

References

Asanuma, Shigeru. "What is a Global Standard of Student Competency?: The Global Perspective for Authentic Evaluation." *Global Education (Japan Association of Global Education)*, Vol. 7, March 2005, pp. 14-29.

Asanuma, Shigeru. "The Declining Scholastic Competency: Is that True?" *Sekai (Iwanami Pub. Co.)* May, 2000, pp. 115-119

LeTendre, Gerald K., Hofer, Barbara, K. Hofer, and Shimizu, Hidetaka. "What is tracking? Cultural Expectations in the United States, Germany, and Japan." *American Educational Research Journal*. Spring 2003, vol. 40, no. 1.

The Ministry of Education and Science in Japan

http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/gakuryoku/siryu/05020801/008.htm

Passaw, A. Harry et al. , *The National Case Study: An Empirical Comparative Study of Twenty-One Educational Systems*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1976.

Prawat, Richard S. "Dewey, Pierce, and the Learning Paradox." *American Educational Research Journal*, Spring 1999, vol. 36. no. 1, pp. 47-76.



At second, “joy” for learning is important for Yui to accelerate the motivation for learning. She mentioned that understanding is “joyful” and its joy inspired her to advance her study. Thus understanding and joyfulness mutually go hand in hand. The individual’s subjectivity represents the unclear and irrational constitutes of learning. It could not be phrased simply in terms of the simple words such as feeling. There is a transactional movement in the subjectivity of learning.

The successful case of the competency based grouping method was made possible by the invisible movement in the subjectivity of a learner. The systematic formation of the curriculum would not automatically lead to the successful case of the individual learners. Beyond the bureaucratic thought of curriculum, we need to further explore what is going in the individual’s mind. The complexity of the teacher’s subjectivity and the student’s subjectivity makes the learning more significant than its simple appearance. We need to illuminate this complexity for the authentic conclusion.

Conclusion

Finally, the existence of several distorted assumptions needs to be disclosed and pointed out underneath the formation of the curriculum policy by the Japan’s Ministry of Education and Science. As the empirical data have shown, there is no causality between the declining of the rank order of scholastic achievement scores of the Japanese students and the curriculum administered from the year of 2002. The Ministry of Education’s fear about the mass media’s bashing of the new curriculum was so immense that they had to cope with the campaign of the banning of the “soft curriculum.” The curriculum became tighter in the end of the year 2003 in terms of the curriculum policy change emphasizing the scholastic achievement scores of the Japanese students in the global competition. The Ministry advocated enhancing two technical methodological innovations: behavioral objectives approaches and the competency based grouping instruction. It appears that the ability grouping type instruction is successful enough to make the individuals advance because of its classified individualization. However, scrutinizing the successful cases of the ability grouping has shown that there are in-depth reasons for the advancement of the individual’s motivation, which could not be uncovered by the systematic structural explanation. Behavioral objectives approach would also fall in short in understanding the subjective side of the individual’s human development. The careful analysis of the stream of consciousness of the individual student would be able to illuminate the meaning structure of her/his motivation for learning.

they looked very happy to hear that. Yui's face looked very happy and bright. The sense of positive identification inspires the individual to move forward. She studied harder and made better achievements in mathematics.

Two hypothetical interpretations for the advancement of learning

Most of the observers of the above practices are likely to interpret that the ability grouping method made teaching successful and the systematic formation of classifying the students would lead to the efficient teaching. As this simplistic interpret has shown, there are so many simplistic views about a successful curriculum and instruction. Most of them adhere to the only systematic form of teaching. That is very superficial and insignificant to understand the individual's human development. The meaning of the word "individualization" ought to be carefully examined for the in-depth understanding of curriculum and instruction.

The Yui's case study is important to understand that there are two ontological reasons in the promotion of learning and understanding. At first, it should be noted that it involves the power of a "metaphor" in learning mathematics. Richard Prawat (1999) explains that a metaphor is an essential condition for learning. The experience of a concrete object enables us to make sense of the concept and principle. Prawat said that a metaphor is a prototype of making sense. Because the individuals have metaphors, they can easily identify the structure of the theory or concept with the typified reality. He phrased that metaphors "are excellent vehicles for ideas" which provide possibility "to capture the nature and quality of anticipated experience." (Prawat: pp. 61-62) Prawat emphasizes the significant role of "abductive thinking" in forming metaphors. While "deduction" implies the "something must be" and "induction" means the "actually operative something," abduction relates to the hypothetical constitution. Abduction is to "test the feasibility of the new idea" for the unknown. (Ibid., p. 62) Prawat cites his favorite example: "photosynthesis" as a metaphor. The metaphor like "food factory for leaves" would help us figure the concrete image of the green leaves function at first. Metaphors play a role in the process of turning the unknown into the known at the beginning stage compounding the "dual meanings" of the object.

The duality of meanings fosters the individuals to recognize the uncertainty of an object. Because of its uncertainty, the individuals have to pursue a sense of meaning through metaphor. The individual could make distinction about the fuzzy object through the metaphor. For instance, the expression of "I saw an animal like a bear" makes it possible for us to discern the animal from other animals like badger or deer. Thus metaphors provide us with the prototypical images for our understanding.

teen instruction hours. She felt the time is short. So she felt that she rushed teaching without confirming the individual students' understanding. She clearly found her failure of teaching a liner function by simply following textbook after examining the students' evaluation sheets. Next period, she brought a large glass water tank and started pouring a certain amount of water with hose. The students measured the height of water level in terms of a particular time interval. The students could identify the correlation of water height with time duration. The beginners needed to acquire a concrete metaphorical figure for their confirmation of the levels of water and time.

Ms. Ishikawa did understand that the students needed to slow down their thinking for tracing the movement of the point crossing the water level and time period. When the students recognized Ms. Ishikawa's efforts to direct the student concern to the certain point of enlightenment about the moving point of the water level, they started sensing the teachers' intention and intensive caring for their satisfaction of knowing. Ms. Ishikawa prepared the drill sheet matching the answer with the meaningful words order cheering the student performance. The students felt being loved by Ms. Ishikawa with deep emotion. The students' enlightenment and their understanding collaborated together for their better performance. Their positive turning round came out from their identification of their beings, admitted and respected by somebody else: they have a place in school. Positive estimate changed their psychological inferiority complex into the direction forwarding front in their learning.

Yui, an eighth grader, had kept escaping studying mathematics since she was a fourth grader because disliked arithmetic for her frustration of the lack of ability to understand. She disliked the mathematics because she did not understand the basics. That implies that "understanding" is an indispensable factor for "liking." The "liking" or favor leads to their motivation for learning and performance. This learning causality is so obvious that the students could easily rationalize and adjust their performance into the self determined achievements. This can be considered a kind of the self prophet fulfillment. Thus, the motivation for learning comes out from confidence. Yui belonged to the beginners course group where she had felt an inferiority complex at first. However, she gradually changed her motivation because she gradually understood what Ms. Ishikawa was trying to teach. One day, Yui talked with their parents in the dinner table. She was proudly saying that she made fifty points in one hundred point full examination of mathematics. Other family members laughed at her when she was satisfactorily saying her points. Yui was not discourage with their laughing. She declared that she would make seventy points next time. The other family members laughed at her to hear that again. But

student uttered their astonishing voice, saying that they could solve the problems in the mathematics drills at the elementary level. They looked very happy because they found they had something they could answer by them selves in the school. Ms. Narusawa was also happy to see that. She interpreted that the students were happy and well motivated to study because they found their own place in the school. The individual's feeling of having an ability to attain something spurs his/her advancement for the next steps even if it is the beginner's level for the able student. Ms. Narusawa reported this incident in a faculty meeting and others were impressed with her finding.

The other discovery is the school principal's experience at the gymnastics. In the class of vaulting horses, the individual students tried jumping with their own levels. Each could choose their own fitted level based on their own individualized estimate. They could choose their own level after their trial and errors. The principal proposed applying this individualized method for other subjects. Thus the individualized method became their natural formation. This competency based grouping instruction was very successful in that school.

Ms. Ishikawa was in charge of teaching the beginner's level mathematics. The beginner's course was named "spring." The numbers of the students in this course were small and the students had a great advantage of gaining careful advices by the teacher. Actually they do not need this kind of ability grouping formation in ordinary situation because the students had already evaluated them selves at a certain performance level and practiced their self-control on the basis of their own evaluation. It is a common scene that a certain number of the students chose not to listen to the teachers and others ran away from the classroom. They escaped from the classrooms because they were not interested in the study. The interest is usually correlated with understanding. Their absence of the interest came from their feeling of the difficulty in understanding the subjects because the teachers usually teach their subject at the average level. That implies the slower students are not considered as the optimum customers, on the one hand. On the other hand, the abler students are likely to get bored with easy tasks. So it is natural for the carefully considered teachers to form the individualized teaching according to the individual differences of students by any means.

Ms. Ishikawa struggled to find the appropriate materials to make the students understand a linear function at the seventh grade math. In particular, the students had a difficulty to figure the metaphor of the ratio, by which the degree in the one line correlated with the degree of the other line on the second dimension. One's move leads to the other's move, e.g., one is time and the other is distance such as increasing amount of water. She had to teach a linear function within four-

A study of a successful case on the competency based grouping instruction at a junior high school

The ability grouping at secondary level schools involves the different implication for students and usually produces the different outcomes for them. The following case is a successful case of the competency based grouping instruction at a junior high school level. Many observers are likely to think this case was made successful by the form of grouping instruction method. However, the form itself does not necessarily lead to the automatic success of the achievements. Other invisible factors are related to the successful educational outcomes.

One successful story has a history longer than its appearance in one short term such as a month or a semester. The successful story has a room in the previous years teachers' experienced with their students. These junior high school teachers had to fight with the vandalism and violence everyday in the former school years. The teachers were disparate because of the magnitude of their violence: smoking, hitting, breaking the doors of restrooms and other. But it was a relief that the teachers of that school had a sufficient passion to fight back with the misbehaviors of their students. They struggled to attempt all kind of changes they could think of in their school.

The first, they decided to tutor each of the students on the one-to-one basis before the class began every day. Even the school management officers were involved in this effort All staff carefully listened to the students voices about anything, including the individuals' studies and their everyday lives. They used any space of the schools even at a gymnasium for the tutoring. One site has shown that the leading young female teacher enthusiastically spoke to all the students in the gym with a loud voice, saying that all the school teachers would never forget you so that they would return to the teachers' love.

The second, they started practicing the competency based grouping instruction in mathematics. They divided the mathematics classes into four level courses, named spring, summer, autumn, and winter. The winter is the highest level. The naming of the courses is especially important in order to avoid labeling the individual student as far as possible. This competency based instruction was initiated by the two discoveries.

The one is the school nurse's proposal. Her name is Ms. Narusawa. She was wondering with the students fully occupied the school nurse room. Those students have no serious healthy problem. She found that those students hanging around the nurse room just wanted to escape from the their classrooms because they did not understand what the teachers taught. One day, she put elementary school mathematic textbooks on the desk in the nurse room without any intention. One day a

tions in basic courses than the advanced course. The teachers occasionally have a meeting with the students before the students decide to choose the grouping courses. For advising the students, the teachers use the matrix table for monitoring the behaviors and characteristics of the individual students. They check the almost all kinds of observable behavioral traits, e. g., the student's voice, the attitude in the class, and others. Those details are indispensable for the efficient advice.

4) *Diagnosis evaluation*

For instance, Moe is a girl who is competent and able for the forth grader's calculus. But she is likely to fail in the examination when she is in the circumstance of competing with other students despite the fact that she could always make full point scores in the non-competitive circumstance. She tends to make mistakes in calculus once she is aware of the situation where she has to rush for competing to finish the test. One day, she brought a letter from the classroom teacher and consulted with the family. Her mother laughed and advised to choose the basic course. The teacher did not straightforwardly force the students into the course groups but never forget to listen to each student's voice carefully.

Moe decided to choose the basic course by herself. She enjoyed the basic course group because nobody interfered with her by giving pressure for the competition with the other students. She could keep her own pace for the practicing the test quiz. This stability of learning environment was important for Moe's success. She made the full point with the common test at the end to the course.

Moe's case has shown that the course and grouping of the students do not lead to the widening gap of the students' achievements but the carefully constituted course selection and teachers' elaborated advices made the individual's efforts more successful. How did the teachers face with the parents' fear of the widening gap of students' achievements? The parents are always afraid of the distinction and labeling among the students. But the class of Moe's case was divided up into the group where the students voluntarily choose their own optimal course. This type of voluntarily based group choice is an indispensable factor for the individual student and parent to be free from the frustration caused by the unequal treatment. The teachers understand that the individual's feeling is the most important in the classroom management. The individuals are very sensitive with the slight difference in the details such as the amount of their assignments and pointing. However, their free choice of the course successfully convinced them that it is fair and good for the individual differences.

ers had a record of the individual student's progress and their strengths and weaknesses. They developed the check list card of the individual student changes.

2) *Aptitude-Treatment Interaction, team teaching*

They were experienced with the interactive communication to diagnose the individual student differences. The class size of the Japanese schools is regulated up to forty students in one room in terms of the Japanese contemporary administration law. So they added two more mathematics teachers for the basic level grouping for the fourth graders. It is important for the fourth graders in basic course to understand the numbers as quantity which can be multiplied and divided in terms of the ratio of one single entity. The students mostly understand the ratio, e.g., half, quarter, one-third, because they could figure the half, quarter, one-third in terms of the simple structural concept of the amount of the volume. It includes the experience based sensual structure. However, the simple equation such as ($\frac{2}{3} \times \frac{5}{6} = ?$) is more difficult than the simple division of quantity because the non serial numbers has no object indicating the concrete image of the object as a one whole entity. It implies that the ratio indicates the magnitude, speed, or strength of one single unit of time or space. Once students have obtained the concept of the ratio of one single unit, they could easily find the total amount of all units by multiplying the ratio with the numbers of the unit. Thus for students the concept of ratio such as a half, quarter could turn out to become an operative tool for their understanding.

In order to make the basic course students achieve the concept of the ratio of one single term, the teachers of the basic course used the various movements and activities of real objects for them. The teachers took the students to the gymnastic and asked them to measure the time and distance of the large air ball they hit by hand. They easily found the moving distance of the balls per second by dividing the measured length by the numbers of measured second. They found that the speed was related with the measured distance of the moving ball through the empirically obtainable data and numbers.

3) *Advanced Course*

For the students in the advanced course, on the other hand, there is no need of those experiences based on the calculus of concrete images. They have a competency to calculate the distance of the moving object in terms of formal or abstract operation. The teachers do not need to bring the concrete objects to make the students understand the meaning of the calculus.

The teachers usually struggle for setting the optimal environment for the individual students. In general, there are more intimate teacher-student interac-

order to save the Japanese students from the declining competency. The administrators assume that that approach would be a relief for the declining scholastic competency of Japanese students. There are not so many school teachers who know the history of the behavioral objectives approach in the 1970's. Thirty years might be the one cycle span that makes the people forgets about the past experiences.

The revised course of study 2003 includes the advice advocating the clarification of instructional objectives. Those suggested objectives are not vividly and precisely clear enough to clarify all kinds of anticipated educational goals in terms of observable behaviors. Almost all Japanese teachers were becoming extremely busy writing the objectives before forming their lesson plans. Those prescribed goals of instruction are expected by the educational administrators to be used for student evaluation. However, almost all school teachers have never used those prescribed behavioral objectives for evaluating the students in their own practices. Those prescribed behavioral objectives were not used in the practices even in The Eight Year Study in 1930's in the United States though it is the origin of the behavioral objectives approach. In Japan, the rough behavioral objectives were used for an evaluation sheet but the neatly prescribed educational objectives have never been practically used in the classroom situation while their voice has been always laud. The revised course of study 2003 has not learned the irony of the achievement of behavioral objectives approach in twentieth century. However, it would not take a long time for Japanese educators to recognize that their intensive and extensive efforts for pursuing the rationality by clarified objectives would turn out to be in vain.

A study of the successful case of the competency-based grouping instruction at an elementary school

1) Teachers collaboration

Here, one elementary school's case will be examined as a successful case of the competency based grouping instruction. Teachers started collaboration for the individualized teaching which, they believed, would be suitable for the individual differences of the students. They integrated three classrooms and divided into three groups based on the individual abilities. In particular, they practiced their instruction in arithmetic because the difference of their ability is distinctively recognized.

It should be noted that they chose the grouping methods in order to save the slow learners. But ironically their original intention turned out to be a proof of the more efficient for the able students. This irony should be carefully examined later on. The teachers gathered for a meeting after the school hours every day. They were discussing the progress and difficulties of the individual student. The teach-

learner. Those who have attained the consensus among educators and students in introducing the competency based grouping instruction have shown successful outcomes in terms of the students' achievement scores. The collaboration of teachers is an important step for attaining this consensus. In fact, the successful case has presented that occasional staff conference about the individual student's growth is a key for their success.

Third, there is a difficulty for the students who are classified into the beginner's course. They are inclined to develop the inferiority complex by their own self-esteem. It easily turns out to be a labeling for their self-devaluation. As has been pointed out by many sociological studies, the labeling leads to the conversion to the group identity and sometimes their IQs. Therefore the educators are anxious with the function of this labeling effect. A successful case of an elementary school has shown that they have shortened the grouping period coping with the length of learning unit. The frequent changes of grouping has made it possible adjust the instruction into more flexible and adjustable terms. The teachers have a faculty meeting almost everyday for exchanging their respective information about the individual student's trait. They have mutually shared a report sheet checking the strength of the individual student's voice. In one successful case at an elementary school in the prefecture near Tokyo, a fourth grade girl is an able student but she made errors when she was sitting in the competitive atmosphere such as a small examination in the advanced course because she tended to make mistakes in the competitive grouping which gave her a stress for rushing. She consulted with a teacher and parents when she had to turn in the report sheet for the group choice. She chose the basic course though she had a higher ability than that course. She could feel confidently keeping her own pace with the relaxed environment. As a result, she made full points with the final term examination which was common for all course students. As this case study has shown, the careful faculty meeting and the intensive individualization of teachers' advices are the most important key factors for the successful competency based grouping instruction. In conclusion, the vividly constituted individualized caring and observation by teachers are essential factors for successfully advancing the students' achievement.

Behavioral Objectives Approach

Another remarkable revision of the course of study in 2003 is the prescription of encouraging the behavioral objectives approach, which is not quite different from Ralph Tyler's rationale in 1930's in the United States. This approach has been once flourished in the 1970's in Japan and became very popular at that time. Again its revival was prescribed in the 2003 revision of the course of study in

academic competition. One junior high school teachers responded as follows: Q: What do you think about ability grouping?

A: If we group students according to their achievement levels, it means we care assessing their math levels by arithmetic ability. Also, if relatively slower learners are grouped together, they feel tenser, as they do not want to be very bottom. If advanced students are grouped together, their competitions get harsh”(LeTendre, Gerald K. , Hofer, Barbara, K. Hofer, and Shimizu, Hidetaka. 2003, p.68).

On the contrary to the above statement, the competency-based grouping instruction has been actually favored by a number of Japanese school teachers because many of successful cases have been reported by local school teachers. But it is presumed that there would be three difficulties in practicing the competency-based grouping instruction.

First, there is a parental difficulty in grouping the students in terms of the word, “competency.” The word, “competency” means “scholastic achievement” in Japanese. That implies that students’abilities are already fixed and not educable. But the competency based grouping is to be introduced to develop the full potential but not for the classifying the students by their achievement. Despite the fact that the grouping is not made for a goal but for the means of improving instruction, the majority of parents are likely to interpret that the grouping instruction is a result of their students’study but not for the future development. So there is a difficulty in gaining parents’ understanding in introducing the grouping instruction based on the individual’s ability differences. Parents’uncertain feelings have been reported by many researches when they face the students’ grouping in schools. Therefore it is important for school teachers to establish good partnerships with parents. That is the first step for the successful competency based grouping instruction.

Second, there is a difficulty in attaining the consensus among the teachers and parents in introducing the ability grouping instruction because they tend to assume that the ability grouping would widen the gap between the able and the unable in the same graders. They may think the competency-based grouping is a tracking, which is the course division practiced at high schools level. The leftist group, in particular, is a strong body antagonizing all kind of different treatment in education because they are sensitive with Japan’s long history of social class discrimination. They assume that the competency based grouping instruction is a kind of practice of educational discrimination while it is a method trying to adjust the individual differences into the equal treatment for the better result of instruction on the individualized basis. The competency based grouping instruction, indeed, play a role of the humanistic treatment of the individual student coping with a slow

students' mediocrity with lauder voices. Their concern is the business chances rather than publicity of educational businesses by alleging that the public schools had failed to keep the students' scholastic competences.

Another interest group is the "Juken (Entrance Examination)" business. They condemned the fallacies of public schools which practiced the soft curriculum. They have announced that the students would lose in their competition of school ladder if they would merely follow the soft curriculum of the public schools. So they have deployed the message among the Japanese students so that they would be able to dream the better future once they enter the private schools from the kindergarten or elementary schools. It is almost a religious belief for the masses that they are open to climbing up the ladder of the social classes. As a result, the parents who are motivated to moving upward to the middle classes rushed to make the students to enter the "brand" named private elementary schools. Consequently, those interest groups have succeeded in expanding the business market among those feared parents and their students. Thus for those interest groups, the profitability through education is their un-doubtful hidden standard by asserting that it is always fair.

Competency-based Grouping Instruction

What did those complexities of the interest groups in the 1990's and the early 2000's bring to the educational reforms after the new course of study issued 2002 in Japan? The Ministry of Education and Science revised the course of study in December 2003 while it used to be kept stable for a decade before that course of study. There are two major points in the 2003 revision. One is the recommendation of competency based grouping instruction. The other is the adoption of behavioral objectives approach, which encourages the clarification and classification of educational objectives. The Ministry of Education and Science expected that those two major points of revision would lead to the improvement of the scholastic achievement scores of the students because the soft curriculum provided too much freedom not only among the students but also among the school teachers.

It is unusual that the course of study as a national curriculum prescribes the method of instruction and a style of instructional grouping. There are many antagonisms against the competency based grouping instruction because many parents would assume that the competency measures the innate ability rather than the individual's temporal achievements. There is a typical statement by the Japanese about the ability grouping as follows:

"... Japanese parents and teachers worried that ability grouping would have a strong negative impact on students' self-image, socialization patterns, and

recognized that the all treasures and fortunes were the fake and surplus more than what they substantially deserved. They started condemning of the inefficiency of schooling in terms of the traditional educational value which was oriented towards the productivity in the heavy industrial Japan. Their attacking is targeted against the two major goals of educational reforms in Japan.

Interest Groups

There are two major interest groups who are influential for forming curriculum policies in Japan. One is “Juku(Clam)” schools and the related entrance examination business corporation. The other one is the group of private schools. The coming aging society has been threatening those two groups because it is plausible in their fate that the declining of the number of students would lead to the shrinking business market and damaging their jobs. They fear that the slowing down ethics would cause the lessening of the competition ethics and pulling out the smaller students population from their own business. This fear cheered up their spirit to oppose the new course of study. They tactically used the most of the mass media to attack the “soft curriculum” by letting many critics condemning it for the all kinds of fallacies in education as much as they could think of. A number of critics and university professors started bashing the mediocrity of the students in the late 1990’s before the new curriculum was administered in 2002. There is one professor of the university of Tokyo blaming that a number of the students do not memorize the year of the end of Kamakura period which is not so important to understand the significant historical context. Another professor criticizes the soft curriculum for its inability to make the students calculate the adding of the division of the fourth graders’ math. Those data were not based on the accurately examined statistical data but the arbitrary extrapolated invalid numerous data. But those distorted data were reified and started exerting the symbolic authoritative power in the educational discourse. The mass media have also accelerated the ethos bashing the soft curriculum. The orchestrated campaign became a laud echo, e.g., “all failures of Japan’s education were caused by the soft curriculum.” This phenomenon is rooted in the same Japanese hysteria attacking Asia and the Pacific countries in the World War .

Juku schools have a prospect that their competition recruiting the new students for their own programs would become much harder and many of the colleagues would lose their business chances. The crisis of the declining scholastic competency would create more business chance for them so that it can loosen their fear because it would expand their programs for the entrance examinations. The mass media would help them by scattering the fear of the Japanese

World War . Literally knowledge and morality has been the massive drive for integrating school curriculum with the economic development. However, it has been discussed by the liberalists and the leftist pedagogy that the constitution and Educational Basic Law after the war declared the modern citizenship in curriculum.

The idea of citizenship education has not been accomplished during the era of rapid economic growth in the 1950's and the 1960's though Japan attained the affluent economic growth. The Japan's political and economic leaders have been proud of their economic achievements since their profit from the scare natural resource was driven up to the historically maximum degree. However, a number of the economists warned that Japan had to confront with the dead end which the affluent society had to experience in the history. The Japanese economy cannot structurally escape from pursuing the goal of the industrial society despite the fact that the nation has just attained the highest point of the production and consumption. But that goal is out-of-date. The most Japanese has not experienced with the values and goals of post-industrial society. However, the Central Council for Education appointed by the Ministry of Education in the 1980's has announced the refined educational goals which aim at the educational reform adjustable for the post-industrial society. The major tenets of educational reform in the 1990's were "Yutori" and "Ikiru Chikara."

Yutori means "relaxation" or "slowing down." It implied that Japan needs to slow down their hard working ethic including the knowledge based curriculum because the national curriculum has been too much concentrated on knowledge and skills because of the overwhelming needs for the industrialization. Historically, there is a seldom case that the national goal of education is constituted of the value of leisure. The Cardinal Principles in 1918's United States was the rare case for emphasizing the individualistic value out of learning activities.

Ikiru Chikara means "living power" or "passion for life." Many elder generations have worried about the lessening passion for survival life among the youths in the coming post-industrial society. They observed that the modern Japanese students have lost the basic human skills which were indispensable for survival as biological beings.

Those two educational goals were endorsed by various kinds of interest groups at the beginning. But those endorsements have been turned out to be very fragile grounds for un-experienced educational goals. Those goals are drastically turned to be attacking targets by the left and the right who are likely to complain contemporary schooling as an evil for everything bad. In particular, the mass media aroused the Japanese mass hysteria against the progressive educational reforms. In the 1990's, Japan was suffering from the bankruptcy of babble economy. They have

the students' scholastic competency. Actually, many empirical data have shown that the time spent for the learning the school subjects does not correlate with the student's school achievement. For instance, the previous IEA's data showed the "country rank order correlation coefficients between hours of instruction and the test scores of the relevant Population do not support the expectation that the two variables are positively related. The coefficients are in general, low and indeed, have negative rather than positive signs." (Passaw, A. Harry et al., 1976.p.267) This finding is very important because it suggests that the instructional hours for the subjects have negative coefficient with the students' scholastic competency.

A number of critics and journalists have kept asserting that the instructional hours and volume of the textbooks are cut down to thirty percent by the new curriculum reform. However, it is easily recognized that the numbers of the instructional hours and volumes of the content was not cut down to that degree. Actual shrinking ratio of the instruction hours is less than sixteen percent despite their assertion. The basic structure of the textbook content has not been changed in terms of the number and the scope of the learning units. It is obvious that the number of the shrinking ratio was overestimated and its numbers came to be politically used as a symbolic indicator of the new curriculum by a particular interest group. In order to identify what kind of interest group has involved in the twisting controversy of curriculum reform, we need to have economic and political perspectives. I would clarify the complicated structure influencing the curriculum discourse. First, the aging of the Japanese population is a basic factor for this clarification. Second, the political reason is involved in this discourse. Third, the complexity of politics and economic interests for a certain lobbying group is an important driving factor for the generation of this discourse. I will discuss the meanings of those factors influencing educational discourses as follows.

The Coming Aging Society

The issue of the coming aging society has already brought the crisis of the changing economic structure. The entire population has increased consumption more than production. The Japanese has to trade for their survival. For the scarcity of natural resources, Japan has built the traditional educational culture which keeps making the people use up to the maximum of their potential. The Japanese has been proud of the quality of labor as a non-complaining machine and the people have believed in the mythos that it has been a outcomes of the "modern" schooling in Japan. Thus the goal of schooling has been traditionally destined to contributing to the nation state instead of the individual citizenship life. So the moral education and education for knowledge used to be integrated in the curriculum before the

crete numerical evidence which shows the failure of the Japan's curriculum reform. This survey sampled the 10 th graders of thirty one nations and tested their scholastic achievements in three subjects as follows: reading; mathematics, science. Those subjects are subdivided into the various areas of scholastic competence. Reading is subdivided into comprehension; extracting information; interpretation; contemplation and evaluation. Japanese students made high scores in those areas in the survey previously conducted in 2000... Their ranking positions were between 5th and 8th among forty nations. Regarding mathematics, Japanese students made the highest score in the survey 2000. In science, Japanese students'score was the second in 2000.

The result of the consecutive survey in 2003 was presented in December 2004. They found that the Japanese students' position of their scholastic competence was down in the various subjects. The majority of mass media delightfully announced the Japan's defeat of scholastic achievement in terms of international competition. In particular, their hysteria became the high light when they discovered that the Japanese students' position of "reading" went down to the fourteenth while their position was at the eighth in the previous survey. Regarding mathematics, Japanese students' position was at the sixth while they were at the top in the previous survey. Their science score was at the second while the last one was at the top. In the new subject, titled "problem solving," the Japanese students' scoring points was at the fourth. Reacting to the questions by the mass media, a spokesman of the Ministry of Education and Science has concluded that (1) the Japanese students are in general at good position; (2) but the tendency of their scholastic competences is down and not at the top level any more; (3) the students' motivation and habit of learning is problematic. Almost all mass media and a number of critics who are usually non-pedagogical professions assume that the failure of the soft curriculum is obvious and the softened curriculum is the major cause of the downing scholastic competence.

The reasoning is simple: Everything bad is caused by the soft curriculum

The soft curriculum could be a well fitted scapegoat for the bashing the progressive curriculum. The critics of the curriculum reform cannot stand with the any kind of changes of the traditional curriculum. Those who believe a value of the traditional curriculum which is centered on the subject matters do not like any change of curriculum. They strongly believe that the integrated curriculum or project based curriculum would not guarantee academic standards and sacrifice the efforts to study individual subject-matters for the goal of the ambiguous activity based learning. They would also assume that time is an important factor for the study but there is no rigid scrutiny to find any correlation between the allocation of time and

ment and the social stratification through educational diploma. Then I would like to develop the phenomenological point of views towards the in-depth analysis of curriculum discourses in Japan.

First, the Japanese masses are obsessed with the weakening Japanese economy which would be caused by the declining of the achievement scores such as mathematics and sciences. They tend to assume that the testing scores of science and mathematics are vital for the Japan's technological development which has been a major drive for the development of Japanese economy. They are obsessed with the losing global market in the economic competition.

The second, they claim that the "soft curriculum" would widen the gap among the social classes. This assertion has been popularly accepted by those who are frustrated with the unequal distribution of the economic incomes and symbolic attainment such as educational diplomas. They claim that the high unemployment ratio or inferior accessibility to the social welfare is caused by the "soft curriculum."

Declining scholastic competency of the Japanese students: Is it true?

Two massive international comparative surveys of students' scholastic achievements have been made by different global organizations in this century. One is called TIMSS2003 (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study 2003). That is a part of the survey of IEA (International Educational Assessment), addressed the result of the ranked scoring points of fourth and eighth graders' mathematics and sciences. The survey was conducted in February 2003. The Japanese fourth graders' scoring points of mathematics was ranked at the third among twenty five nations and the eighth graders' position of the mathematics scores was at the fifth among forty six nations. Regarding sciences, the Japanese fourth graders' position was at the third among twenty five nations and their eighth graders' position was at the fifth among forty six nations. Those positions have not been explicitly changed from the previous records in 1995. That made the mass media disappointed because they were eager for the hard evidence indicating the failure of the Japanese curriculum reform 2002. The result has shown the slight down of the Japanese students' competence but that is not enough for the strengthening their criticism.

The other one is called PISA (Program for International Student Assessment), which is a project drawing educational indicators in OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). PISA gave a more extensive impact for the Japanese mass media because it has obviously shown the declining scholastic competence of the Japanese students. The mass media has waited for coming out the con-

ling of the curriculum and instruction for school teachers.

This paper will attempt to verify the fallacies of those curriculum policies and their underlying assumptions while the idea and practice of individualization of the instruction facilitates the successful learning for the individual students at elementary and junior high school levels. I also presume that the hidden curriculum underneath of the individualization of teaching method helps students make successful scholastic achievements. This presumption will be made clarified in the case studies described in the latter of part of this paper.

The course of study is a symbolic indicator of national curriculum in Japan. It embodies the Japan's curriculum policy not only at national level but also at local level. The textbook and syllabus are edited by the guide lines of the course of study. The 2002 reform of the course of study has profoundly changed the scope and sequence of the elementary and middle school curricula. The level of the high school curriculum has been consecutively changed in 2003. The major content of the reform was thoroughly illustrated in terms of the posited educational goals, including the "Yutori" and "Ikiru Chikara." Those two goals are the main slogan of the national educational reform in the 1990's in Japan. The curriculum reform accompanies with the new field which is called "The time for the comprehensive learning," which implies a project based learning or an integrated curriculum. American style of progressive education was a significant model for this curriculum, though it was not historically the first time to introduce activity based curricula in Japan.

It has been believed for a long time that this reform has drastically shortened the time for learning in school subjects. It has been said that this reform cut thirty percent of learning time in school. However, it has been so much taken for granted for the mass media and other critics that no one has attempted to examine the exact time cut for the various subjects in school.

Since this curriculum reform was announced by the Ministry of Education (previous official title), a number of critical reactions have been targeted against the curriculum reform. The declining of the students' scholastic achievement scores of mathematics and sciences has been the main issue of the targeted criticism. The reasons that those critics have alleged are not single but various. A great controversy about the curriculum reform has been widely spread in the contemporary Japan. This controversy has created various discourses about the prospect of Japan's education among laymen. The mass media and non-professional curriculum researchers have oddly influenced the formation of mass discourses concerning curriculum reform in Japan. In this paper, I will try to point out two influential factors leading curriculum discourse in Japan, i.e., the global industrial develop-

The Contemporary Curriculum Reform

The Japan's contemporary curriculum reform was on the line of the long historical context of that political and economic development. The new curriculum started from the new course of study in the year 2002, which emphasizes more liberal and individualistic values. For instance, it prescribes that all schools including elementary, middle, and high schools, have to spare time for project based learning between one or two hours a week. The teachers are required to invent their own projects on the basis of the voluntary and creative idea. This kind of freedom has not been admitted by the educational administrators in the Japanese educational history except right after the war period.

Another instance implying the characteristic of the curriculum reform was the number of hours for the individual subjects. The numbers of school hours have been also shortened up to about seven percent of the total school hours. Many critics began their accusation on the new curriculum before the reform started. The results in the international surveys of scholastic achievements inspired many Japanese critics toward more militant against the contemporary curriculum reform based on the individualistic values. Those bashings have gone beyond the level of tolerant for the bureaucrats of the Japan's Ministry of Education and Science (Shortened title from Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology) so that they have turn the steering of the reform into the retreated direction from 2003.

I will examine and discuss the implications of the retreat from the reform as follows:

- The Ministry's retreat from the fundamental reform of the traditional Japanese educational value was led by the overwhelming bashing of the declining of the school achievements.
- The fascist type irrational condemning of the unsuccessful performance of the Japanese school teachers has been dominant since a number of the Japanese mass media urged the Japanese masses to fear to the soft curriculum's inability to make their students attain basic knowledge and skills.
- The mass media's distortion of the result of the international comparative study of school achievement test scores gave a further impetus to the banning of the progressive type of curriculum because of its softness.
- The Ministry tried to cope with the criticism of the new national curriculum and revised the course of study into the more achievement scoring point oriented direction.
- The major point of the Ministry's revision is the individualization of teaching method; in particular, the competency based grouping instruction.
- The behavioral objectives approach has been expected to advance the control-

education, music, fine arts, home economics, and traditional ethics. All subjects were integrated under the pillar of nationalistic ethics. For the nation, it was a model for modernizing the nation state democracy and modern bureaucracy, accompanying the industrialization concentrated on the heavy industries and modern technology. For the school, the curriculum was composed of basic skills and knowledge based on the rote learning. The creativity was not emphasized for the individual basis because the pressure for the competition to enter the higher school diploma was too intensive for her/him to explore other interests. Besides, the eagerness to compete with the Western developed countries drove upon the rise of Japanese nationalism and militarism which led the moral education before the war. The result of the modern education after the Meiji Restoration ended with the tragedy of the World War Second.

After the World War Second, Japan's school curricula have drastically changed while the structure of the school system was basically continued while the school years of the individual school level was changed into the single hierarchy. During the U.S. occupation period, the American officers compelled to change the Japanese ultra-nationalistic militarism school curriculum and forced to introduce the idea of democracy in the Japanese education. The Educational Fundamental Act (Kyoiku Kihon Hou, 1947) took over the position of the nationalistic Education Order Act (1890) as the most important pillar of the Japanese education after the war. The basic tenet has been changed from the nationalistic to the individualistic value, which stems from the principles of modern republic school after French Great Revolution). It emphasizes the freedom of the humanistic individual spirit which ought not to be oppressed by others.

After the progress of the democratization of Japan's school curriculum, the cold war gave an extensive impact on Japanese educational reform after the war. It followed the retreat from the democratization and changed the educational reform toward more conservative and efficiency oriented direction. The modernization of school curriculum became the dominant movement just as the United States and USSR did. The 1958 Japanese Course of Study was the beginning of the rigid and well packed knowledge curriculum for the rapid economic advancement in 1960's. In the middle of the 1970's, as a reflection of the rapid economic growth in Japan, a number of economist and critics have condemned the rigid, fully packed modern curriculum of its inhuman aspects. They assumed that air pollution and other environmental problems were caused by the inhuman curriculum, which geared to pursue the economic achievement alone. The individualistic humanistic value based on the Educational Fundamental Act has been an unattained goal for a long time since the war was over.

The Contemporary Japanese School Curriculum: Focusing on the Policy Formation and the Classroom Practices

Shigeru Asanuma, ph. D.

Introduction

The Japan's modern centralized school system and policy have started in 1872, five years after the Meiji Restoration. Since then, the modern public school system became common and its being in a local community has been taken for granted though there was a little conflict between the government and the individual local community.

In prior to the starting modern Japanese schools, there were a number of community schools both for the Samurai class and the masses. The Samurai class was considered as a ruling class, which occupies about seven to ten percent of the entire population and other social classes constitutes the majority of the Japanese, including farmers, technicians, and merchants. During the Edo period, the children of the Samurai class studied in the Samurai class school, called "Hankou," and those of the masses studied in the masses school, called "Terakoya". The curriculum of the Samurai class consists of the Confucianism, Japanese classical literature, and Japanese fencing (kendo). That of the masses was constituted of more practical subjects, e. g., calligraphy, arithmetic, and moral education. The estimated literacy rate of the Japanese children, seventy percent in Eighteenth century, was regarded comparatively very high in the world in the same period of the world history. Many scholars specialized in Japanese education pointed out that those historical antecedents made it easier to attain the epoch-making shift of modern education from the feudal state to the modern style of Japanese schools. The existence of a number of the literate modern Japanese masses led to the masses' acceptance of the centralized modern public school system in Japan.

After the Meiji restoration, it did not take long time to attain more than ninety percent of the elementary school attendance rate in the early twentieth century. The Japanese school development after the Meiji restoration can be characterized as a good student struggling for catching up the Western school model despite the fact that the basic skills and knowledge were integrated with the western physical

با نام خدا

معرفی:

پروفسور آسانوما را باید از چهره‌های شاخص اندیشه‌ورزی و نظریه‌پردازی در ژاپن امروز دانست. او که فارغ‌التحصیل این رشته از دانشگاه ویسکانسین امریکا است، ارتباط خود را با جریان پویا و تحول‌آفرین برنامه درسی در جهان حفظ کرده و با الهام از این جریان و فاصله‌گرفتن از نگرانه‌ها و نگرش‌های سنتی فعالیت‌های علمی خود را سامان داده است.

اما نکته‌ای درباره‌ی چگونگی آشنایی با آسانوما. در تدارک برگزاری ششمین همایش سالانه انجمن مطالعات برنامه درسی و براساس مأموریتی که کمیته‌ی علمی همایش به نگارنده داد، مکلف شدم تا در زمینه استفاده از صاحب‌نظران غیرایرانی تلاش نمایم. در انجام این مأموریت اقدامات متعددی به عمل آمد. از جمله با همکار گرامی دکتر سرکار آرانی که به دلیل سابقه تحصیل در ژاپن و استمرار ارتباط با محافل علمی این کشور شناخت دقیقی از شخصیت‌ها و ظرفیت‌های علمی در حوزه برنامه درسی نیز دارد ارتباط برقرار نمودم و با واسطه ایشان با آسانوما آشنا شدیم.

بنابراین مقاله‌ای که در این شماره به چاپ رسیده است به سفارش کمیته علمی ششمین همایش و برای ارائه در این همایش به رشته تحریر درآمده که با تصویب هیئت تحریریه به چاپ آن در فصلنامه مطالعات برنامه درسی نیز مبادرت ورزیده شده است. مطالعه این مقاله را به کلیه علاقه‌مندان به تحولات سیاست‌گذاری در قلمرو برنامه درسی در ژاپن و دستداران مباحث تطبیقی توصیه می‌نمایم.

سر دبیر