

Chapter 6

Recommendations

This thesis presents information on the status of Japanese studies in the high school social studies courses of British Columbia. The data summarized in Chapter 5 encourage a number of recommendations designed to expand and improve Japanese content and quality in the social studies courses in British Columbia high schools. Three perspectives will be considered. In the first instance, recommendations requiring a minimum investment of time, effort, and finances are proposed. The intent of these suggestions is to make the best use of existing resources. Beyond this, proposals are made which require some commitment of time and funding commensurate with a move towards greater Japanese content in the classrooms and textbooks of the British Columbia high school social studies courses. Finally, in recognition of the documented importance of Japan to the next generation of British Columbians, a number of substantive proposals are detailed.

Recommendations Utilizing Existing Resources

This paper has identified existing resources which conform to the opinions of the research subjects and which educate children about Japan. The latest British Columbia curriculum guide allows teachers latitude in emphasizing and expanding content areas. In this sense, the framework for Japanese studies can be said to exist. The key factor is awareness. Educators wishing to include greater Japanese content in their teaching must be made aware of the present resources available and the quality of these resources. For example, a modest outlay of

capital and time could result in the preparation of an annotated bibliography specifically detailing presently available resource materials for Japanese studies at each grade level. Similarly, a scope and sequence chart devoted exclusively to Japanese studies could be prepared. This chart could outline content and sequence for the study of Japan, utilizing the prescribed textbooks and courses of study presently in use. In this way, a teacher or school could present a systematic program of Japanese studies throughout the high school years.

A recurring theme throughout the evaluation and the summary and conclusions sections is the initiative required by teachers who wish to teach about Japan. The above proposals may help to inspire and maintain that initiative by clearly detailing what is available, the quality of that material, and a framework for using it. Dissemination of the information outlined in this thesis will provide some guidance for professionals wishing to utilize existing Japanese content and thus improve the state of Japanese studies in British Columbia.

Recommendations Requiring Some Commitment of Time and Funds

The literature reviewed for this study includes details on the British Columbia government's initiative to upgrade the core social studies curriculum and thus place greater emphasis on the Pacific Rim. Significant funds have been allotted for Pacific Rim education and it is reasonable to assume that some of these funds will be available for the advancement of Japanese studies. With this in mind, a number of more substantive recommendations are possible. The discussion of the data in Chapter 5 points out the inconsistency of Japanese studies

material from one year to the next. A good start is made on Japanese history in Grade 8 which tapers off in Grade 9 and does not re-emerge in terms of quality.

Similarly, Japanese-Canadian relations begin in Grade 10 but are not expanded in Grade 11. Such comments support Bullard's (1986) comment that Asia content tends to be fragmented and lacking continuity. With some initiative and funding these shortcomings could be corrected. Curriculum guides can be amended to require a systematic and sequential study of Japan from Grade 8 through 12. This does not imply an increase of time devoted to Japanese studies at the expense of other topics but rather a more definitive inclusion of Japanese studies within the wide-open framework detailed in Chapter 5. Further, Japanese content should appear consistently at each grade level and build sequentially from one year to the next. For example, the history of Japan could be divided over four years with the fifth year emphasizing the interrelationship of past to contemporary Japanese characteristics. A study of Japanese geography could begin in Grade 8 and move smoothly into economy and Japanese-Canadian relations over the high school years. Culture could be discussed within each of the topics above with increasing emphasis on how foreigners can best interact with the Japanese for mutually beneficial progress.

As mid-level recommendations it would be too much to suggest the development of new textbooks. However, as the results of this study point out, there are very few excellent resource books available which conform to the criteria of the research subjects. The Highly Recommended texts are spread over varying abilities and topics. A compromise to support increased Japanese content in the curriculum

guides could be a series of booklets. These booklets could supplement the prescribed texts presently in use and correct deficiencies. Teachers could shift from text to booklet for the Japanese content section of the course. The booklets could be produced locally and relatively inexpensively. Consequently, they could be written to conform to the distinctive needs of British Columbia high school students as indicated by the subjects interviewed in this research.

Another recurring concern with those texts that discuss the Japanese economy and Japanese-Canadian relations is how quickly the statistics become outdated. By producing separate booklets on each of the topics, those that became obsolete over time can be replaced without a great expenditure of capital and the rest can remain in circulation. This is an advantage over a textbook in which the Japanese economy is only one small part.

Recommendations of a Substantive Nature

If funding were available beyond that required for the suggestions above, or changes were to be continually implemented over a long period of time, then recommendations with far reaching implications for Japanese studies could be considered. In reality, such changes are more a case of degree than substance. For example, as an optimum resource, a packet of materials for each grade level could be developed but employing a consistent theme at each grade level. In Grade 8 students could be issued a binder of materials on the history, geography, culture, economy, and nature of Japanese-Canadian relations appropriate for a student about to visit Japan for the first time. At the Grade 10 level, the depth of coverage of these topics could

increase so that the binder or packet is more applicable to students involved in a regular exchange with Japan. Finally, at the senior high level, the packet of resource materials could present the various topics from the perspective of a visiting government official or perspective businessman. This final packet could parallel directly dossiers prepared by government and public officials for overseas trade missions and diplomatic delegations. By utilizing a packet or binder format, pages can be added or deleted as required and allow the material to keep up-to-date with developments and the latest statistical data.

Teacher Support

Transcending all levels of suggested changes in the British Columbia social studies high school courses, is the concern over teacher expertise. The analysis of the curriculum guides consistently pointed out that, even where time is available for increased Japanese content, it requires a teacher with some background and knowledge in Japanese studies. In utilizing existing resources as outlined at the beginning of this section, teachers can depend on those resources without having to look further afield. However, since curriculum guides do not provide specific data on topics, once the curriculum guides are altered to increase Japanese content and introduce new resources then the teacher, by necessity, accepts greater responsibility for content. In addressing this problem it would be unrealistic to expect teachers to learn the complexities of Japanese history, culture, geography, and economy, at least in the short term. However, teacher workshops could concentrate on methodology, that is, on how best to utilize new

materials such as the booklets described above for this degree of curriculum change. In this way the lack of teacher expertise is addressed by stressing methodology as opposed to factual content.

In the long term it is desirable that teachers do become knowledgeable about Japan. To this end universities could be encouraged and subsidized to design education courses devoted to Japanese studies. For example, four summer courses covering Japanese history, geography, culture, and economy (including Japanese-Canadian relations) could be offered. Teachers completing the course would be issued a diploma signifying expertise in Japanese studies.

For teachers in rural areas without easy access to post-secondary institutions, universities and government could work together to produce a series of video tapes covering the proposed course content. The tapes could include interviews with recognized experts in individual areas. Perhaps these experts could be persuaded to complete a lecture circuit throughout the province to disseminate their knowledge first-hand.

Finally, consistent with outside corporate involvement in curricular materials production, companies with an interest in expanding Japanese contacts might be persuaded to finance a series of video tapes utilizing Canadian children in Japan. Each tape could stress one of the topics identified by the research subjects. Ultimately, these tapes could act as a supplemental resource material.

Additional Directions

Language. Two more topics raised by the research subjects need to be addressed in this recommendation section: the question of the study

of the Japanese language and the place of Japan in the context of Pacific Asia. The Japanese language curriculum guide issued by the British Columbia Ministry of Education encourages a multi-topic approach to learning Japanese. The study of Japanese culture, history, and geography is seen as enhancing language acquisition. Although language study and social studies are separate subject areas they are not mutually exclusive. The resource material analysed for this project could supplement language training. Similarly, some language training could be included in social studies courses on Japan. Consideration could be given to integrating the two subjects more closely so that social studies students learn the fundamentals of the Japanese language and language students learn the cultural milieu in which the Japanese language is used.

Extension to Other Pacific Rim Countries. Japan is but one of Canada's Asia-Pacific neighbours. The recommendations above could be expanded to include all of the nations of the Asia-Pacific region. A four-region approach could be used representing Japan, China, the newly industrialized countries of South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore, and the ASEAN nations of Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Brunei, and the Philippines. However, it should be carefully noted that such an expansion would require a series of studies on each nation of the Asia-Pacific region. Such studies could use this research as a guide and examine what is most desirable to learn on each particular nation and the extent and quality of resources presently available on that nation.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a series of recommendations for Japanese studies in British Columbia high school social studies classrooms. These recommendations range from awareness and utilization of what is presently available, to the design and implementation of entirely new resources. The recommendations are summarized in Appendix B. By implementing one, several, or all of these ideas it is intended that British Columbia high school students will be better informed about Japan. In addition, this study has attempted to identify critical topics for inclusion in a British Columbia social studies high school curriculum focussed on Japan. This was accomplished through interviews with knowledgeable individuals in business, politics, and academics. Their comments contributed to the establishment of criteria for examining existing resources in Japanese studies. Analysis of curriculum guides, textbooks, and supplemental resource material presently in use in British Columbia high school social studies courses provided the framework for assessing the state of Japanese studies in British Columbia high schools. Finally, recommendations for changes in Japanese studies were offered. It is hoped that the data collected through this process, and presented in this study will provide a framework for curriculum development in Japanese studies with the ultimate objective of preparing the next generation of British Columbians for their future role in dealing with the island nation of Japan.