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**CRITICAL FACTORS IN THE TEACHING OF JAPANESE  
IN NEW ZEALAND AT YEARS 7 AND 8**

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## ABSTRACT

Current literature about the teaching of Japanese in New Zealand has raised a number of issues. However, there has been no attempt made to rank these issues either in terms of priority or in terms of how they may be addressed. In addition, in the existing literature, the writers have not provided any solutions or recommendations themselves.

This research identifies and ranks issues in Japanese language teaching programmes at Years 7 and 8 in the New Zealand school setting. Two professional groups (teachers and principals) were approached to provide the data. Discussions were held in focus groups with teachers of Japanese from around New Zealand. Issues which either constrain or facilitate the implementation of a Japanese language teaching programme were elicited from participating teachers. These issues have been termed “factors” to avoid any negative connotations. Professional responses to the most critical factors were also sought from the teachers. The critical factors generated by teachers were grouped into four broad categories and the focus groups then contributed professional responses to these. Initial results showed that teachers identified “commitment from principal”, “pressure and time” and “availability of resources” as being important. Questionnaires were then developed and sent to principals in schools offering Japanese at these levels. Principals identified “commitment from principal”, “availability of resources” and “confidence of teachers” as being important.

The results of this study are discussed with reference to the current literature and a number of implications for teaching programmes are proposed. These suggestions are intended to guide schools contemplating the introduction of Japanese or another international language at these levels.

The model developed for group discussions could be used in further research when trying to determine critical factors in the teaching of either other languages or indeed other curriculum areas.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

FLES	Foreign Languages in Elementary Schools
FLEX	Foreign Language Experience
LOTE	Languages Other Than English
NZAJLT	New Zealand Association of Japanese Language Teachers
NZALT	New Zealand Association of Language Teachers
SFFJLE	Sasakawa Fellowship Fund for Japanese Language Education
SLLP	Second Language Learning Project