

System of Guidance for Returnee and Foreign Students Through School, Administration, and Organizational Cooperation

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Curriculum vitae

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Summary

1. The Program in Osaka City

In Osaka City, there are 299 elementary schools and 129 junior high schools. About 5,000 foreign students were registered in these schools in 2005. Looking at the nationalities, the majority of the students come from North and South Korea. Next is China, the Philippines, Brazil and Peru, in that order. One hundred and nine students come from China because of a caretaker starting work, and through bicultural marriage and adoption. Four hundred and twenty students are in Japan for other reasons. The nationality and residency countries of these students are from 30 diverse countries.

These foreign students are distributed throughout various places in Osaka and the number of students in a particular school is small. Foreign students for whom guidance is necessary are 200 and the number of these students increases every year.

Important is the situation of the educational practice for the Japanese-Korean students, the Korean students and the student from other countries. In Osaka City, the educational programs that can esteem human rights and admit the diversity as a richness for each student is encouraged in each subject, in moral education, and during integrated studies. Moreover, 102 schools in Osaka City have established an ethnology class that studies the languages, cultures, and the history of the Koreans. This program aims to increase the consciousness of the students from Korea for their own country and their race.

Four elementary schools and four junior high schools in Osaka City have been designated as "Education and Schooling Centers for the Returnee Student" (Center Schools). Students in the fourth grade and above are registered in the Japanese guidance classroom of a Center School. For the first year after registering, the students come to the Center school two to three times a week for an hour and half to two hours of study each time. Instruction includes guidance in the Japanese language to build the ability for self-sufficiency in the Japanese elementary school. Conversely, Japanese Language Guidance Counselors are assigned to schools that have students in the first to third grades to care for their health, safety and mental well-being. Moreover, translation assistance for students and guardians. Finally, materials for the assistance in Japanese language, and the history, geography and science subjects is made by interpreters.

2 Initiatives for Returnee Students and Foreign Students

Following their enrollment in school, returnee students and foreign students start speaking broken Japanese where the differences in lifestyle, customs and the like become the cause of problems with regular students, who almost to the extent of over kindness are considerate in regards to (differing) study methods and how time is spent at school, and resultantly they gradually seem to draw apart. Without the efforts of

teachers, it is often difficult for regular students to understand the feelings of these students and issues like falling behind in studies due to a lack of understanding of Japanese, stress and the feeling of anxiety attached to not being able to fit in (class).

Student A returned to Japan with his parents from China before entering elementary school. When he progressed to junior high school, he had lost confidence in his studies and did not seem to understand his school lessons. He spoke for the first time about his study difficulties - "I don't understand my school work. Leave me alone". His study grades were poor, and (judging) from his normal and reasoned speech (manner), it was not possible to anticipate such (poor) results. Student A had not undertaken any particular Japanese language coaching; he had picked up the language through contact with his friends on entering elementary school. Student A eventually came to understand the Japanese being spoken by the teacher in the classroom after the latter half of grade two. From grade 3 onwards, understanding lessons was difficult since he was mostly unable to understand Japanese from the early years of elementary school. The two-year vacuum of not being able to understand the Japanese necessary to comprehend school lessons made comprehension of subsequent school lessons difficult. Further, his self confidence suffered because he could neither understand nor speak Chinese.

Student B came to Japan as a grade four elementary school student and was enrolled in the equivalent school grade. The opportunity for student B to come to Japan came about when he secured resident status due to the prior arrival of his parents for employment. After arriving in Japan, the parents initially considered enrolling him in a Brazilian school but there was no Brazilian school in Osaka. They then heard about the school situation from a Brazilian family with children attending a Japanese public school and student B was subsequently enrolled in a public primary school in the local zone. At the time student B arrived in Japan he was able to receive special education at a "centre school," however, with the comment from his homeroom teacher that "the "centre school" is far away" his family abandoned the idea of special Japanese language education. At school, he studied Japanese twice a week with a Japanese person who was a Portuguese speaking interpreter.

By the time he entered grade six, he had already been in Japan for two years. Student B was unable to learn the Japanese used in school lessons and it was even difficult for him to read katakana. He **relies on the** hiragana readings of kanji to slowly read text books but understanding the meaning is difficult and it seems he is unable to keep up with lessons. In history and social studies, he tries to understand the detail of what is written in text books using the printed photographs as a clue. In arithmetic, it seems he does not understand calculation methods and finds multiplication and division operations involving multiple digits to be difficult. He does not have any particularly close friends and so after returning from school is often at home. There is also the tendency to miss school. Whilst at home, he watches television and exchanges email with his Brazilian friends that attend public schools. Portuguese is spoken amongst the family but there was no opportunity to study Portuguese and, thus, student B's ability to write, read and think in Portuguese remained at the grade four level, the level it was when he arrived in Japan. His parents are employed through a staffing agency and work from eight o'clock in the evening until eight o'clock in the morning. If this employment is lost, then so too is the lifeline to stay in Japan and the family would be forced to return home. Because the family does not even know what will happen the next day, it does not know how long it will be able to stay in Japan.

In student A's case, he entered elementary school at the same time as other Japanese children and studied hiragana and katakana in Japanese lessons. In student B's case, he studied the Japanese language after arriving in Japan with a Japanese person who was a Portuguese speaking interpreter. However, both student A and student B were unable to learn the Japanese required for understanding their school lessons. Was it not thought that they would be able to pick up Japanese naturally at school? In using these two examples, I am not criticizing the methods of schooling foreign students. Returnee students and foreign students pick up the necessary Japanese as their school life progresses relatively quickly but the necessary language to understand class work takes many years to acquire. Acquisition of the Japanese language by these students will differ according to such factors as the age at which they arrive (back) in Japan, the differences between Japan's schooling system and that in their country of origin, family background, early developmental history

and the objective of the student's guardian for coming to Japan. Hence, I think that it is necessary to proceed with school lessons whilst the unique issues of each student are grasped.

In the four-year period from 2002 to 2005, Osaka City was designated as a "Regional project for the promotion of the internationalization of education together with returnee students and foreign students" by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The aim was Japanese language guidance for school lessons, cooperation with guidance counseling and courses, multicultural course guidance initiatives, promotion of education for international understanding, and support for maintenance of native languages and so on. Furthermore, by planning cooperation among enrolled schools, "centre schools," administration, and all relevant organizations and bodies, the project aimed at nurturing the Japanese language proficiency of returnee students and foreign students and at promoting educational initiatives which allowed students to be proud of their individuality, mutually recognise their differences and learn from each other. The results from these four years of research are still being utilised today in education initiatives for returnee students and foreign students.

A large number of returnee students and foreign students arrive (back) in Japan against their will; when the purpose of their guardian takes priority for such reasons as employment or international marriage. There are foreign students that do not settle into Japanese schools and are absent for long periods or who drop out even after advancing to senior high school due to course problems related to the Japanese language or academic ability and also with relationship problems with friends. There are also students who give up on the idea of advancing to senior high school as a result of attendance and admission information not being adequately circulated or the influence of family circumstances or the attitude of guardians toward education. The employment circumstance of the guardian also has a large influence on the students. I think it is an important theme to consider an educational system possessing a future outlook that combines planned cooperation between all relevant schools and administration organisations together with expanded learning of the Japanese language whilst at the same time not limiting but rather preserving native language abilities which are the means of the student's thinking and expression.