United States; likewise, EFL curriculum is potentially influenced by current and ongoing demographic changes in non-English speaking countries around the world.

4.3 Bilingual Education Curriculum Issues and Reforms

The argument against bilingual education is effective and has gained political support. Politicians fear that government recognition of minority language “sends the wrong message” to immigrants, encouraging “them” that they can live in the country without conforming to national ways. Although some of the objections to
bilingual education are lodged in good faith. Many objections simply reflect ethnic stereotypes or class biases. As stated in the article *Issues in the U.S. Language Policy* (1998), such opinions merely reflect a pervasive ignorance about how bilingual education works, how second languages are acquired, and how governments have responded to multi-nationals.

Although society consists of diverse ethnic and cultural society members, competition, labeling, prejudices, stereotyping and discrimination have caused groups to separate. The equal rights movement in the United States brought about a paradigm shift concerning racial equality in all sectors of society—including education. Reforms in education have focused on providing quality education to all society members. These reforms continue in order to conform to continuing demographic changes in society. Multinational understanding of other cultures is needed to ensure the quality of education curriculum standards.

Tax base sharing and other new program standards are being introduced in an attempt to ease cultural, economic, and gender differences by providing a balanced influence on schooling between districts. High school traditions and structures consign English language learners to marginal positions and inferior academic opportunities (Coulter & Smith, 2006). Information on the challenges faced by English learners in U.S. schools is not always properly represented. “They should all speak English” is the attitude of many politicians, administrators and educators (Bilingual Education, 1998). This attitude shows a lack of willingness to support bilingual education as marginalization of minority or non-English speaking students becomes institutionalized.

5. BILINGUAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN JAPAN

In the Wednesday, June 14 2017 edition of Japan Times, the article titled “Number of foreign students at public schools who lack Japanese language skills hits record high: Schools unprepared for foreign-student influx” describes in detail the need for the consideration of bilingual education in Japan. According to Japan’s Education Ministry (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology), the number of non-Japanese children at public schools who are lacking in Japanese language skills and who need remedial lessons reached a record 34,335 as of May 2016 (Yoshida & Aoki, 2017). This is an increase of 17.6% from the Education Ministry’s provided survey conducted in 2014 which accounted for 42.9% of the 80,119 non-Japanese children at public schools.

Table 4. Foreign Students in Japan in Need of Japanese Language Support: Yearly Assessment Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Assessment</th>
<th>Students in Need of Support</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>28,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>27,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>29,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>34,335</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Source: Japan Education Ministry, 2017]

Of the current 34,335 children in Japan who are in need of Japanese language support, 76.9% take additional Japanese lessons. Of the many languages spoken by students from overseas, Portuguese tops the list with 8,779 children, followed by Chinese with 8,204, Filipino at 6,283, Spanish at 3,600, Vietnamese at 1,515, and English at 982 (Yoshida & Aoki, 2017). English is not the primary bilingual language when considering demographics.

In the 1990s, an influx of Japanese Brazilians moved to Japan to fill labor shortages, which explains the number of Portuguese-speaking families and their children. By prefecture, Aichi with 7,277 has the greatest number of non-Japanese children with poor Japanese skills, followed by Kanagawa at 3,947, Tokyo at 2,932, Shizuoka at 2,673 and Osaka at 2,275 (Yoshida & Aoki, 2017).

According to the survey by the Education Ministry, 9,612 children who hold Japanese citizenship have poor Japanese skills, needing remedial language instruction. Of the schools surveyed 2,491 responded that they could not offer language lessons for such children because of a lack of Japanese language teachers (Yoshida & Aoki, 2017). It was announced by the Education Ministry that children lacking Japanese skills at public schools reached a high record in June 2017.

EFL curriculum is influenced by current and ongoing demographic changes. In Japan, there is also a debate concerning the semester system as schools in Japan do not conform to the semester system of foreign schools on
an international level. Graduation is also different as students graduate in March in Japan while graduation is in May in most Western schools.

Demographic changes also present a challenge at the educational institutes the author currently employed. Although demographic changes are more evident concerning declining population rather than variations in the population of the international community, the monogenic society of Japan is also slowly changing as some cultural diversity is evident. Expatriates who reside with their families for an extended amount of time in Japan are faced with finding a school that accepts enrollment or offers assistance for internationals. The school the author is employed at has some cultural diversity as international students are accepted. Local schools are participant schools of international exchange programs. International students are dominantly from neighboring Asian countries. China, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore send students to local schools through the Lions Club foreign student exchange program as well as sister school programs.

In Japan, as the current population declines, educational standards are also challenged by changes in demographics. Academic competition has only become fiercer with the declining population. The author has noticed that bureaucracy of standards is a challenge when children need supplemental instruction to ensure equity. International students need to have more support with their studies as they are not able to keep up with their Japanese classmates. Finding group acceptance to be challenging and having a fear of inability to achieve makes many exchange students avoid actively participating in school events and building relationships with classmates.

As Japan’s population declines, an increase in immigrant labor is predicted to be needed in order to save the economy. Continuing demographic changes are predicted as the foreign community increases. Legislation is divided as immigrant increase is also seen as a social risk. The foreign community has grown and culture diversity does exist in Japan. The future of this island nation is a mystery as immigration policies are stricter than most other industrialized nations. If immigration laws are changed, an even greater amount of cultural diversity will be noticeable. Bilingual and EFL education will also become more of an issue in Japanese schools in response to the needs of the foreign community.

When one considers the common attitude of politicians, administrators and educators in the United States imposing “They should all speak English,” it must be known that a similar attitude exists in Japan that expatriate students “should all speak Japanese.” Classrooms and educators on both sides of the ocean are not equipped to support bilingual education nor have the willingness to conform to the needs of international students. This is especially true for primary and secondary education institutes in Japan. The United States military Department of Defense (DoDS) schools and International Schools exist in random locations in Japan, but enrollment is exclusive and tuition is extremely expensive. According to a current 2016-17 application found on the American School in Japan (ASIJ) website, after the application fee, registration fee, and building maintenance fee are paid, the tuition is over 3 million yen per semester (ASIJ, 2016). For this cost alone, most International Schools are almost entirely composed of military children (who attend for free), children of ambassadors, religious mission presidents and the very wealthy and privileged in society. International schools are not an option to most all expatriated families in Japan leaving children no choice but to integrate into a Japanese school. Compulsory education institutes in Japan, whether prefectural, city, or private do not offer bilingual education programs.

5.1 Examples of Changes in the Overt Curriculum of Bilingual/EFL Education in Japan

Content of EFL curriculum has changed recently in response to the Politically Correct movement. Political Correctness or “PC” is a term created from a social movement to minimize offense concerning racial, gender, ethnic, aged, disabled or other identity groups. Political correctness concerns the language, policies, ideas or behaviors toward social groups. Perceived discrimination fuels language changes to avoid offense or to soften meaning for political or societal purposes. As sexism, racism and discrimination are reflected in language, textbooks have changed over the past few years to new genderless, non-discriminatory vocabulary which is accepted as politically correct. As an example, gender-specific vocabulary such as fireman, policeman,
mailman, businessman, and chairman have been changed to fire fighter, police officer, mail carrier, business person, and chairperson. Vocabulary that existed in both feminine and masculine form such as waiter and waitress, steward and stewardess have been changed to genderless form as caterer and flight attendant. This trend has continued over the past few years and is gaining support and momentum as the author has noticed the EFL textbooks previously endorsed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology reprinted with genderless vocabulary.

Expressways textbook published by Kairyudo and New Horizon published by Tokyo Shoseki are examples of this curriculum trend. Recently, the Expressways and Expressways II text has been expanded, at the request of Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) to include the teaching of cultural variations of English by including Australian, New Zealand and United Kingdom English as study units in addition to the standardized American English which has become popular in Japan in the wake of World War II. Oxford University Press writer R. Nakata (2016) has also supported this trend in her textbook series Let's Go. Let's Go textbook series has recently received full endorsement by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology and is currently used in many elementary schools and middle schools throughout the country. Let's Go series is now at its forth reprint. Alteration of vocabulary to reflect genderless nouns and illustrations showing multinational students modeling dialogs are noticeable changes in the Let's Go texts. As the PC movement continues, the author has noticed changes in textbooks and other overt curriculum as being a trend in curriculum. The PC movement is a determining factor in creating explicit curriculum.

In recent decades, schools throughout Japan have changed from six-day week programs into five-day academic weeks. Traditionally schools were from Monday through Saturday in Japan; however, most schools have since changed to Monday through Friday classes. To compensate for the Saturday classes school days were made longer. Teachers and students alike enjoy having their weekends. However, recent studies have found that students performed better under the six day week program. Attending school for six days of the week evidently fosters better study habits. Future curriculum trend might move retro toward the former six day academic week. Even sports oriented schools such as the secondary education institute the author is employed by have also followed suit for non-academic courses. The author believes this trend may continue unless evidence proves the five-day academic week as more productive. The extended school week curriculum trend is a current issue that is resulting in teacher burn-out and a turnover increase among secondary education teachers (Phro, 2014).

6. LEARNING THEORY IMPACT ON CURRICULUM TRENDS

As economic stresses and the United States economy is further weakened, the United States will have to look outward to strengthen its standing with the international community. This includes education curriculum as global studies and cultural pluralism are well-noted curriculum trends in the United States (Gaff, 2003). Likewise, as the population in Japan ages and declines through aging 高齢者社会 and the birthrate 少子化問題, the government might have to reassess its immigration policy. Demographic changes are already occurring throughout Japan. Japan is also trying to improve its international image in preparation for the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics.

Cross-cultural education will also become an important part of curriculum over the next decade as information from a global perspective will be important for the both Japan and the United States to strengthen its international image and global standing. When considering the differences in interpretation of information and the religious and cultural differences that exist in the world, the importance of cross-cultural knowledge becomes noticeable. The next decade; indeed, the next century is certain to bring more challenges and conflicts. The students of today will be future diplomats. Cross-cultural knowledge as a curriculum trend would help both the United States’ and Japan’s global standing.

Behavior theorists, sociologists, social anthropologists, philosophers, and psychologists will continue to be busy over the next decade analyzing and theorizing concerning student behavior and cognitive development. Time-tested learning theories will still be needed to create effective academic curriculum. The author most concurs with Bandura’s Social Learning Theory of how
learning is modeled and social reinforcement influences individual behavior (Boeree et al, 2005).

The author believes that the environment will continue to have a direct influence on behavior and learning. Profanity, sex and violence in TV, movies, video games, and music will continue to be an influence and a distraction for students over the next decade. Likewise, the author believes that entertainment-hungry youth are easily influenced by video games, Internet, television, and movies. Negative influences and the negative modeling of behavior continue to desensitize the youth and these negative influences on behavior might be displaced and perpetuated among society members. School violence will continue over the next decade as video games, comic books, movies, TV programs, and the Internet continue to influence the youth. As songwriter Michael Franti conveyed in his tune “Television, the Drug of the Nation,” “…TV, is it the reflector or the director?, does it imitate us, or do we imitate it, because a child watches 1500 murders before he's twelve years old and we wonder how we've created a ‘Jason generation’ that learns to laugh, rather than abhor the horror” (Franti, 1991). Perhaps violent students are simply modeling the behavior that they are being submerged in through the media and entertainment.

The quality of the education environment is often determined by student behavior. Educators have the responsibility of controlling students who disturb the quality of the learning environment. Methods of controlling misbehavior are under scrutiny. Physical punishment used for maintaining student discipline opens an ethical, moral and political debate.

Physical discipline is defined as the use of a variety of techniques or strategies with the aim of teaching students appropriate behavior. Physical punishment is one form of discipline. Physical discipline includes all forms of physical contact such as punching, hitting, kicking, slapping, shaking, spanking, shoving, choking, stabbing, poking, and excessive exercise (Greydanus et al, 2003). Non-physical forms of punishment are also legally classified as physical punishment. Such disciplinary actions include forcing students to stand for long periods, prevention of urine or stool elimination, and extended isolation (Greydanus et al, 2003).

School discipline has two main goals which include ensuring the safety of the teaching staff and the students as well as creating an environment conducive to learning (Moles, 1989). Discipline and the law concerning discipline support two educational rights of students. The government right as a citizen to a public education and the right to a safe and productive learning environment are the requirements of educators and the rights of the students under the law. Educators are likewise protected by these laws.

Corporal punishment, is lawful in Japan as a disciplinary measure in penal institutions as the Constitution 1946 does not prohibit corporal punishment; however, the act of corporal punishment is unlawful as a sentence for crime as there is no provision for corporal punishment in the Penal Code or the Criminal Procedure Code in Japan (GIEACPC, 2016).

Zero tolerance school discipline policy defined in detail by the school through a contract would help protect both students and educators. Physical discipline has a long history. Physical punishment used to control the behavior of children has received support for thousands of years through interpretation of legal and religious doctrines, such as beliefs based on Judeo-Christian and other religions. In the United States, physical punishment has been used since colonial times as a conventional method in disciplining children (McCarthy, 1992). However, the history of physical discipline in the United States has changed drastically since early times. Physical discipline was once considered an effective means to control behavior. A paradigm shift in standards concerning discipline in schools escalating during the civil rights movement and has continued since.

The rights of both teachers and students in the classroom are also an ongoing curriculum trend. Bilingual education coincides with student rights as it concerns the right to study in the language(s) one chooses.

7. CONCLUSION

The author’s influence on curriculum development and implementation in his employment at secondary and advanced education institutes in Japan is limited. He has limited ability to influence school text curriculum and determining technology application of current curriculum. Nevertheless, he has a direct influence on grading practices and discipline as well as lesson design and
content. He also plays a role in the application and development of Peace Education and vocational course curriculum.

Changes in curriculum and curriculum trends have an impact on the author personally. His career is based on bilingual and ESL/EFL education. His training and skills as an educator are based on his curriculum vitae that he has built as an expatriate educator in Japan and Korea. Looking at the current trends in bilingual education in the United States and how NCLB program standards have dissolved NABE. He does not see a promising career in education if he returns to the U.S. since his training and skills might not be applicable. Moreover, the America that the author is familiar with was over 25 years ago—before NCLB was implemented. Curriculum changes and standards in education have changed drastically over the years. He is perhaps more familiar with education standards and issues in Japan and Korea.

No matter what the next decade holds in store for curriculum trends, instructor qualification and certification is a trend that is shared on both sides of the ocean. In acknowledgement of this trend, the author is pursuing continued training and study through online courses. The author believes that continued training will be an asset for the years to come. Ethical concerns with multilingual and multicultural classrooms also present concerns over the credentials, professionalism and training of the instructor. The need for highly trained bilingual and ESL/EFL instructors will continue over the next decade (Janesick, 2003). Standards are always under scrutiny and stricter teaching qualifications will continue to be a trend having an impact in the years to come.

Parents and educators alike are presented with the challenge of providing a nourishing educational environment for youth. Through actively pursuing knowledge of curriculum trends and issues concerning education, and by gaining an understanding of the attitudes of instructors, students, and parents concerning curriculum change, the author hopes to continue to improve his professional skills and knowledge. Demographic changes present challenges, but through meeting challenges, reassessing standards and designing appropriate curriculum, education quality can be improved.

REFERENCES


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