

# Teaching Cultural Diversity in Families: Learning from Canadian Secondary Education Curricula and Textbooks

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## ABSTRACT

This study looked into Canadian home economics curricula and textbooks that teach cultural diversity in families. Curricula and textbooks were chosen from two of the most populated provinces, Ontario and British Columbia (B.C.). Two objectives of this study were as follow.

1. To examine what the home economics or home economics-related curricula and textbooks instruct concerning cultural diversity in families at the secondary education level in Ontario and B.C..
2. To suggest what Japanese home economics education can instruct on concerning cultural diversity in families, learning from the Canadian curricula and textbooks.

As results, it was found that cultural diversity was instructed in the Ontario course, "Individuals and Families in a Diverse Society" and B.C. course, "Family Studies 10 to 12." The textbooks used in Ontario and B.C. show multiple themes of cultural diversity in families. The followings are suggested contents to include in Japanese home economics education:

- Multiculturalism in families
- Comparing customs and traditions of families in various cultures
- Understanding cultural differences from the global perspective
- Differences and similarities of families from various cultures
- Empathy

And, these contents can be instructed as one topic, as well as throughout the content of home economics curriculum as they are in the examined textbooks used in Canada.

KEY WORDS : Cultural Diversity, Families, Secondary Education, Canada, Textbooks

## I Preface

Japanese families have been more diversified in the last 30 years, experiencing a low fertility rate, more divorce and aging society. In 1980, nuclear family households, consisting of couples with children, were 43.1% of all family households in Japan (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2000). However, it decreased to 31.0% in 2009 with the growth of other family structures such as one-person households, couples without children and single parent families (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2009). Marriage or having children is just an alternative nowadays. These structural changes in families emphasized the importance of teaching life planning in home economics education (Hotta, 1991, Naito, 2005, Ueno, 2010). As well, these structural changes are reflected in most of the home economics textbooks that are currently used in senior high schools. However, Japanese families have started to have cultural diversity as well as structural variety.

The number of registered foreigners in Japan has been on an increase for the last 30 years. The number grew from 766,894 in 1978 to 2,217,426 in 2008 (National Institute of Population and Social

Security Research, 2010). This is a almost three-fold increase. Accordingly, the number of registered foreign workers increased from 12,660 in 1974 to 211,535 in 2008 (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, 2010). The growth rate is about 17 times.

Moreover, Japan has started to accept non-Japanese social workers and nurses to work in Japan. The economic partnership agreement between Japan and the Philippines and one between Japan and Indonesia came into effective in December 2008. These agreements bring a maximum of 400 nurses and 600 social workers, from each of the two countries, in the first two years (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2009). This can also accelerate Japan's cultural diversity.

The changes in workforce influence families in Japan. According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare Vital Statistics (2006), the bicultural marriages out of the total number of marriages was 5.8% in 2005, which is not such a high rate, but has been growing. It increased from 0.6% in 1975 to 5.8% in 2005. This is a ten-fold increase in 30 years.

Further, according to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2008), in 2008 there were 28,575 students, who were non-Japanese and needed Japanese-as-a-second-language tutoring, at all public elementary schools, junior high schools, senior high schools, secondary schools and special-need schools. It was 12.5% higher than 2007 and the highest ever on record.

With these facts, it is obvious that Japanese families have been gradually diversifying in terms of culture. As these changes are occurring, there is a necessity for Japan to prepare to teach about cultural diversity in families. The necessity of teaching cultural diversity or international understanding in home economics has been mentioned before (Ikezaki, 2000, Uchino, 2005, Hoshino, 2010). However, neither the currently-used course of study or new course of study announced in 2008 for elementary school Home Economics and junior high school Technology & Home Economics, and one announced in 2009 for senior high school Home Economics do not mention cultural diversity in families. As for textbooks, only a few secondary school home economics textbooks currently in use introduce culturally different families<sup>1)</sup>. It can be said that Japanese home economics education is at the stage of seeking for ways to teach family diversity. Therefore, this study looked at Canadian home economics education in order to learn by example of the ways because Canada has such vast cultural diversity.

The latest available Canadian census data, the 2006 Census counted approximately 31,613,000 for the population, which is about one third of the population of Japan. The Canadian population has been growing. The increase in immigration has greatly contributed to the growth. Even close to 20% of the 2006 census population were immigrants (Statistic Canada, 2006). Canada has been built by immigrants and aboriginal people. About one third of the population recognized themselves as Canadian. However, with the multiple answer question of the 2006 Census, most Canadians identified themselves belonging to other ethnic origins as well, such as English, French, German, Italian, Ukrainian, Chinese and East Indian etc. Besides the identified ethnic origins, there are visible minority and aboriginal ancestry populations in Canada. Over 80% of Canadian people identify themselves as "Not a visible minority." Still, 16.2% of the total population is a visible minority including African, Filipino, Korean and Japanese etc. This extensive cultural diversity affects Canadian families.

Considering such a variety of cultural background, how does Canadian education teach cultural diversity in families? There was a research project done to investigate how Canadian secondary schools taught families (Ueno, 1995). The researcher observed secondary school home economics classes and interviewed the class teachers to learn how they were teaching about families in the

province of British Columbia (B.C.). The findings from the project were that the teachers were instructing students to recognize differences of individuals and families, and construct a definition of family on their own without giving a definition of family as the answer. However, it was a school-based case study. As well, the project was done more than 15 years ago and it was not specific research on cultural diversity in families.

There are also curriculum studies done on the home economics and home economics related courses of some Canadian provinces<sup>2)</sup>. Organizations and characteristics of the curricula can be learned from those studies. However, again those studies were not specific for cultural diversity in families.

## **II Research objectives and method**

Therefore, this study looked into current Canadian curricula and textbooks that teach cultural diversity in families. Canada does not have a nation-wide common school system. The Ministry of Education in each province is in charge of developing its own curriculum. This study focused on two of the most populated provinces, Ontario and B.C.. Although Quebec is the second most populated province, it was excluded. It was simply due to the fact that Quebec does not offer high school home economics or home-economics-related courses (Smith & de Zwart, 2010, p.6). Ontario and B.C. are teaching family content at the elementary school levels. However, this study spotlighted on the secondary education level where students are in a higher developmental stage and expected to plan for their future family life. Thus, this study had the following two objectives:

1. To examine what the home economics or home economics-related curricula and textbooks instruct concerning cultural diversity in families at the secondary education level in Ontario and B.C..
2. To suggest what Japanese home economics education can instruct on concerning cultural diversity in families, learning from the Canadian curricula and textbooks.

In order to examine the curricula and textbooks, text analysis was implemented in this study. First, each provincial curriculum was retrieved from the Ministry of Education web site in order to look into if they had any instructions on culture. Expectations or learning outcomes were examined to clarify what they instruct concerning cultural diversity in families.

Then, provincially authorized textbooks for home economics or home economics-related courses were collected for examination. The textbooks were chosen if the contents indicated culture relating to families. Ethnicity, race and religion are often used interchangeably or as related concepts with culture. However, this study only focused on the word "culture." As well, due to space limitation in this paper, only two textbooks were examined. Ontario has two courses in the subject area of "Family Studies": "Individual and Family Living in Canada" for grade 9 or 10 and "Individuals and Families in a Diverse Society" for grade 12. This study looked at "Individuals and Families in a Diverse Society" because its cultural diversity content was richer than the other course. The approved textbook for this course is also called "Individuals and Families IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY" (Holloway et al., 2003). B.C. has a course called "Family Studies 10 to 12" for grade 10 to 12. B.C. recommends two textbooks including content of culture: "Families Today, 5<sup>th</sup> edition" (Sasse, 2009) and "Strengthening Family & Self" (Johnson, 2004). This study reviewed "Families Today, 5<sup>th</sup> edition" because this textbook assigns more pages on culture than the other textbook. Texts concerning culture were drawn out from those two textbooks and analyzed as to how they described cultural diversity in families.

### III Findings from text analysis on curricula and textbooks

#### 1. "Family Studies" in Ontario

##### (1) "Family Studies" Curriculum

In Ontario, "Family Studies" is not a compulsory course. Students must earn one credit from English, a third language, Social sciences and the Humanities, or Canadian and world studies as a part of the eighteen compulsory credits, as well as twelve optional credits in order to obtain a high school diploma. It means that students may take "Family Studies" for the one compulsory credit or twelve optional credits. "Individuals and Families in a Diverse Society" for Grade 12 is one of the two courses of "Family Studies," and teaches cultural content relating to families. It is a university/college prep-course. This course consists of three topics, "Diverse Roles of Individuals," "Family Diversity" and "Variations in Parent-Child Relationships." Among them, "Family Diversity" teaches cultural content. Table 1 shows its three specific expectations.

Table 1: Specific expectations for "Family Diversity"

<p>Family Diversity</p> <p>By the end of this course, students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-explain changing family forms and functions in various societies throughout history, and describe contemporary family forms;</li> <li>-analyse factors influencing the transition of the family from an economic unit to a psychological unit (e.g., industrialization, feminism, employment of women);</li> <li>-analyse the historical and ethnocultural factors affecting variations in mate-selection, marriage customs, and marital roles.</li> </ul> <p>(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000, p.71)</p>
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The 3<sup>rd</sup> specific expectation directly indicates culture. The following textbook analysis looked at learning content that support the 3<sup>rd</sup> specific expectation as well as any other contents indicating culture in the textbook, "Individuals and Families IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY." And, themes are extracted from the contents.

##### (2) Textbook: "Individuals and Families IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY"

The Ontario Ministry of Education Trillium List shows the approved textbooks for use in Ontario schools. The list signifies only one textbook, "Individuals and Families IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY" (Holloway et al., 2003) for the course, "Individuals and Families in a Diverse Society." This textbook is written by Canadian authors in order to specifically instruct the Ontario curriculum course. It consists of 14 chapters and each chapter has chapter expectations.

##### 1) Ethnocultural factors in the history of marriage

The 3<sup>rd</sup> specific expectation in the curriculum, "analyse the historical and ethnocultural factors affecting variations in mate-selection, marriage customs, and marital roles" is in the chapter expectations of Chapter 6, "Marriage, Intimate Relationships, and Society." This chapter discusses the historical and ethnocultural factors for marriage in the past by tracing back to the Ancient Roman, Greeks, and Hebrews, as well as North American aboriginal peoples, immigrants from European countries and non-European countries to Canada. It shows various aspects of marriage, such as forms, obligations and expectations, in the history.

##### 2) Inter marriage

Chapter 8, "Relationship Issues and Trends," has a section called "Inter marriage" and introduces cultural factors that may affect inter marriage. The section describes inter marriage as "marriage

between partners who are from different social, racial, religious, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds” (p.227), and notes some issues in intermarriage.

Intermarriage brings together two individuals who share a similar contemporary culture but discover that they have different “roots” when they begin to negotiate the roles, rules, and rituals of their marriage. (p.230)

The later portion of this section describes issues interracial couples, interfaith couples and interethnic couples may experience by exposing examples such as prejudice, different beliefs and customs, value systems.

### **3) Multiculturalism in families**

The 1<sup>st</sup> curriculum specific expectation for “Family Diversity”, “explains changing family forms and functions in various societies throughout history, and describe contemporary family forms,” is written as one of the Chapter 1 expectations. Chapter 1, “Family Matters,” talks about Multiculturalism in families. It first introduces the functions of the family as “basic universal functions” (p.7) despite the differences of societies. Further, Chapter 1 has a section called “The Family in History” which includes a topic, “The Contemporary Canadian Families,” where multicultural influences on Canadian contemporary families are described.

Family formation during the last 25 years in Canada reflects the broader multicultural influences that result from the shift in immigration. (p.21)

Further, it specifies what influences were brought to families in Canada.

These immigrant families have brought their diverse family systems, such as arranged marriages and matriarchal families. As they interact with other Canadian families, they will influence on the family form, roles and priorities of the next generation. (p.21)

The above texts explain the variety of influences borne by multiculturalism and describe it as a contemporary Canadian families’ experience.

### **4) Cultural conflict in the family**

The chapter expectations of Chapter 5, “Young Adult Issues and Trends,” do not include any specific expectations for “Family Diversity,” but Chapter 5 has a section called “Cultural Conflict.” The section shows difficulties that young adults may face from their parents who are immigrants to Canada.

Immigrant families and their adult children, as well as the children of families in religious groups such as Mennonites and the Hutterites, with their values, face additional challenges in the transition to adulthood if there are conflicting cultural values. (p.139)

It elaborates the issue by saying, “Many immigrant families experience conflict when the children go against the parents’ wishes” (p.140). This is another aspect that cultural diversity conveyed to families.

## 2. "Family Studies 10 to 12" in B.C.

### (1) "Family Studies 10 to 12" Curriculum

The current home economics curriculum in B.C. teaches about families in "Family Studies 10 to 12." "Family Studies 10 to 12" is one of the four elective courses in "Applied Skills." Students need to earn four credits in either "Applied Skills" or "Fine Arts" in order to qualify for graduation. It means not all students choose "Family Studies 10 to 12."

This course consists of six modules: "Child Development and Parenting," "Adolescence," "Adulthood," "Families in Society," "Interpersonal and Family Relationships," "Housing and Living Environment." Among them, "Families in Society" has four key concept groups, "Families in a Changing World," "Living in a family," "Facing Family Challenges" and "Career Opportunities," and cultural diversity content is embedded in "Families in a Changing World." Table 2 shows the five prescribed learning outcomes for "Families in a Changing World."

Table 2: Prescribed learning outcomes for "Families in a Changing World"

#### FAMILIES IN A CHANGING WORLD

It is expected that students will:

- 1 analyse the relationship between societal change and the changing definition of the family
- 2 demonstrate an understanding of various functions of the family
- 3 identify various family structures
- 4 analyse current trends in families in Canada today
- 5 compare customs and traditions of families in various cultures

(British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2007, p.28)

The 5<sup>th</sup> prescribed learning outcome uses the word, "culture." Therefore, the following textbook analysis looked at learning content that support the 5<sup>th</sup> prescribed learning outcome as well as any other contents indicating culture in the textbook, "Families Today, 5<sup>th</sup> edition." And, themes are extracted from the contents.

### (2) "Families Today, 5<sup>th</sup> edition"

"Families Today, 5<sup>th</sup> edition" (Johnson, 2004) was written by an American author. That is, it is not specified to teach "Family Studies 10 to 12" in B.C.. Therefore, the textbook chapter objectives are not exactly the same as the B.C. curriculum prescribed learning outcomes. However, it covers a vast range of family aspects with 32 chapters. The volume of this textbook seems to satisfy the learning outcomes of "Family Studies 10 to 12." As well, Chapter 4 is "Families in a Changing World" that is the exact same title as the B.C. curriculum key concept. And, this chapter is full of messages about teaching cultural diversity in families.

#### 1) Comparing customs and traditions of families in various cultures

The 5<sup>th</sup> prescribed learning outcome in the curriculum, "compare customs and traditions of families in various cultures," seems to be supported by the review and application exercises at the end of Chapter 4. The followings are examples of the exercises:

**Interview:** Schedule an interview with a foreign exchange student or someone who grew up in another country. Write a list of questions to help you learn about the culture in that country. Be sure to ask what has been the biggest cultural difference he or she has observed. Write a report of your interview. (p.78)

**Ethnic Foods:** Visit a store that features ethnic groceries. Look at the foods displayed. Identify three that are similar to foods you eat and three that are unfamiliar. Choose an

unfamiliar food that you might buy and prepare for your family. Ask a clerk for help. Give a short oral report to your classmates on what happened. (p.78)

There are more suggested activities to compare customs and traditions of families in various cultures. Those activities are indicated as “Real-World Skills” that practice what they have learnt in Chapter 4.

#### **2) Understanding cultural differences from the global perspective**

Chapter 4 has a topic, “A Global Workplace” in the section of “Society Affects Families.” This seems to support the 1<sup>st</sup> prescribed learning outcome, “analyse the relationship between societal change and the changing definition of the family.” The topic describes the importance of understanding family differences.

The global workplace has influenced families. Families are apt to live and work with people of all ethnic backgrounds. Learning to understand and get along with different types of people is an important part of life. (p.71)

Then, reasons to learn different cultures are indicated in the next section of Chapter 4, “Appreciate Diversity.”

The boundaries between cultures today are not as distinct as they once were. People around the world have more chances and reasons to get together. They may travel and do business across cultures, communicate via the Internet, or move from one culture to another. (p.74)

It introduces a global perspective for understanding differences. And, concrete examples, such as travelling, business, communication and relocating to different parts of the world are noted as reasons to appreciate cultural diversity.

#### **3) Culture affecting family life**

Further, the section, “Appreciate Diversity,” shows that cultural customs are nurtured in socialization and children learn social expectations from their families. How culture affects family life is specified as follows:

Cultural patterns and beliefs have a direct effect on family life. Family members learn the customs and traits of their culture. A family takes on the patterns and ways of life that are common in its society. When a family knows about more than one culture, its life is richer. Family members can choose customs that fit their values. (p.73)

This understanding of culture affecting family life seems to support the 1<sup>st</sup> prescribed learning outcome.

#### **4) Differences and similarities of families from various cultures**

The section continues with showing differences and similarities of families.

Each culture also has a family system of some type. People may live together in different structures. Parents and children may have different roles. Families, however, are the basic unit of each society. Families around the world have the same functions. They help preserve



their cultures and make their societies strong. (p.74)

This quote implies that different cultures have different family systems and they shape different family structures and family roles. Moreover, it expresses that families are the basic unit of society and have the same functions as well: the preservation of culture. The section also has a topic called "Cultural Diversity." This topic states the importance of learning cultural diversity as well as the meaning of diversity.

Diversity is variety in the sense that people are all different in one way or another. It is important for people to learn about diversity and its influence, or power, over the family. When you sit down with your family to eat a meal, what kinds of food do you eat? The foods your family chooses to eat may express its diversity. (p.74)

The passage also illustrates the uniqueness of culture by saying, "Some qualities that make each culture unique are their languages, attitudes, customs, and daily routines" (p.74). As well, sharing similarities among different cultures is emphasized as follows:

When talking about cultures, it is easy to focus on how they differ. There are actually many similarities. People all around the world have the same basic needs, no matter where they live. (p.74)

This recognition of differences and similarities of families can be supporting the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> prescribed learning outcomes.

#### **5) Empathy**

The following topic, "Families Teach Culture," in the "Appreciate Diversity" section examines the relation of families and culture. First it shows a succession of cultures, saying that "Families are the main teachers of culture in any society" (p.74). An important point in teaching and learning different culture is also mentioned.

One of the important things families can teach is empathy. Empathy is the ability to put yourself in another person's situation. Empathy is needed when people judge others on cultural issues. Sometimes, people fear what they do not understand. A different culture may create such feeling in some people. Working to feel empathy for those who are different will improve relationships. (p. 74)

Empathy is suggested as a key concept to teach for understanding people in different cultures. This can be another function of the family that supports the 2<sup>nd</sup> prescribed learning outcome.

#### **IV Summary and suggestions for teaching cultural diversity in families in Japanese home economics**

"Family Diversity" is one of the three topics in the Ontario course, "Individuals and Families in a Diverse Society." One of the specific expectations for "Family Diversity" directly indicated culture.

B.C. has a course, "Family Studies 10 to 12," and one of the six modules of the course is "Families in Society." "Families in a Changing World" is one of the four key concepts of "Families in Society."



And, one of the prescribed learning outcomes certainly uses the word, "culture."

The followings are the themes of cultural diversity in families that are found in the Ontario textbook, "Individuals and Families IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY" and B.C. textbook, "Families Today, 5<sup>th</sup> edition":

- Ethnocultural factors in the history of marriage
- Intermarriage
- Multiculturalism in families
- Cultural conflict in the family

The themes extracted from the B.C. textbook, "Families Today, 5<sup>th</sup> edition," are as follows:

- Comparing customs and traditions of families in various cultures
- Understanding cultural differences from the global perspective
- Culture affecting family life
- Differences and similarities of families from various cultures
- Empathy toward cultures that are not ones own

The textbooks used in Ontario and B.C. cover each province's curriculum expectation or learning outcome that directly indicates culture. As well, the textbooks show multiple themes of cultural diversity in families that can support other curriculum expectations and outcomes. Then, what can Japanese home economics education learn from Canadian home economics education in terms of teaching cultural diversity in families? We may need to teach all the aforementioned themes in the future. However, considering that Japan is still in the early stage of cultural diversity, this paper suggests including the following contents in current Japanese home economics education as the first step:

- Multiculturalism in families
- Comparing customs and traditions of families in various cultures
- Understanding cultural differences from the global perspective
- Differences and similarities of families from various cultures
- Empathy toward cultures that are not ones own

Globalization seems to be only moving forward. It must be time to recognize multiculturalism in Japanese families, especially by paying more attention to other cultures existing in Japan, such as Korean, Chinese, Brazilian, and Filipino. And, these contents can be instructed as one topic, as well as throughout the content of home economics curriculum as they are in the examined textbooks used in Canada. If home economics education ought to assist students to grow as global citizens (Hoshino, 2010, p.185), instruction in cultural diversity in families can be another area of contribution for Japanese home economics education.

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## Footnotes:

- 1) For example, senior high school "Comprehensive Home Economics" textbooks published by Tokyo Schoseki and Kyouikutosho in 2009 introduce different cultural families in other countries. Another "Comprehensive Home Economics" textbook published by Kyouikutosho in 2009 notes bicultural marriage in Japan, and a junior high school Technology & Home Economics textbook published by Kairyudo in 2009 mentions non-Japanese students living in Japan in the chapter of

“Relationship with people in the community.”

- 2) The following studies were conducted on Canadian home economics curricula.  
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