Diversity and Multicultural Paradigm in Japan: The LLSC Analysis of Social Studies

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the contents of Japanese social studies textbooks and to determine how the school subject of social studies has been taught in Japan in order to provide an LLSC: living (abr., L1), learning (abr., L2), school activities (abr., SA) and community life (abr., CL). This LLSC will determine how difficult it is for minority children to work with the curriculum materials in a non-diverse society. The methodology that was used is a critical textual analysis. The critical textual analysis in this study was performed on 18 social studies textbooks published in 2011. The LLSC was established with diverse and equitable practical support as one of the critical methodologies in this study. Using the LLSC, it was easy to discover the big questions and main issues related to multicultural education paradigm in the social studies. With regards to LLSC, Japanese social studies have not progressed in diversity. In order to obtain a more diverse and equitable contents for multicultural education, it is absolutely necessary that textbook makers and policy makers work together.

1. Introduction

Although multiculturalism has become an important factor in education, many school curriculum materials such as social studies textbooks do not included multicultural contexts. This is especially the case in East-Asian nations. Nakayama (2006) argued that most Japanese social studies textbooks are at a multicultural education level 2, “The Additive Approach” (from Bank’s four levels of integration of ethnic contents¹).

This study examines current practices in Japan by examining the contents of social studies textbooks. Moreover, this study establishes the diverse and equitable practical support factors in living (abr., L1), learning (abr., L2), school activities (abr., SA) and community life (abr., CL), or LLSC. I believe that textbook makers, educational


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policy makers, school administrators, and teachers, in fact the entire society need to consider these LLSC practical support factors to create a system for multicultural education.

The purpose of this study is to determine the contents of social studies textbooks and to examine how the school subject of social studies has been taught in Japan in order to provide an LLSC: living, learning, school activities and community life, which will integrate minority children into the curriculum materials in a non-diverse society.

1.1A Framework for LLSC

The support factors living (L1), learning (L2), school activities (SA), community life (CL) discussed in this paper are based on theoretical orientations of the ICF (International Classification of Function, 2001 World Health Organization). The four factors (from ICF) will be denominated as L1, L2, SA and CL in this research. Because the ICF functions were created for patients who need rehabilitation and for disabled children/people, there is a need to further discuss, consider and examine them from a critical perspective for multicultural education. The differences between ICF and LLSC are as follows.

Firstly, “among many factors leading the changes of modern society (political, social and technical), the cultural factors, in particular the intercultural factors are having a profound impact on political discussions and social and educational practice” (Fretsey, 2012, p.25). To discuss the effect of practical factors on multicultural education, it was necessary to subdivide the factors in sub categories. Secondly, since 2007 I have been discussing my LLSC concept (including ICF concept) with schoolteachers, professors and others. We believe these categories are helpful to consider some important factors concerning multicultural education and inclusive education, as many schoolteachers still say things such as “because they do not have enough information and knowledge about these issues, it is difficult to deal with minority children”. For example, they said “I could very often hear their views of teaching to minority children who don’t speak the majority language”, “I can not understand their languages”, “What should I do for them, it is especially difficult to teach to minority students in social class, because I am afraid to say something bad their country”, “I can not understand their culture” and so on. By using the revised ICF ideas into this concept of LLSC, many school teachers found it easier to share and exchange information not only with parents and minority children but also with their fellow teachers.

Thirdly, the concepts of ICF and LLSC are similar in their ideas about diversity and equity. For example, “achieving equality of educational opportunity, knowledge and understanding about differences, develops competencies in multiple ways of perceiving, evaluating, believing, and doing and reduces prejudice and discrimination” (Bennett, 1995, p.14). Also, Sleeter and Grant argued for "main streaming and inclusive education with exceptional children who have mental and physical differences, when teaching the exceptional and the culturally different" (2003, p.39). According to Sleeter and Grant (1987), much of the existing literature addresses only limited aspects of multicultural education.

Therefore, they have developed a taxonomy by which to define the term, examine how it is used, and criticize various approaches for their shortcomings and insights. They address several categories such as teaching the culturally different, human relations, single group studies, multicultural education, that is multicultural and social reconstructionist by goal, language/bilingual, culture, social stratification, gender, social class, handicap, history, policy/legal issues, instructional modal, curriculum, instruction, teaching guide and project description. I would like to critically analyse human relation factors and social environment factors related to a critical perspective of multicultural education material (social studies textbook). Moreover, the LLSC factors are based on diversity and an equitable critical multicultural education, which means that the knowledge is based on an understanding and acceptance of difference.

Living (L1) is based on personal factors such as the nationality of family members, their specific minority culture, and family backgrounds. These tend to be different from the majority culture. Minorities will have a different living style, which is expressed through eating different food, and how they like to live (for instance in large groups opposed to a desire to live with single families). Learning (L2) is based on majority language problems (including bilingual problems) and academic skills. Many minority children can easily solve language problems in their classroom such as communicating with friends and schoolteachers depending on how much time they have to adapt. The factor school activities (SA) is based on relationships with classmates and teachers, it is also based on the
school environment such as the school system and the role of the teacher in the classroom, including majority curriculum problems and pedagogy issues. Also, SA is related to the information that is exchanged between minority parents and schoolteachers during counselling time. Community life (CL) is based on the connection between a minority child and his or her family within social communities. CL is based on the exchanges of culture and customs between the minority and majority group with the purpose to understand each other.

2. Methodology

The critical textual analysis in this study involves first collecting a large number of subjects which describe multiculturalism and multicultural education for foreigners in the Japanese elementary school textbooks. This study was performed on textbooks provided mainly by three publishing companies in 2011. Collecting related LLSC contents, as described in Table 1, then continued the analysis. A total of 18 textbooks were analysed: Syogakusyakai published by Kyoiku Syupang (6 books, from 3-4 grades to 6 grade), Atarashiisyakai published by TokyoSyoseki (6 books, from 3-4 grades to 6 grade), and Syogakusyakai published by NihonBunkyo (6 books, from 3-4 grades to 6 grade). These textbooks were published in either Tokyo or Osaka, all in 2011. These 18 elementary school textbooks were written, organized and published by professors or elementary school lecture.

Table 1: Categories for LLSC analysed by elementary school textbooks

| L1 = r1, e1, g1, r2, p1, s1, .......... | L2 = l1, b1, a1, s1, t1, t2, .......... | SA = c1, p1, s1, t1, t2, .......... | CL = c1, c1, n1, s1, .......... |

In table 1, I analysed textbooks by LLSC data processing. As a first step in the LLSC analysis, I established symbols which are easy to understand, such as L1 = r1 (race and human rights), e1 (ethnic), g1 (gender and disability), r2 (related to living food, building and so on), p1 (psychology such as self-expression and self-determination) ..........., L2 = l1 (language), b1 (bilingual), a1 (academic skills), s1 (socio-cultural learning) ..........., SA = c1 (curriculum), p1 (pedagogy), s1 (school system), t1 (teacher and classmates), t2 (textbooks) ..........., CL = c1 (communication between minority and majority society), c1 (cooperate between majority society and minority society), n1 (network and partnership), s1 (sharing and understanding between majority and minority society) ..........., Thus, LLSC factors with collecting working for categories set up.

Multicultural Perspectives on Japan

In 1980, multicultural education is becoming an issue in Japan because of the economic boom. According to Qi “Since the Japanese government started to promote “internationalization” in the 1980’s, slogans such as “international exchange”, “cultural exchange”, “understanding of other culture”, etc., have become the most popular expressions among policy makers and educators” (2011, p.105). Also in 1990, the Japanese government reformed their immigration laws for residence requirement to improve the influx of South American labourers (Tabunka centre, 2004). In the curriculum, according to MEXT website (Japanese national Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology hereafter, MEXT), especially in a document published in 2007, Chuokyoiku Simikai (Educational Council) organized the discussion for social studies of elementary school and middle school. On general outlines of social studies of elementary school in their paper, they tell “The world has many exotic things, which are different from what Japanese children are familiar with. Japanese children are curious about this. Therefore, in 2011, MEXT established a guideline for schoolteachers and local government. MEXT (2011), it has established four means of support for foreign children/students in public schools. These supports measures have been planned for foreign children/students who don’t speak Japanese. Unfortunately, the support was developed only for school managers, Japanese teachers and the local education committee but not for minority children and their families. As a result, many minority children still have problems making friends in their schools, judging from the above tactics of MEXT.
3. Findings

Using the LLSC, the contents of multicultural aspects in Japanese social studies textbooks amounted to 11%, meaning that 14 out of 126 subjects are focused on only L1 and CL (social studies textbooks did not include L2 and AS). Also, LLSC results showed that A, Syogkusyakai (K) > C, Syogakusyakai (N) > B, Atarashisicyakai (T), it showed most multicultural contents were by A, Syogkusyakai (K). The K and N companies published mostly about L1 (Living). Moreover, they are mainly interested in ethnic groups in Japan, Japanese from other countries and compare how Japanese live. In particular, food and housing in other countries is a favourite subject. For example, “Food is from where?” (p. 64, 65, 89, K-303), “Let’s introduce Japanese food to foreigners” (p.101, K-503), “Interview with Japanese workers abroad” (p.131, K-503), “Disabled people and old people in factories” (p.147, K-503), “Japanese and Europeans” (p.61, K-603), “Japanese immigration” (p.115, K-603), “Why did Koreans and Chinese move to Japan?” (p.121, K-603), “The variety in housing in other nation” (p.51, N-507), “The labourers in a Japanese factory” (p.35, N-508) and “Human rights” (about discrimination of Ainu and Koreans, N-608). Moreover, three Japanese social studies textbook companies are also interested in support factor CL (Community Life) when they where introduced their support ways toward multiculturalism such as “Fukuoka city and many nations” (p.159-161, K-304), “The world map” (K-503), “Kobe city and the world” (p.154-155, T-302), “Okayama prefecture and the world” (p.153, N-308).

Moreover, I discovered that all publishing companies involved in this study published similar multicultural contents. Firstly, common subjects such as “Knowing about Machi”, “Kind of working”, “Visiting a factory”, “Preparing food”, “City or state map and environment”. Also, often words such as “we, our or us” (minnano, watasi-tachi) are used instead of “I, my or me” (watashi). For example, “Our street and our city”, “Our shopping”, “Our living and country”, etc. Secondly, the publishers are proud of Japanese culture and society, for example, “Japanese food is more healthy and better than food from other nations” (lesson, International products are safe or not? pp.95-98, K-503, etc), “Japanese industry” (lesson, You should choose only made in Japan, famous Japanese cars and industry p.131, K-503, etc.). Lastly, in the past 6 years social studies lessons included “Good relationship” and “Good role” in the world (p.52–, K-604, p.40–,T-602, p.34–,N-608). This is showing that making a good imagine to foreigners is very important to Japan.

4. Discussion

Through this study I explored the LLSC of contents of Japanese elementary school social studies textbook and the analysed the results. Using the LLSC as guidance, textbooks for social studies need to give a voice to minority children in how they are living, learning, their school activities and community life. Practically, this means that textbook makers will have to increase the use of terminology such as “multiculturalism”, “diversity”, “equity” and “difference”, showing how the minority child is included. Currently, textbook makers only use one term: “an International understanding” in their curriculum, although there are more than 80,000 minority children living in Japan today. The total number of foreign children/students in public Japanese schools is 79,981 (elementary schools; 43,187, middle schools; 23,276, high schools; 12,338 and special schools; 1,061, other; 119. from MEXT, 2012). However, I believe there are more minority children in Japan because a number of minority children, who study in international schools were not included in the statistics. For instance, many international schools are still not considered as public schools in Japan and 6,212 more Japanese public schools have foreign children/students who speak Japanese very well today. With this attitude, the Japanese government acts as an outsider who does not consider multicultural education as one of its responsibilities. The Japanese school standard curriculum does maintain a dubious attitude on contents. I believe this point is somehow different from other developed countries and is unique in one area: multicultural education. According to Terra and Bromley, “textbooks remain one of the most widely used and influential classroom resources around the world” (2012, p.141), also in order develop social studies that should focus on multiple voices and multiple perspectives.

Notes

1. Banks suggested four approaches to multicultural curriculum reform. Level 1, the contributions approach: focuses on heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements. Level 2, the additive approach: contents, concepts, themes, and
perspectives are added to the curriculum without changing its structure. Level 3, the transformation approach, the structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and culture groups. Level 4, the social action approach, students make decision on important social issues and take actions to help solve them. From Banks, J.A. (1994). *An introduction to multicultural education*. Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon. p. 25.

2. WHO established the ICIDH (International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps: A Manual of Classification Relation of Disease) in 1980. ICF (2001) and ICFCY (2007) (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health) were revised to not only be used for health related subjects but also for education including curriculum, right, living, inclusion, diversity and equity. The ICF model consists of body functions/structures, activities/participation, environmental factors, and personal factors/health condition/functioning. In this research, ICF and LLSC are one way of understanding and communicating between two comparative groups with diversity and equity. (You can check more ICF related research such as models and a checklist at www.who.int/classification/icf/en). Moreover, this definition was based on an earlier developed technique (LLSC), described in manuscript ‘the consciousness of elementary school teachers towards multicultural education in Japan: An investigation of living, learning, school activities and community life’ by Seo, J. Y. (2012).

References


