

JAPANESE STUDIES: A FRAMEWORK FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

by

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## Abstract

This study was undertaken to provide direction for improving Japanese studies in the high schools of British Columbia. The investigation began with a series of interviews with 18 individuals representing business, politics, or academia. All of these subjects had had contact with Japan ranging from short-term visits to life-long career associations. The objective of the interviews was to ascertain and compare subjects' opinions on possible topics to include in a high school social studies course on Japan. The gathering of data on the relative importance of six possible Japanese studies topics concluded the interview. The six topics supported by the interviewed subjects for inclusion in a British Columbia high school social studies course on Japan were: culture, history, geography, economy, language, and Japanese-Canadian relations. As well, a number of other topics were suggested (eg. Chinese influence, Asian studies, internationalization) as important to an understanding of Japan. These suggestions were grouped together under a seventh heading, Other.

Rank-order data on the six specific curriculum topics showed high correlation between the opinions of the three groups. A general theme emerged from the interviews and rank-order data indicating that materials on Japanese culture, history, geography, economy, Japanese-Canadian relations, and the Japanese language should not be taught in isolation but rather as a series of interrelated topics contributing to an understanding of contemporary Japanese life-style and perspective.

The subjects' opinions formed the basis for the evaluation and

discussion of the present high school social studies curricula in British Columbia as it relates to Japan. Specifically, British Columbia social studies curriculum guides for Grades 8 through 12 were analysed to determine the extent of actual and possible Japanese content in the high school social studies courses of British Columbia. Further, all basic social studies high school textbooks, and accompanying teacher's guides, as well as recommended supplemental texts for Grades 8 and 9, were evaluated to discern the degree and quality of Japanese content in these books and the extent to which they adhered to the recommendations of the interviewed subjects. A modified annotative system of textbook analysis was developed which consisted of extensive annotative comments on the extent and quality of Japanese content in each book, a designation of the text into one of six categories based upon the number and degree of identified topics evident in each text (Not Applicable, Unacceptable, Adaptable, Minimally Acceptable, Recommended, Highly Recommended), and a checklist reference chart indicating which of the topics identified by the subjects were covered in the text.

The analysis and evaluation indicated that there is no consistent pattern of study of Japan in British Columbia. The topics listed as integral to a study of Japan by the interviewed subjects were all covered to varying degrees in the high school years but the coverage is often cursory and lacking the element of interrelationship. It is concluded that students graduating from Grade 12 in British Columbia schools will not have a thorough understanding of Japan and consequently they will not have a knowledge base to utilize in fostering greater contact between Canada and Japan.

To improve Japanese studies in high schools of British Columbia a

number of recommendations are made based upon the findings of this study. Three levels of recommendations are detailed: those utilizing existing resources, those requiring some commitment of time and funding, and those requiring substantial input of time and funding. Finally, recommendations to assist teacher instruction about Japan and a number of supplemental suggestions are offered.

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-Dedication

There is no doubt that this study has been a cooperative family effort in the true sense of those words. I dedicate it with gratitude to Judy, Michael, Mark and Catherine.