# Instructional Activities of Multicultural Education in Canadian Home Economics : A Case of Secondary School Education

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# Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate home economics teachers' instructional activities of multicultural education in Canada. With findings from the investigation of the first purpose, the other purpose was to extract tips for practicing multicultural education in junior high school home economics. The research participants were six Canadian secondary school home economics teachers in the province of British Columbia. The observation and semi-structured interviews were conducted, and the following implications were compiled, based on the findings, for tips for practicing multicultural education in home economics.

Tips for home economics food class:

- i. Focusing on locally grown foods or each student's family food as fundamental foods.
- ii. Comparing commonly existing foods in the world and explore the similarities and differences, and discuss what make the differences.
- iii. Inviting new comer students to speak in class and share their knowledge and experience.
- iv. Setting opportunities to share an appreciation of cultural diversity.
- v. Cultivating open mindedness toward diversity for the future. Tips for new comer students:
- i. Making the class environment accessible and inclusive for new comer students from different cultures.
- ii. Pairing newcomer students with helpful students.
- iii. Preparing learning materials with assisted visuals or/and translation.
- iv. Implementing various activities to engage those students in class.
- v. Collaborating with language assisting teachers.

# Key words

canada, home economics, multicultural education, secondary school, interview

#### I. Research purposes

In this globalizing world, Japan has been also experiencing an increase of people coming from other countries to live, work and study, as well as Japanese citizens going outside the country for the same reasons. People, goods and information flow in and out of Japan. Accordingly, Japanese schools have been accepting more and more students who do not speak Japanese as their first language and need to receive Japanese language instruction. The latest statistics showed the number of such students had been growing. In 2016 there were 34,335 students; the highest on record ever (the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2017). It means that Japanese students and those students related to other cultural backgrounds or heritage study together in the same class and recognize cultural differences at school. This situation is providing an educational opportunity for all students to learn from each other and appreciate other cultures. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2011) also stated that it is important to respect the cultural diversity of students with other cultural backgrounds or heritage, and understand their cultural backgrounds or heritage (p.6). The general rule of the new course of study for the junior high school level, which was announced in March 2017, says that we should offer extra support for students who return to Japan from other counties as well as students who have challenges to learn Japanese as a language (p.10). This should be applied to all the subject courses.

Home economics is a mandatory subject where students study about everyday life which includes cultural aspects of life. It is considered that "Home economics education can actively take an important role to instruct everyday life culture since learning food, clothes and housing is related to identity development as well as understanding other cultures" (Hoshino, 2010, p.185). Especially for the learning content of junior high school home economics, the current course of study indicates collaboration with people in the local community. Those local community people are meant to be mainly small children and elderly people. And, "students learn about interpersonal relationships through role-playing activities and actual social interactions with children and the elderly (Ito & Nakayama, 2014, p.8). However, recently there are more and more communities embracing people with different cultural backgrounds in Japan. This community change may require different approaches to have students understand the necessity to collaborate with those people with different cultural backgrounds. It is because cultural differences can be greater challenges than age differences. Ikezaki (2000) noted that "it would show a direction for future home economics education to motivate students' interest in relation with other countries and instruct them from global perspectives" (p.57). Although there are examples of multicultural education in home economics (Hoshino, 2015), no guidance materials are currently available. It is also reported that "challenges for developing multiculturalism through junior high school home economics education are insufficient Japanese language ability, difficulty in educational guidance, cultural difference, lack of elementary school home economics education, little time to have mutual understanding cultural differences" (Ueno, Hoshino & Ito, 2016, p.69). Then how do other countries cope with multiculturalism in home economics education for example?

Canada is a country known as a cultural mosaic, and accepts approximately 235,000 new immigrants per year (Statistics Canada, 2016). "Canadian experience has shown that multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding" (Government of Canada). It can be said that multiculturalism is the base of Canadian education.

Therefore, this study chose Canada for a research site and set two purposes. One purpose was

to investigate home economics teachers' instructional activities of multicultural education in Canada. With findings from this investigation, the other purpose was to extract tips for practicing multicultural education in junior high school home economics.

#### II. Research methods

The research participants were six Canadian secondary school home economics teachers in the province of British Columbia (BC for an abbreviation). The reason to choose BC was that BC has kept 'Home Economics' as a subject when most provinces in Canada have stopped offering home economics content in 'Home Economics' anymore. The questions were related to how to instruct students with multicultural backgrounds or heritage to teach multiculturalism in home economics. Home economics courses are elective courses at the secondary school level in BC. Because of the second research purpose mentioned above, grade 9 'Foods and Nutrition' course was selected for this research project focus. Grade 9 was considered as the same level as the Japanese junior high school third year. The other reason was that 'Foods and Nutrition' was one of the home economics courses offered by the BC curriculum at the time when this research project was conducted. Moreover, it included a key concept 'Social, Economic, and Cultural Influences,' of which the prescribed learning outcomes were 'describe factors that influence food choices' and 'compare a variety of eating customs and etiquette' (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2007). Six home economics teachers who had taught grade 9 'Foods and Nutrition' were gathered by the snowballing method (Table 1).

Teachers	Gender	Age	Teaching experience	Class observation
A	Female	In sixties	40 years	Not done
В	Female	In forties	20 years	Done
С	Female	In thirties	14 years	Not done
D	Female	In thirties	7 years	Done
E	Female	In thirties	7 years	Done
F	Female	In thirties	6 years	Done

Table 1: Participant teachers

This research project was designed as a case study as "to understand its activity within important circumstances (Stake, 1995, p.xi). In this study the 'activity within important circumstances' was Canadian home economics teachers' instructional activities of multicultural education in 'Foods and Nutrition' classes within a multicultural environment. The observation was fulfilled to confirm the multicultural environment and interviews were to understand the teachers' instructional activities. The observation and semi-structured interviews were conducted in May, 2016 at the schools the participants were teaching in BC, Canada. All three writers of this paper were involved in the observation and interviews. Field notes were taken during the observation in order to understand the case circumstances. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed into text and shared among the three researchers. The following guideline questions were used.

(1) What do you talk to your students about as the fundamental Canadian food?

(2) What kind of approach do you take in order to have students learn about diverse cultural foods and foods from other countries?

(3) When you have a newcomer/new immigrant student who has difficulty with understanding and

speaking English in your class, how do you include them?

(4) If there is a student whose cultural heritage is the one you are trying to teach in the class, how do you introduce the topic to the class?

(5) What are your goals to instruct diverse cultural foods?

Each interview lasted from 15 to 60 minutes. For analyzing process, the open coding and categorization were applied to the text data. Based on this procedure, the interpretation and discussion were made to understand the participant teachers' stories about their practice of multicultural education in Canadian home economics classes. It was attempted to "take out multi layered and various meanings from peoples' life history stories of their experience" (Sakurai, 2006, p.161) instead of conceptualizing common meanings from saturation state data with the grounded theory procedure. Therefore, this study tried to gain as many tips as possible for practicing multicultural education in home economics in the procedure to understand multi layered and various meanings of the Canadian home economics teachers' experience.

# III. Interpretation and discussion

#### 1. Class observation

Class observation was undertaken in Teacher B, D, E and F's classes. Due to the limited permission given from each school, taking photos of the students was not allowed. The details of the students' cultural backgrounds were not provided due to the sensitivity of the cultural background, as it was recognized as a part of each student's personal information. Only Teacher E shared her assumption and limited information about the gender and ethnicity of the students, and it was confirmed by the observation and field notes of this study (Table 2 and 3).

 Table 2: Demography of Teacher E's class student gender

Girls	Boys	Total
14	10	24

 Table 3: Demography of Teacher E's class student ethnic groups

Caucasian	East- Asian	Middle-Eastern	Middle-Asian	Total
13	6	3	2	24

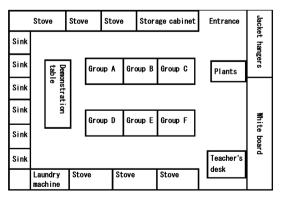


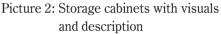
Figure 1: Floor plan of Teacher E's classroom

\*Gender and ethnicity of each group

- A: 2 girls (2 East-Asian) & 2 boys (2 Caucasian)
- B: 4 boys (1 Middle-Eastern, 1 East-Asian, 2 Caucasian)
- C: 4 girls (3 Caucasian, 1 Middle-Asian)
- D: 2 girls (2 Caucasian) & 2 boys (1 Caucasian, 1 Middle-Asian)
- E: 3 girls (2 Caucasian, 1 East-Asian) & 1 boy (1 East-Asian)
- F: 3 girls (2 Middle-Eastern, 1 East-Asian) & 1 boy (1 Caucasian)



Picture 1: Sinks at the back side of the classroom and tables in the middle



The students were divided into small groups of 4 students with mixed gender and ethnicity in this class. Each group was using a table in the middle of the classroom, a set of electrical stoves, kitchen cabinet and water sink on the side of the classroom (Figure 1 and Picture 1). Labels of cooking tools and stored items such as flour and seasonings were posted on the cabinet doors with pictures (Picture 2) so that students were able to find tools and items regardless of their English language levels.

Teacher B, D and F chose not to share their assumption or information about the gender and ethnicity of their students. However, the similar diversity of students' gender and ethnicity was observed in their classes. Since even one ethnic group holds different cultures, the students' cultural backgrounds were more diversified. Therefore, it was confirmed that the six teachers were teaching in a multicultural environment, and visuals as well as English as a language were used as common communicating methods in the classrooms.

#### 2. Teacher interviews

In the following sections, quoted stories from the Canadian teachers are bolded, assigned codes are underlined with bold lines, and extracted important texts for coding were indicated with wavy underlines.

# (1) Fundamental foods

The interviewers explained to the Canadian teachers that rice and miso-soup are the fundamental Japanese foods and how to prepare them is taught in the elementary school level home economics class in Japan. By contrast, the Canadian teachers were not teaching that there are certain foods as Canada's fundamental foods, but mentioning how '<u>multicultural</u>' Canada is. Teacher D said, "Because Canada is such a multicultural country, I have a difficult time teaching what is distinctly 'Canadian' food." As Teacher E also found Canada very multicultural, she said, "I am not too sure

**about what is fundamental Canadian food.**" As well, Teacher F could not acknowledge any foods as fundamental Canadian foods, saying that **"because Canada is so multicultural."** 

Instead, the teachers were talking about 'locally grown foods' as common foods in their classes. Teacher A said, "My usual content is based on locally grown foods. Since we live in a very agriculturally rich area, it is common sense to teach students to use foods that are grown locally for economic reasons as well as food costs and available foods." Teacher B, C, D and F also admitted that they talked about locally grown foods in class. As Teacher B mentioned some examples of typical Canadian foods, such as "poutine in Quebec, and salmon in BC. Blueberries in Nova Scotia, and Fiddleheads in Newfoundland. Arctic Char in the Northern Territories and corn in Ontario," she recognized that those foods were influenced by the topography and climate of each region. By discussing 'locally grown foods' in class, the teachers were trying to help students connect to regional foods as well as understand advantages and disadvantages of buying local or importing foods.

Another approach was introduced by Teacher F. She was letting students introduce their own typical home cook meals as <u>fundamental family foods</u>. She said, "I often try to celebrate <u>fundamental family foods or foods that students eat from the culture that they are from</u> whether that culture is just in their small family unit and the food is special to just their small family, or whether that food is a larger cultural food." This seemed to help individual students be aware of their own fundamental family foods.

#### (2) Approaches to instruct diverse cultural foods

For having students learn about diverse cultural foods and foods from other countries, two instructional approaches were categorized. One was 'demonstration of different cultural foods.' This approach was discussed by Teacher A, B, and E. Teacher A discussed in class the diversity amongst the different cultural groups. She said, "I sometimes have students demonstrate their traditional foods to the class and we will taste the foods after the demonstration." Teacher B was undertaking an activity called "What's that Food Wednesday." On those days, she brought in "foods from different ethnic cuisines" to class. Her idea for this was "to respect the foods of different cultures." She expected students to recognize how food fits in their own culture, as well as how it fits in with other cultures. She also had the class studying various cultural foods first, and instructed them to create their own recipes based on two different cultural foods they chose. She said, "Students get to choose the recipes so that they may create their own recipes, and I am finding a lot of their incorporating their cultural backgrounds into the foods they are making." Teacher E was having food lab classes where they "cook some foods from other countries." And she added "what are the fever foods of the culture" to the class.

These teachers demonstrated different cultural foods by bringing them to class, inviting students to introduce different cultural foods to class, or setting an international food lab classes.

The other approach was 'comparing commonly recognized foods in the world.' With this approach, students were exploring similarities and differences of the foods. Teacher C said, "I ask students to make connections with the same or similar food items from a different culture. For example, flat breads – crepes, roti, tortillas etc. We do research, discussions, and draw upon connections." Teacher D did "flavour profiles around the world." Her class discussed "how some regions of the world use the same ingredients or flavours often, and in a variety of ways, to the extend we identify certain dishes or tastes as being 'Italian,' 'Asian,' 'Indian,'

'Mexican' food." Teacher F encouraged her students to question origins and meanings of foods and discussed foods that connect to the world throughout the semester. She had set a small unit on tea. She chose tea, acknowledging that "tea is drunk worldwide, but in many different ways." She said, "We look at all aspects of tea – different ways it is consumed around the world, why it is consumed, what is the same, what is different." Her intention was to "open students' eyes to the vast differences but also strikingly similar ways people around the world interact with food and drink."

Commonly existing items, such as flat breads, flavour, and tea were set as the lesson themes. The teachers had students compare them, and find similarities and differences among them. As well, the classes discussed what made up those differences.

# (3) How to include a newcomer/new immigrant student with difficulty of understanding and speaking English in home economics class

The teachers were practicing several common methods in order to include a newcomer/new immigrant student with difficulty of understanding and speaking English in home economics class. All six teachers were 'pairing a newcomer student with another student.' There were two categorized ways of pairing a newcomer student. One way was to pair up with another student who speaks the same native language, and the other way was to have a newcomer student work with another student who doesn't speak the same native language but is willing to help. It depended on each newcomer/ new immigrant student which way would work better. Teacher B sometimes put newcomer/new immigrant students with a student who speaks their native language, "so they can help the student understand the concept in their language, expecting the English skills would come later." Teacher A assigned a helper student who did not speak the same native language. She thought that this way was the best way to integrate a new student. She said, "I think that integrating them into the class as soon as possible is more beneficial than allowing the same cultural groups to work together." She called this "a buddy or mentoring type of experience." Further, Teacher C and E explained, when making groups with 4 students in each group, a teacher facilitation can be intervened and have culturally mixed groups to promote their mutual growth.

Another instructional method Teacher A, C, D, E and F mentioned was preparing <u>'learning</u> <u>materials with assisted visuals or/and translation</u>.' For example, Teacher C said, "I use lots of <u>visuals</u> <u>accompanied with vocabularies</u>." Teacher D indicated, "We have several resources available to us in terms of having translated documents and handouts."

Another method was '<u>implementing a variety of activities for building community in class</u>' and engaging those students with the class content. Teacher D said, "I focus a lot of my time, regardless of whether or not students speak English, on <u>community building activities</u>, which helps ensure that all kids feel safe and welcome in the classroom." And, teacher F described about engagement of students, saying, "We do a variety of activities that engage learners in a myriad of ways. My classes engage in discussions, group work, individual work, movement activities, etc. So learners are able to engage with the content in a variety of ways to facilitate understanding." For assessment, various methods were used as well. Teacher F said, "I also assess in a variety of ways that does not simply include reading and writing." Including non-verbal ways such as demonstrations and created products in assessment seemed to be fair for newcomer/new immigrant students.

The other methods were collaborating with an EAL (English as an Additional Language) teacher.

# Teacher B explained about assistance from an EAL, saying, "They (new students) receive support from the EAL teacher, and I can get support from her in strategies to help students improve their English skills."

A variety of methods were implemented for engaging those students and helping them even with language difficulties. It can be said that such 'community building activities' should be a part of class management whether or not there is a newcomer student with language difficulty in class.

#### (4) How to invite a student/students to introduce his/her cultural heritage to the class

If there is a student whose cultural heritage is the one to discuss in class, the student can be a good resource, but could also be too reserved to bring out what he/she is able to contribute to class. The Canadian teachers were 'inviting those students to speak in class and share their knowledge and experience of their cultural background.' Teacher B said, "I definitely ask them to add something or I may ask their opinions or their experiences either living in the countries that we are talking about or their experiences with the culture being from here." Teacher C and D also indicated that they invite students to share their own experiences and understandings.

Teacher A and E asked their students to do a demonstration of their cultural foods for the classes. Teacher A said, **"We have the students volunteer to prepare a slideshow of their cultural heritage or do a food demonstration and discussion on their cultural background."** When Teacher E taught a cultural food unit, she asked the students from the culture to do demonstration. She said, **"I do have students who come up and help me and I ask them to do the demonstration."** Teacher A and E did not seem to have difficulty to invite their students to speak about their cultural foods in class. Teacher A added, **"We develop a classroom of appreciation and respect. There is not usually any disinterest when students are given choices."** She created a welcoming atmosphere in class so that those students felt comfortable in the class beforehand. Moreover, she had the students not only share their knowledge and experience, but also study more of their cultural backgrounds and present their studied knowledge in class. This gave the class opportunities to draw interest in other cultures.

#### (5) Goals to instruct diverse cultural foods

Two goals to instruct diverse cultural foods were categorized. One was '<u>sharing appreciation</u>.' Teacher A said, "The goal is one of <u>awareness and appreciation</u>. It is an enhancement to the learning experience and not a separate entity in itself. Sometimes we will <u>address the</u> <u>commonalities of our cultures rather than the diversity</u>." Teacher D said, "I want my students to <u>appreciate that the foods they are eating have a history</u>, they have a story, that is the result of geography and social changes, among other things."

The other goal to instruct diverse cultural foods was '<u>cultivating open mindedness toward</u> <u>diversity</u>.' Thinking about the future of students, Teacher B said, "My goal is for students to be introduced to diverse foods. I also want students to respect where a culture's food has been, and where it might go. We tend to think of cultural foods as never changing, when in fact it does, as does the food of all cultures." Teacher C was also describing the students' future and saying, "My goal is to provide my students with an understanding of what they may come across when they become adults. This is so that they can maintain an open mind to try new things later." Teacher E was looking at her class and said, "We are so multi-cultural. In my class there are so many different cultural representatives. I want them to be open for multicultural foods." Teacher F had a broader perspective as a home economics educator. Her goal was to instruct students "to be mindful about how their choices impact themselves, their local community, and their global community. I want them to have an open mind and an open heart."

Teacher A and D's intended goal was to share appreciation by looking at foods from various aspects. Teacher B, C, E and F's goals had emphasis on the future. They were expecting the students to be open to diversity so they may see, as well as change, what they can make for the future. The teachers were having students introduced to diversity so that they can be open/open minded for new things as well as constant development of foods.

# IV. Summary and conclusions

For the first research purpose, investigating home economics teachers' instructional activities of multicultural education in Canada, the followings findings were made from the observation, field notes, and the Canadian home economics teachers' interviews.

-Multicultural environment was surly observed in the classes, and visuals as well as English as a language were used as common communicating methods in the classrooms.

-Since Canada is made up of multicultural people, it seems that fundamental Canadian foods cannot be defined. Locally grown foods were talked about in class as common foods.

- In terms of instructing diverse cultural foods, two instructional approaches were recognized. One is to have demonstrations of different cultural foods in class, and have students experience the foods. The other was to compare commonly existing foods in the world, explore similarities and differences and discuss what make the differences.

- Pairing a newcomer/new immigrant student with another student was commonly practiced. Another instructional method was preparing learning materials with assisted visuals or/and translation. Another was to implement a variety of activities for building community in class and engaging those students with the class content to facilitate understanding. The other methods were collaborating with an EAL (English as an Additional Language) teacher.

-In order to introduce a cultural heritage in class where a student/students from the cultural heritage were there when they talked about it, the teachers were not hesitant to invite those students to speak in class and share their knowledge and experience of their cultural background.

-Two goals to instruct diverse cultural foods were coded. One was sharing appreciation by looking at foods from various aspects. The other was cultivating open mindedness toward diversity.

For the other research purpose, extracting tips for practicing multicultural education in junior high school home economics, the following implications for tips were compiled based on the above findings.

Tips for home economics food class:

- i. Focusing on locally grown foods or each student's family food as fundamental foods.
- ii. Comparing commonly existing foods in the world and explore the similarities and differences, and discuss what make the differences.
- iii. Inviting new comer students to speak in class and share their knowledge and experience.
- iv. Setting opportunities to share an appreciation of cultural diversity.
- v. Cultivating open mindedness toward diversity for the future.

In Japan, locally grown foods such as district fundamental foods and each student's family foods as individual's fundamental foods can be shared in class, although rice and miso-soup as Japanese

fundamental foods cannot be replaced with any other foods. As well, tips ii, iii, iv and v can be practiced in Japanese home economics class as a part of food culture content. However, the limitation of junior high school home economics class hours in Japan may prevent from assigning enough time on implementing them.

Tips for new comer students:

- i. Making the class environment accessible and inclusive for new comer students from different cultures.
- ii. Pairing newcomer students with helpful students.
- iii. Preparing learning materials with assisted visuals or/and translation.
- iv. Implementing various activities to engage those students in class.
- v. Collaborating with language assisting teachers.

There are already existing Japanese schools that have been practicing these tips for new comer students at the elementary school level (Ito et al., 2016). It is expected that junior high schools are also having more students with multicultural background and/or heritage and the diversity of those students are getting larger according to world globalization. These tips ought to be widely diffused into Japanese junior high schools.

Overall, both the tips for home economics and tips for new comer students can facilitate Japanese education to develop in a globalizing world, which correspond with the new junior high school Technology & Home Economics course of study announced in March 2017. It is because the general rational of the course of study says that "it is expected that each citizen serves for a sustainable society, uses diversity as an engine, and creates new value for quality enriched personal development and society growth in our mature society" (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2017, p.1). Furthermore, one of the Home Economics field goals states creating a better life by collaborating with family and people in the local area, where more and more culturally diversified people have recently been living and working.

As for future challenges, the tips need to be collaboratively implemented at each school, and further examinations should be made in order to find effective ways to put them into practice for Japanese junior high school home economics classes.

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