

The Current Situation of and Issues Regarding Education and Teacher Development in Pakistan, Indonesia, Myanmar, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Ghana, China and Japan

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to share current educational and teaching issues presented by international teachers from Pakistan, Indonesia, Myanmar, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Ghana and China. These international teachers are ‘teacher training students’ who conduct research on school education at Japanese universities under the Japanese Government Scholarship Program. In this paper, the teacher training students at AUE (Aichi University of Education) discuss the educational systems, programs, curriculum, and teaching materials of their respective countries. They also present the current situation of and issues regarding education in their respective countries. Contemporary issues in teacher development will be one of the main subjects. Other related topics presented in this paper are language policies, low literacy rates, qualification of teachers, infrastructure for education, service-learning, and multicultural education. Some of these issues and challenges are encountered in several countries, beginning with Japan. It is hoped that this paper will significantly contribute to the understanding of cutting-edge issues in education from an international perspective. The present research is a joint effort of the teacher training students, Takao IMAI, and Midori INABA of AUE, Japan.

Keyword: Teacher Development, Teacher Training Student, Lingua Franca, English Multicultural Education, Literacy, Language Policy, Teacher Certification

1. Introduction: Globalization & the Challenges of Education in Japan

Midori INABA

With the advent of globalization, the state of education in Japan becomes more and more multilingual, multicultural, and multiethnic. In the classrooms which were only used by Japanese, there are now seated students who speak different languages, who hold different cultural views, and who have different religions and customs. This makes discovering

how to educate effectively in schools which are increasingly diverse and which have wide regional and societal differences a pressing issue. And the development of instructors who can flourish in such a diverse classroom is a challenge and a duty of teacher training universities.

In 2008, the government of Japan announced its “300,000 Foreign Students Plan,” which calls to increase the number of foreign students in Japan from the current 140,000 to 300,000 students by 2020. It aims to make a significant increase in the number of foreign students studying in Japan in the next five years.

The plan states that Japanese universities already accept many students from overseas, including AUE. The university has academic exchange agreements with partner institutions to bring students to Japan from schools in many countries, including China, South Korea, Taiwan, Mongolia, Thailand, Indonesia, the United States, German, and Brazil. And research students from developing countries such as Cambodia, Vietnam, and Myanmar are accepted at the university, which also sponsors their education research and grants educational assistance. Furthermore, teacher training students are also accepted, which contributes to teacher development overseas.

The international teachers are ‘teacher training students’ who conduct research on school education at Japanese universities under the Japanese Government (MEXT¹) Scholarship Program. They tend to have more than five years of working experience in their home countries as teachers at primary or secondary educational institutions, or teacher training schools. Their training at Japanese universities can be largely divided into four categories: educational administration (for example, administration, finance, and school management), educational methods (classroom teaching, learning system theory, curriculum, and educational assessment), specialized subject research (mathematics, physics, chemistry, and gymnastics), and observational tours and practice (classroom observation, participation in special educational activities, and tours of educational research facilities).

In this paper, these teacher training students will discuss the topics and problems with regards to education in their respective countries. It is largely thought that Japanese society and education are confronting several of the social and educational issues with education in these developing countries—increased multiculturalism, multilingualism, and multiethnicism. For example, in *Multicultural Education*², by James A. Banks, which

¹ The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

² See Banks, J.A. & Banks, C. A. (1995).

a student from Bolivia references in this paper, these issues have been seldom raised in the sphere of Japanese education practice, but if the classroom continues to become more multinational, there is a need for such measure to complement a global education. Namely, it is thought that the development of education, subject matter, methods, curriculum and a syllabus which bear in mind James Cogan's 1999 syncretization of multicultural education and global education, *Global Multicultural Education*, is in demand.

As Japan boasts a high literacy rate, the Pakistani students allude to the problem that their own country's literacy rate is not as advanced. However, at this time there are school in Japan which have many students who are children of foreigners, whose own reading and writing of Japanese is inadequate. And there are severe problems with hindering their education in schools. There is a need for a policy to instruct these children in the language which will help them adapt to Japanese society—basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). BICS refers to conversational fluency in a language, while CALP refers to students' ability to understand and express, in both oral and written modes, concepts and ideas that are relevant to success in school.³

Furthermore, there are some young students who also have a poor grasp of their mother tongue. In some severe cases, this means that they are unable to communicate with their parent or guardian. This issue of how to proceed with literacy education for such children is different from the case of Pakistan, but it will become an issue for Japan in the future.

With regards to English education, Japan shares many problems in common with other nations—promoting communicative proficiency, developing teaching materials and methods, and building infrastructure. However, these countries also show initiative by implementing thoroughly English education from the beginning, and on this point they are ahead of Japan.

As students from Pakistan, Costa Rica, and elsewhere have pointed out, English has become an indispensable tool for participation in society in the modern age, and an essential tool for getting a job or rising in society. Japan, too, has formed deep connections with foreign countries as globalization continues, and English will likely become an indispensable tool to social life. This means that there are many things that Japan can learn from these countries.

³ The distinction between BICS and CALP was introduced by Cummins (1979, 1981) in order to draw educators' attention to the timelines and challenges that second language learners encounter as they attempt to catch up to their peers in academic aspects of the school language (Cummins, 2008).

2. Introduction to the Pakistani Education System and Issues

Uzma JABEEN

Education in Pakistan is supervised by the Ministry of Education of the Government of Pakistan as well as provincial governments. The federal government mostly assists in curriculum development, accreditation, and in the financing of research and development. The government of Pakistan is responsible for providing free compulsory education up to the secondary level. The education system in Pakistan is generally divided into six levels: Primary (pre-school) education (for ages from 2.5 to 5 years); primary (grades one through five); middle (grades six through eight); high (grades nine and ten, leading to the Secondary School Certificate or SSC); intermediate (grades eleven and twelve, leading to a Higher Secondary (School) Certificate or HSC); and university programs leading to undergraduate and graduate degrees. Schools in Pakistan fall into five categories: elite private schools, armed forces schools, state schools, non-elite private schools, and madrasas, or religious schools.

The spectrum of Pakistan's education problems is much wider and deeper than just schooling. It affects all sectors of the education system, ranging from primary and secondary schooling to higher education and vocational training. Unfortunately, Pakistan is among those developing countries which are still struggling with problems in its education system. The problems have fundamentally arisen due to lack of commitment and inefficient management on the part of the state. Over a span of 66 years, the nation has been given more than 20 policies and action plans but they remain focused on paperwork rather than implementation. Of the total budget, less than 3 percent is allocated to education, which is less than adequate to provide quality education.

There is no accountability or transparency in the system, the salaries are low, the incentives are too low to be effective and even those are uneven. Other factors include: unnecessary political interference; a shortage of qualified teachers; different mediums of instruction in educational institutions; inequality of the system at the provincial level; lack of technical education and a lack of uniformity in the educational system.

The governments in Pakistan have undertaken some reforms since 2007 for the betterment of the education system, including free education up to secondary level, revisions to the syllabus and examination system, the establishment of the HEC (Higher Education Commission of Pakistan) and an increase in spending on higher education. In spite of these efforts, more sincere and effective efforts are required to resolve administrative and management problems.

3. Causes of Low Literacy Rates in Pakistan

Memoona AZEEM

Pakistan faces a challenge of low literacy as compared to other developing countries. After more than half a century of independence nearly half of population is still illiterate. The country has one of the lowest literacy rates of the region. Low literacy seems to be the root cause of all other ills of society that have risen to the scene in the last decade.

The recent heightened situation of terrorism and poor economic growth is also unanimously believed to be unanimously to the current state of education in the country. There are various factors responsible for this sorry state of affairs. In this context, this research attempts to analyze the core issues related to the low literacy rate in Pakistan. The overall outcome of this research reflects how poverty, low allocation of funds, mismanagement of resources, problem of access, sex segregation, and inadequate implementation of education policies and plans were major hurdles in the development of an education sector in Pakistan.

The analysis also highlights that throughout the history of this country, new policies and plans were often prepared without giving due consideration to the reasons behind the failure of previous policies and plans. The situation highlights the need for the formulation of national policies and plans as well as an adequate system for their implementation. Hereby the current research concludes that low educational budget allocations are the mother cause of major problems contributing to low literacy rates in Pakistan.

4. Issues & Challenges of English Language Teaching in Pakistan

Uzma KHAN

In government institutes in Pakistan, the English language is taught under conditions which are far from satisfactory. In Pakistani society the English that is taught is usually literature oriented & hardly goes beyond the teaching of formal grammar rules. The communicative aspects of language are totally ignored and as a result students and learners lack the basic understanding of language and fail to properly incorporate this language in their daily communication. Schools and classrooms are the only source of learning English, where teaching is limited to English spelling drills, some formal grammatical constructions, and precise definitions. In rural and even urban areas most teachers are not able to stay abreast of cutting-edge research in second language pedagogy and applied linguistics.

The main reason for the poor standard of English language teaching in Pakistan is that

the English teachers do not have formal training in teaching the language. Being a teacher, I came across different problems such as shortcomings in the curriculum; inefficient teachers; methods and techniques most Pakistani English language teachers incorporate; and teacher-centered classes where a teacher occupies the classroom and provides information from the textbooks. The National Education Census (2005) depicted a bleak picture, indicating that 26% of teachers in the workforce are untrained, 37% have only basic training at PTC and CT levels, and 44% have not even completed even a 2 year undergraduate degree beyond 12 years of basic education. This miserable situation leads to least qualified teachers.

It is imperative to prepare skillful teachers in order to raise the quality of teaching at all levels of education through improving teachers' professional skills and capabilities. Teachers should be provided with more in-depth learning and advanced training so that they will have the expertise they need inside and outside the academic world and so their students and community will be the ultimate beneficiaries. The training of teachers in Pakistan needs to be effective, relevant and largely practice-focused. There is a dire need for provision of quality, licensed, and certified English language to enhance and sustain the quality of teaching and tackle this grave issue.

5. Teacher Certification: One Important Step for a Better Education in Indonesia

Sigit WIYONO

Indonesia's largest reform in its educational sector is the "Teacher Certification" program which aims to set standards and increase the quality of teachers. As one of the policies in the so-called "Teacher Law," Law No. 14 in 2005, teacher certification would improve the quality of national education. The government, as mandated by the teacher law, has planned to certify as many as 2.3 million teachers by 2015 and will double monthly salaries for all teachers towards the end of their career. The policy has certainly marked a great change in our educational history; since perhaps the establishment of this country teachers have been paid relatively very low.

Teachers nationwide, both civil and non-civil servants, undertook the certification process, which was launched in 2007 and carried out through portfolio assessment and training courses. Those deemed to pass would receive a teaching certificate, a teacher registration number, and a professional allowance to the value of their basic wage. However, many studies have been conducted to ascertain the influence of the teacher certification on teachers' quality. These mostly showed that there has been little impact from the program on the quality of national education.

This is generally due to some design flaws as well as in its own implementation. Teacher certification does not force the already certified teachers to keep upgrading and improving their professionalism. Once they received certification, they seemed to fall into a comfort zone, as there are no penalties applied if they later do not exhibit a professional performance. This portfolio-based assessment also has some drawbacks in the implementation of teacher certification. Reports of manipulated data, certificates of seminar or workshop attendance or simply certificate-oriented efforts were among the demonstrated weaknesses of this portfolio assessment.

Moreover, there is also an interesting phenomenon where almost one million teachers in Indonesia are non-civil servant teachers, who could not undertake the certification program because of their status as still non-appointed and contract teachers. The fact is that many of them have been teaching for more than 5 years and have been taking part in shaping the quality of education in this country. Therefore, the government should apply a strong reward and punishment system for certified teachers to ensure that they keep maintaining and increasing their professionalism. They should keep their status as certified teachers, along with all their rights mandated by the national teacher law, and they could be stripped of these if they do not meet requirements for professional teachers.

A better system for teacher certification, instead of portfolio assessment, is therefore that all in-service or pre-service teacher should take professional courses so that the standards and treatments implemented are relatively the same. The government should also consider how to certify all non-government teachers as well, for they also have largely similar jobs and responsibilities in the development of our human resources, especially in the field of education.

6. Some Issues of English Language Teaching in Myanmar

Myo WAI

Myanmar's education system follows a 5-4-2 system. Primary school is from G-1 to G-5, middle school is from G-6 to G-9, and high school is G-10 and G-11. Therefore a student will complete his or her primary education in 11 years. Primary school is compulsory. Most of the schools are public schools under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. School curriculum and textbooks are prescribed by the Ministry of Education and the textbook committee. English is taught as a compulsory subject in schools from G-1 to G-11. This means that students learn English for 11 years in school. But when students finish high school, they cannot apply English well in real situations. For some reason, they lacked adequate communication skills. Public schools have been criticized for their failure in communicative language acquisition. Students with practical skills are required.

Curriculum is fixed and teachers are to follow the textbooks which were prescribed about 10 years ago. The same topics are used year by year in the classroom, which is tiresome for both teachers and students. We want to adapt to the era and needs of the current situation by changing topics or adding new ones. With that opportunity, teachers can challenge themselves, which will improve their ability and creative skills.

Reading and writing skills are prioritized over communicative skills by both students and teachers. Students are taught by focusing on grammatical analyses and translations into their mother tongues. Exams lack listening and speaking sections, instead focusing on reading and writing. It is my opinion that the evaluation system needs to be modified.

In schools, English is taught as a subject using traditional translation methods for prepare students to pass exams, not as a language. Class sizes are rather large. Traditional teaching style is commonly used: teacher-centred and lecture style instruction is more dominant than other methods, hindering the development of practical communicative skills. In class, teachers and students practise through repetition and drills, and there are few opportunities for students to engage in discussions, express opinions, or engage in group problem solving. Teachers must be motivated to try new approaches to teaching English and authentic English teaching methods. To improve the qualifications of teachers and their teaching abilities, English language teachers need training courses by domestic or overseas teacher training programs.

We do not have language laboratories or sufficient audio-visual materials to facilitate the teaching learning process. Students need to have the opportunity to meet native speakers.

7. English in the Public Education System in Costa Rica

Maria Jose RAMOS ALVARADO

Education has become the most popular form of social climbing in Costa Rica. In a democratic country this represents an equal chance of opportunity as higher levels of education often lead to better job opportunities. The government invests 8% of the gross domestic product (GDP) into public education, which contributes to a more skilled labor force which impacts society positively. One of the most recent adjustments in education was to begin English lessons in the first grade. The purpose was to prepare new generations for the demands of the current labor market. However, this change has not had the desired result as new graduates are not competent enough in the English language, which impacts negatively their performance and competitiveness when looking for a job.

In 1869, the Constitution stated that public education was to be compulsory for both genders, free, and supported by the government. Since the beginning of the Republic, Costa Rica has showed a high interest in teaching foreign languages in public education. In 1997 English became compulsory in education from kindergarten until senior high school. Even though the government tries to provide new generations with the required skills for learning foreign languages, the combined effects of 1 year of education in preschool, 6 years in primary school, 3 years in junior high school and 2 years in senior high school still leaves the level of English competence in graduates from the public system very questionable.

In a country where English competence is a requirement to get most jobs, the need to improve skills in foreign languages in new graduates is evident. The investment currently being made by the government in public education is not achieving the results at the end of the process. Therefore changes are required to the education system with regards to teaching English. Possible solutions could include better training for teachers, an update to the English programs used to teach at each level, and improvements in the delivery of teaching in this subject. Because a clear path has not been set, the current situation causes debates between the Ministry of Public Education, parents and students.

8. The Challenge of Building a Multicultural Education in Bolivia

Jose Maria MENDOZA MANJON

Bolivia is a country located in the center of South America, with a significant indigenous population. The Plurinational State of Bolivia changed its name in 2006 as part of recognition of the 36 ethnic groups and their languages that co-exist in the country. From this recognition comes the need to build a country that respects this postulate of the Constitution, not excepting education. Each of these ethnic groups has its own language, so the Bolivian education system aims to be multilingual, as each one of these cultures possess their own knowledge.

Bolivia's education system comprises four levels: preschool, primary, secondary and higher education. It is governed the Siñani Elizardo Avelino Perez Law, which was enacted in 2010. Initial education ranges from 4 to 5 years old, primary education from 6 to 11 years old, and secondary from 12 to 18 years old. At the level of higher education, public and autonomous universities award four categories of undergraduate academic qualifications: middle technical college (two years of study); top technical university (three years of study); Bachelor of Science or Arts (four years of study); and degree (four to five years).

Challenges in education are complex and involve many variables. For example: language, or how an educational system can help preserve the language of a culture. This, of course, is necessary in a culturally diverse but globalized world, and Bolivia has taken a step that must be analyzed and understood in full. Bolivia's main challenge is to build an education that meets the needs of the modern world while respecting the different cultures that coexist in Bolivia. The country has constructed three pillars concerning inclusive education for different cultures in Bolivia: 1) building a multilingual education, 2) building an education that develops interculturalism, and 3) building an education that preserves the moral codes of the indigenous nations, such as a respect for Mother Earth.

9. The Challenges of Science Education in Ghana

Augustine ADDAE

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the administration and coordination of public action regarding education in Ghana. Its agencies handle the implementation of policies in cooperation with the local authorities (10 regional and 138 district offices). The education system received 25% of the state annual budget.

Formal education is widely acknowledged as the foundation of civilization and development. In modern times, the scope of emphasis has been stretched from mere formal education to science and technology education. For a developing country such as Ghana, the provision of science education is more imperative, given that it serves as catalyst for development.

Sadly, however, the beautiful goals of science education as an engine of growth have not been achieved in Ghana due to weakness in implementation. Major factors have been highlighted as mitigating against science education in Ghana, such as inadequate teaching and learning materials and a lack of qualified teaching staff for science education.

10. School-based Curriculum Development in Chinese High Schools

Yuan ZHANG

Service-learning is a method by which young people learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully-organized service experiences. These experiences meet several criteria: they meet actual community needs; they are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community; they are integrated into each young person's academic curriculum; that provide structured time for a young person to think, talk, and write about what he or she did and saw during the actual service activity; they provide young people with opportunities to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real life situations in their own communities; they enhance what is taught in the school by

extending student learning beyond the classroom; and they help to foster the development of a sense of caring for others.

Service-Learning in China is still at an early stage of development. Service-Learning in China contains social practice and community service. Social practice and community service is another alternative where, through teacher guidance, students are participate in community activities and social practice, process knowledge, gain direct experience, develop practical ability, and enhance their social sense of responsibility. Service-Learning in China attaches importance to developing students' interpersonal and co-operative skills and to enhance their concern for and willingness to serve the community. Service-Learning in China focuses on the services, the effect of the services, and the feelings of the service object; it does not, however, focus on a server's learning objectives.

During the development of Service-Learning in China, teachers should be encouraged to design Service-Learning objectives, teaching plans, and activity plans. They can create conditions to guide students to actively participate in the community of practice activities as citizens, know the real condition of the current community, and, through the practice activity, to realize that they as an individual share an inseparable relationship with the community.

11. Perspectives: Global Teacher Development

Midori INABA & Takao IMAI

MEXT emphasizes the “internationalization of schools,” and says that “in order to develop citizens who can one day serve as leaders in the international community, it will be extremely effective to create opportunities for young people to encounter various cultures and languages from a young age.” There are several ways of making good on these declarations: college classes for teacher training students, proactive use of these tools in lectures, school visits to promote international understanding, and promoting interaction with local people. Teacher training universities must take the lead in giving its enrolled students as many opportunities as possible to encounter different cultures and communication; therefore, they are responsible for the important role of training teachers who can implement proactive international exchange. The development of these sorts of education programs is a pressing issue. As a result of their research in Japan, teacher training students acquire more of technical foundation for education, participate in various activities, and through their study abroad develop a deeper understanding. Once they return to their home countries, it is only proper that they grow into leadership roles in education and contribute to the development of their respective countries' students.

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