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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents a culturally adapted curricular/pedagogical model of a traditional foundations of education course. It was developed as a result of a college of education's commitment to internationalize its curriculum and to broaden global and cross-cultural experiences for preservice teachers, in order to enhance the knowledge, skills, and commitment of new teachers to effectively teach about other cultures and international educational issues. The model uses Japan as a case study to incorporate cross-cultural/global content and methodology. The course covers antecedents and development of American and Japanese education; schools of philosophy and educational theories in the United States and Japan; philosophical implications for educational practice; and the role of religion, financing, instructional technology, and teaching as a profession. Student journals and portfolios indicated that most students achieved a satisfactory degree of knowledge, skills, and commitment to teach about other cultures and about international educational issues. (Contains 25 references.) (JDD)

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# Global Perspectives in the Foundations of Education Curriculum: Japan as a Case Study

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## **Global Perspectives in the Foundations of Education Curriculum: Japan as a Case Study**

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The main objective of this paper is to present a curricular/ pedagogical model that could be replicated or adapted by other institutions who are involved with the internationalization of teacher education curricula. A culturally adapted model of a traditional foundations of education course was developed as a result of a college of education's commitment to internationalize its curriculum and to broaden global and cross-cultural experiences for preservice teachers. Specifics regarding its implementation - course goals, course content, instructional procedures, and teaching resources, as well as implications derived therefrom are presented.

The United States has become inextricably connected to political, social and economic events around the world. Competing rigid religious, ethnic, political and economic ideologies are threatening human dialogue. Teachers, as keepers of the dream and guardians of the future, need to take a leading role in fostering equity, justice, harmony and understanding in our classrooms where future leaders and citizens are being educated and developed.

America's culturally diverse children and youth present a challenge for teacher education. How to increase preservice teacher understanding of diversity and commitment to global/multicultural education are major challenges faced by colleges of education in the United States. Understanding of interdependence, equity and social justice should be crucial components of preservice education programs - especially in the light of rapidly changing demographics in the United States and the increasing interdependency of the world. It has become essential to internationalize and globalize teacher education programs and subsequently educational programs in our public schools. Educators must be encouraged to teach with a world view perspective. Not teaching children, especially those living in relatively monocultural areas,

about the world "outside" could be a handicap to them. It cannot be assumed that they will never leave their environment once they reach adulthood.

The push for excellence in schools require that teachers have the skills and knowledge to ensure that *all* students, including the culturally different and those with special needs, are able to succeed. According to some scholars teacher preparation can be considered as one of the most serious multicultural needs of today (Mitchell, 1987). Cultural sensitivity, empathy, and commitment are essential to successful teaching in pluralistic classrooms (Banks, 1987; Campbell & Farrell, 1985; Cruickshank, 1986; Gollnick & Chinn, 1986; Sleeter & Grant, 1988). In essence, multicultural and global education is a democratic approach to teaching and learning which fosters pluralism within culturally diverse societies and an interdependent world (Bennett, Niggle & Stage, 1990). We need to teach students about the uniqueness of their own culture and about the commonalities that all nations share. Students must be encourage to examine issues from more than their own perspective and the values implicit in the practices of different cultures.

This presentation investigates a way in which the training of new teachers could be enhanced so that they have the knowledge, skills, and commitment to effectively teach about other cultures and international educational issues. A culturally adapted curricular/ pedagogical model of a traditional foundations of education course that could be replicated or adapted by other institutions interested in internationalizing curricula and broadening global and cross-cultural experiences for preservice teachers is presented. In this course Japan was used as a case study to incorporate cross-cultural/global content and methodology into EDFD 2020. Analyses of the major literature on Japan, intensive cultural training sessions, and a three week seminar in Japan provided the background needed to design it.

The rationale for selecting the foundations of education course as one of the vehicles to infuse cross-cultural content and methodology into the teacher training academic program was: 1) Its apparent suitability for the infusion of international and cross-cultural content and methodology since its stated goal is to provide an overview and critical examination of educational thought and practice in the United States; 2) Its general acceptance as a required course in

colleges of education training programs which makes it a cross-cultural infusion model that could be useful on a wide scale.

Catalogue Description of EDFD 2020 - This experience supplies a critical examination of educational thought and practice in the United States viewed as a phase of social progress and is designed for undergraduates who have decided to enter the teaching profession. 3 credit hours.

General Course Goals - To provide preservice teachers with a survey of historical, philosophical and social issues of education as they relate to developing an understanding of the structure and function of society and its formal educational institutions, and to provide them with a cross-cultural and international dimension to their understanding by comparing United States educational systems and beliefs with those of Japan.

#### Specific Course Objectives:

1. Develop an understanding that all educational issues and problems in the United States and in other countries, for example Japan, have historical, philosophical and social dimensions.
2. Identify major events in the historical development of American and Japanese schools, including a comprehension of the relationship between historical and current educational practices.
3. Know salient features of major Western and Japanese philosophies of education and understand the relationship between philosophy and the practice of education.
4. Develop the ability to critically examine issues in the United States and Japanese education, and by extension international educational issues.
5. Develop an understanding of the sociocultural forces which affect classroom experiences in both countries.
6. Develop a better understanding of individuals who differ from us through opportunities to learn more about Japan.
7. Increase knowledge, skills and commitment to teach effectively about Japan and other cultures.
8. Realize the need for international education and cooperation and the dangers of misunderstanding and discord.

Course Content:

Unit I--Historical Perspectives:

- a. Antecedents of American and Japanese education
- b. Development of education in the United States and Japan.

Unit II--Philosophical Foundations of Education:

- a. The relevance of philosophy.
- b. Schools of philosophy and educational theories in the United States and Japan.
- c. Philosophical implication for curriculum design, ethical and moral educational decision making, classroom management, planning, and presentation in both countries.

Unit III--Social Foundations of Education:

- a. Religion and American and Japanese schools.
- b. Organization and financing of American and Japanese schools.
- c. Specialized concerns of education in the United States and Japan.
- d. Instructional systems technology.
- e. Teaching as a profession.

Texts used in the course:

Parkay, F. W., & Stanford, B. H. (1992). *Becoming a Teacher*. Allyn and Bacon Publishing Co.

White, M. (1987). *The Japanese Educational Challenge: A Commitment to Children..* Collier MacMillan Publishers.

Finkelstein, B., Imamura, A. E., & Tobin, J. T. (1991). *Transcending Stereotypes: Discovering Japanese Culture and Education..* Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press Inc.

Cristopher, R. C. (1983). *The Japanese Mind*. New York: Fawcett Columbine.

Audio Visual Materials:

Videos: Head of the Class; My Day; The College Years; Suburban Tokyo High School Students; Cram School; Faces of Japan -The New Generation; Slides on Japan; and a personal Japan Video

Of all the microcultures in the United States, the Asians may be the least understood by American macroculture (Kierstad & Wagner, 1993). An informal questionnaire administered to preservice teachers appear to indicate that students know far less about Japanese and Chinese Americans than they do about Black, Hispanic or Native Americans. Even the myth about the "model minority" was not generally known. The most frequent answer to "What do you know about the Japanese and Chinese"? were that the Japanese are in unfair trade competition with Americans and the Chinese-Americans have good restaurants. Very few substantial answers were forthcoming with regard to Japanese Americans.

In looking at the historical foundations of education in the United States and in Japan in Unit I, students were relieved to discover that our education system was not the only one beset with historic dilemmas which defy quick fixes.

In Unit II the educational philosophies of both countries were explored and students were encouraged to view the world through Japanese eyes. Specific efforts were made to stifle tendencies to oversimplify to make the culture more understandable or to generalize to minimize feelings of ambiguity. As can be expected it was often a struggle for students not to become judgmental when cultural perspectives caused discomfort. Students learned about the moral assumptions of everyday life at home and school, and the forms of classroom culture which included requirements of practice until perfect, and the value placed on technique, craft and precision (Finkelstein, 1991).

Insight was also gained into the Japanese's unusual sensitivity to the way students learn and the manner in which they relate to each other; the rough-and-tumble quality of Japanese preschools, the gentleness with which teachers encourage students to work together and learn from each other; their unwillingness to lead discussions, their high degree of tolerance for invisible and/or unevaluated outcomes, and their high respect for the learning power of individual students (Finkelstein, 1991).

Students were interested to learn about salient values in Japanese society such as harmony (*wa*), hard work, and "shame" and that these values, in and of themselves were not unique to Japan. Practiced and believed in combination,

however, has led to a distinct Japanese national character which, according to Soroka (1992), was largely responsible for the nation's economic success.

Discussions of the possible implications of a people who believe in the conquering of self as a pre-condition to success and the need to push oneself to the limits of physical and mental endurance and the fact that Japanese children were taught from a very young age to do their duty (*giri*) and to meet their obligations (*on*) resulted in thoughtful journal entries.\*

In dealing with social foundations in Unit III the class explored conditions in both countries with regard to the: a) Role of religion in schools as it relates to moral education; b) Organization and financing of schools; c) Specialized concerns of education; d) Use of instructional systems technology; and e) Teaching profession. Students learned that the Japanese people, similar to us in the United States, were struggling with moral, political and economic issues and trying to resolve disagreements among reformers about the best way to reconcile merit and equality, public and private education (Finkelstein, 1991).

The many commonalities between the two cultures were an eye opener to students and helped to create a sense of empathy with the Japanese and Japanese-Americans that did not exist at the beginning of the semester. Female students were especially intrigued with childrearing practices, the educational role of mothers and the way Japanese women define liberation within their domestic roles.

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\* American teachers often have a hard time trying to impress on youngsters the value of hard work, diligence, self-discipline and the need for individuals to meet obligations. In this respect Japanese-American students who have been exposed to these values at home, have a distinct advantage over many of their peers belonging to the macroculture. Statistics indicate that Asian students in the United States outscore all racial groups with regards to composite scores on the ACT standardized test (Caucasian, 19.4, Asian/Pacific, 20.0) and math scores on the SAT standardized test (White 491, Asian, 525). It is also significant to note that 47 percent of Asian High School Sophomores are in college bound programs. The figure for White students is 37 percent, for Blacks, 29 percent, and for Hispanics and Native Americans, 23 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 1980).

Through an examination of Japanese processes of teaching and learning which nurture character, identity and cooperation future teachers gained an understanding and respect for Japanese culture that they did not have prior to taking this course. Daily journal writings reflected the growth in cultural sensitivity and understanding. A highlight of the course appeared to be the opportunity students had to visit and share their thoughts and ideas with Masahiro Hirose, a visiting professor from Tokyo. Several students expressed an interest in becoming participants in the JET (Japan Exchange Teaching) program.

In the final analysis, it appears that a traditional foundations course can be successfully adapted to become a powerful instrument to broaden global and cross-cultural experiences for preservice teachers. Focusing on a critical examination of educational thought and practice, this course was successful in bringing about positive student attitudinal change relating to cultural diversity. Journals and portfolios appear to indicate that most students had achieved a satisfactory degree of knowledge, skills, and commitment to teach about other cultures and about international educational issues. Using Japan as a case study opens the way towards the incorporation of other countries into the curriculum of teacher training programs and public school curricula.

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## **Specific Course Objectives**

- 1. Develop an understanding of historical, philosophical and social dimensions.**
- 2. Identify major events in historical development.**
- 3. Know salient features of major philosophies of education and understand relationship between philosophy and practice of education.**
- 4. Develop the ability to critically examine issues.**
- 5. Develop an understanding of socio-cultural forces.**
- 6. Develop a better understanding of individuals.**
- 7. Increase knowledge, skills and commitment to teach.**
- 8. Realize the need for international education and cooperation.**

# Course Content

## Unit I--Historical Perspectives

- a. Antecedents of American and Japanese education
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## Unit III--Social Foundations

- a. Religion and the schools.
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