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TEACHER LEARNING FOR CURRICULAR AND
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A CASE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

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**TEACHER LEARNING FOR CURRICULAR AND INSTRUCTIONAL REFORM IN
JAPAN: A CASE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

VOLUME I

By

Anne M. Hooghart

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ABSTRACT

TEACHER LEARNING FOR CURRICULAR & INSTRUCTIONAL REFORM IN JAPAN: A CASE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

By

Anne M. Hooghart

The new “integrated studies” subject area added to Japan’s public school curriculum in 2002 through the Rainbow Plan education reform requires teachers to learn to design curriculum at the local level and make use of unfamiliar, student-centered instructional techniques. The teacher learning in this case of reform implementation, focused on a set of four middle schools in a town in rural western Japan, is characterized by a “continuous improvement” (or “*kaizen*”) orientation, in which policy development, implementation, and professional development reflect the principles of an incremental, top-down/bottom-across approach involving the hybridization of established and innovative practices and collaborative information-sharing across all levels of the education system. Beliefs shared by members of communities of practice at various levels both foster and mirror teacher learning that is incremental, collaborative, and grounded in examples of practice.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

What happens when a national education policy mandates decentralization and customization of curriculum by educators who have been socialized personally and professionally to prepare students for competitive standardized entrance examinations through traditional, didactic dissemination of a centrally-determined curriculum? This is a key dilemma created by the new “integrated studies” aspect of the Educational Reform Plan for the 21st Century (also called the “Rainbow Plan”) curriculum reform that officially went into effect in Japanese public schools in April 2002. To this researcher, it presented an invaluable opportunity to investigate teacher learning, that fundamental component of nearly every education reform—a component upon which so much depends, but about which so little is understood (see Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Lieberman & Miller, 1984, 1999; Sykes, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999).

In this chapter, I describe the central research questions of my study and explain why I decided to investigate them through this particular instance of teacher learning for reform. I provide an overview of the historical and professional contexts in which the reform is taking place, along with reasons for my focus on teacher learning related to the particular subject area (integrated studies) and grade level (7th-9th grades) in question. In subsequent chapters, I will explain in detail the analytic framework and research methods used in this ethnographic case study, and discuss my findings and their implications. I shall argue that this is a case of continuous improvement, in terms of policy, implementation, and professional development related to teacher learning for education reform.

Japan's Rainbow Plan Education Reform Policy Poses Challenges for Teacher Learning

Like many education reforms in other nations, Japan's latest reform depends on implementation by teachers—the “street-level bureaucrats” (Lipsky, 1980) or “policy brokers” (Schwille, Porter, Belli, Floden, Freeman, Knappen, Kuhs, & Schmidt, 1983) in public school classrooms—and therefore requires effective teacher professional development to succeed. Although “all policies require some learning by those who must carry them out” (Spillane & Jennings, 1997, p. 449), teacher learning has come to be “identified as a pre-condition for thorough-going school reform” (Huberman, 1995, p. 193; see also Elmore & Burney, 1999; Little, 1993; Thompson & Zeuli, 1999). Teacher learning will be absolutely essential for the Rainbow Plan curriculum reform because “curricular change...ultimately relies on teacher understanding, skill, and will” and ambitious reform on “what teachers are prepared to do in conjunction with policy-driven change” (Sykes, 1999, p. 152).

The ongoing Rainbow Plan reform, which some call the “Third Great Reform” of Japan's education system after the Meiji and post-WWII reforms (Hood, 2003; see also Ishizaka, 2001), is wide-ranging and ambitious. It stipulates class-size reduction, increased parental participation, improved internet access for schools, private-sector work experiences for teachers, and improvement of academic quality in higher education. Among the many changes it specifies, the restructuring of curriculum in the compulsory grades (1st-9th) through a drastically revised *Course of Study* (the school curriculum prescribed by Japan's central government and updated once every decade; see MEXT, 2001a; Ishizaka, 2001) is perhaps the change with the most visible, radical, and direct

impact on teaching practice. Since curriculum reform impacts “goals for students, the content of instruction, the methods of instruction, and examinations” (Schmidt, McKnight, Houang, Wang, Wiley, Cogan, & Wolfe, 2001, p. 43), the curriculum-reform aspect of the Rainbow Plan is, in fact, a reform of both curriculum and instruction, and therefore requires teacher learning.

The Rainbow Plan overhauls the national curriculum by simultaneously reducing annual instructional hours—by an average of 30% in core subjects like math and science (Azuma, 2002; Ishizaka, 2001)—and adding a required course called *sougouteki na gakushuu no jikan*, or “integrated-type studies time” (usually referred to as *sougou gakushuu*, or “integrated studies”) a new subject area for 3rd through 12th grade that incorporates content from core subject areas into the theme-based study of information technology, environmental studies, English language, international understanding, and/or human rights, with an emphasis on thematic, hands-on projects and problem-solving (Azuma, 2002; MEXT, 2000; Shimahara, 2002). Beginning with the 2002-03 school year, the traditional five-and-a-half-day school week was officially shortened to five days, with all public schools prohibited from offering classes on Saturdays (Ishizaka, 2001), and all public elementary and lower secondary (junior high) schools required to officially include integrated studies in their curricular offerings (Azuma, 2002; MEXT, 2000).

Changes in required annual class hours from the previous two (1980-1991 and 1992-2001) junior high school *Course of Study* curricula are summarized in Table 1 (adapted from Ishizaka, 2001, p. 36). While the total class hours for 7th through 9th grade have been reduced by almost 7% (from 1050 to 980 hours per year), it is not a flat,

across-the-board reduction in each subject area. Rather, the required class hours in core subject areas have been reduced by 20% to 40% or more, and in subjects such as music, art, and special activities, by 35% to 50%. The remaining balance of hours is accounted for by an increase in required annual class hours for foreign language (previously an elective subject) and for integrated studies.

Table 1

***Annual Class Hours* Required by Junior High School Course of Study
by Subject and Grade Level (adapted from Ishizaka, 2001)***

Subject	Curriculum Period	Grade Level		
		7 th	8 th	9 th
Japanese language	1981~1992	175	140	140
	1993~2001	175	140	140
	2002~	140	105	105
Social studies	1981~1992	140	140	105
	1993~2001	140	140	70~105
	2002~	105	105	85
Mathematics	1981~1992	105	140	140
	1993~2001	105	140	140
	2002~	105	105	105
Science	1981~1992	105	105	140
	1993~2001	105	105	105~140
	2002~	105	105	80
Music	1981~1992	70	70	35
	1993~2001	70	35~70	35
	2002~	45	35	35
Fine Arts	1981~1992	70	70	35
	1993~2001	70	35~70	35
	2002~	45	35	35
Health & Physical Education	1981~1992	105	105	105
	1993~2001	105	105	105~140
	2002~	90	90	90
Industrial Arts & Homemaking	1981~1992	70	70	105
	1993~2001	70	70	70~105
	2002~	70	70	35
Foreign Language (English)	1981~1992	0	0	0
	1993~2001	0	0	0
	2002~	105	105	105
Ethics	1981~1992	35	35	35
	1993~2001	35	35	35
	2002~	35	35	35
Special Activities**	1981~1992	70	70	70
	1993~2001	35~70	35~70	35~70
	2002~	35	35	35
Elective subjects	1981~1992	105	105	105
	1993~2001	105~140	105~210	140~280
	2002~	0~30	50~85	105~165
Integrated Studies	1981~1992	0	0	0
	1993~2001	0	0	0
	2002~	70~100	70~105	70~130
Total Class Hours Per Year	1981~1992	1050	1050	1050
	1993~2001	1050	1050	1050
	2002~	980	980	980

*one class hour equals 50 minutes

**special activities include homeroom activities, student council activities, school events, and so on

NOTE: A range of hours specifies the minimum and maximum annual class hours for the given subject.

This suggests that the curriculum reform is more than a simple “relaxation,” or reduction of the amount of content to be mastered at each grade level. Instead, the Rainbow Plan signifies a marked shift from emphasis on traditionally disparate subject areas—such as those tested on standardized examinations—toward an emphasis on integration of various types of knowledge and skills, including both traditional core subjects and skill-based fields such as foreign language and computer technology. This shift is embodied by the new integrated studies course, with its emphasis on theme-based projects and experiential learning—including student presentations and investigations—rather than fact-based examinations. While foreign language and integrated studies are the only subject areas to experience a net gain in mandatory class hours compared to previous *Course of Study* requirements, of the two, only integrated studies can truly be considered a “new” subject area. Foreign language (usually English) is a subject area that has commonly been included in entrance examinations (along with math, science, social studies, and Japanese language), and therefore in most secondary-school curricula as well, for the past several decades (see Amano, 1990; McDonnell, 2000), while integrated studies has not. Significantly, the curriculum reform policy makes no mention of concrete plans to overhaul the entrenched system of competitive examinations for entrance into upper secondary school (high school) and university, nor does it prescribe the incorporation of skills and topics taught in integrated studies into such entrance exams (see later section on the historical context of the reform for more details about the entrance-exam system).

Indeed, integrated studies is not intended to focus on the mastery of any particular subject matter *per se*, but rather to make use of cross-disciplinary topics, such as

environmental issues and human rights, to hone students' investigative and problem-solving skills (see Azuma, 2002; MEXT, 2000). According to the *Course of Study* guidelines, integrated studies is intended to develop students' ability to "learn independently, think independently, make judgements proactively, and solve problems more effectively" and their dispositions "toward proactively and creatively engaging in problem-solving and inquiry" (MEXT, 1999, p. 54; all translations of this document are mine). (See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of the goals of the integrated studies reform.) Since the national policy refrains from specifying precisely which themes and instructional activities schools should use to achieve these aims, integrated studies has no discrete topics or content that might be included on a standardized exam.

What the integrated studies reform policy does prescribe is a significant departure from curricular and instructional patterns of the past several decades in two main ways. First, the reform's emphasis on cultivation of school/district autonomy means that teachers are expected to become involved in curriculum design at the local level, to a much greater extent than before. The new policy leaves decisions about the specific content of the integrated studies course up to local educators, schools, and districts, in contrast to traditionally centralized decision-making about curriculum by national and prefectural government agencies (see DeCoker, 2002). Second, the reform's emphasis on cultivation of individual autonomy means that teachers are expected to transform the traditionally didactic patterns of instruction with which they are most familiar, both from their "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) as students and their professional (pre-service and in-service) training as teachers (see Shimahara, 2002; Shimahara & Sakai, 1995), so as to foster student initiative and problem-solving skills to a greater

degree than before (see Shimahara, 2002). To this end, the policy prescribes specific instructional strategies for the teaching of integrated studies (such as experiential learning activities, small-group investigations about student-selected topics, and student presentations), that basically challenge educators to shift from a “deep-seated essentialist pedagogy that stresses the transmission of knowledge toward a progressive orientation that embraces students’ needs, motivation, interest, and diversity” (Shimahara, 2002, p. 149). In short, teachers in Japan are now expected not only to teach in new ways, but also to help develop the curriculum that they and their colleagues will teach, selecting from and expanding upon suggested themes of study (such as environmental issues, human rights, and international understanding) which may intersect to greater or lesser degrees with their subject area specializations.

This creates a formidable challenge for Japan’s educators and teacher professional development systems, particularly given the sizable gap between the ambitious goals of the curriculum reform and the existing realities of teaching practice—including the entrenched traditions of Japan’s “culture of teaching” (Shimahara, 2002) on the one hand, and a culture of schooling that includes institutionalized “educational credentialism” on the other (Amano, 1990). Like other reforms, Japan’s new curriculum reform not only places “demands on the knowledge, skill, judgement, and imagination” of teachers, but also conveys “certain values and worldviews” (Little, 1993, p. 129) that are not entirely compatible with existing traditions. Reform policies are “filtered through teachers’ own prior beliefs and values” (Kennedy, 2002, p. 364), and must necessarily be adapted to the “existing setting” in which teachers and students function, and fitted into the “multiple demands, priorities, and values operating in their environment” (McLaughlin, 1987, p.

175), and this includes established conceptions of teaching, learning, purposes of schooling, and so on. Implementation of Japan's sweeping curriculum reform—and the integrated studies course that seems to symbolize the shift away from examination-oriented transmission of factual knowledge toward integration and application of such knowledge to real-life problems—will require nothing less than the transformation of teachers' beliefs, roles, and practices (see Shimahara, 2002), and therefore, the teacher learning associated with this reform can be regarded as nothing short of cultural transformation. As Fullan (1992) puts it, in education reform, “Changes in the culture of teaching and the culture of schools is required” (p. 121).

Statement of Research Problem

School reformers everywhere must grapple with the question of how school-related cultures can be transformed and how teacher learning can facilitate this process (see Fullan, 1992). In Japan, the new integrated studies curriculum means that not only are teachers now required to be more involved in curriculum design than ever before, they are also expected to transform the traditionally exam-centered, didactic instructional patterns that have been prevalent since the time when they themselves were students (see Amano, 1990; Fukuzawa, 1990, 1996; LeTendre, 1998; Rohlen & LeTendre, 1998), in effect transforming the existing culture of teaching and learning. In the areas of both curriculum and instruction, teachers in Japan are now expected to learn to do something “new” or unfamiliar, something to which they have had limited exposure and must become accustomed. The question is, how does this happen? How do teachers learn to make the changes in their practice mandated by a reform policy? Stripped to its

essentials, the central research question in this study is: *How do teachers learn to do something new?* In order to address this question, I must also address related questions, such as: What is the new thing that teachers must learn to do? What makes it new? What must teachers learn in order to do it? What tools, information, and resources are available to facilitate teacher learning, and which do teachers use, in what ways, and why? What evidence is there that learning has taken place?

In order to understand the significance of a change in professional practice, it is helpful to situate that change in its historical and professional contexts—the circumstances preceding and surrounding the change. In the next sections, I offer an overview of the historical context of the current reform of Japan’s educational system and the cultural context of the structures and traditions of the teaching profession in Japan. Examination of the historical and professional contexts in which the integrated studies reform is occurring helps address the questions about what teachers must learn to do, what makes it new, and what existing resources might be available to help facilitate their learning. It provides evidence that the curricular and instructional practices mandated by the Rainbow Plan indeed contrast significantly with past practices—suggesting an inherent need for teacher learning—and that this contrast can be seen most clearly at the junior high school level, within the new subject area called integrated studies. In later chapters, I shall outline various perceptions of what teachers need to learn, describe observed changes in teaching practice which suggest that teacher learning has indeed occurred, and discuss in detail the structural and cultural resources associated with such learning and reform implementation (see Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002) and their relationship with the continuous improvement of education systems.

Historical Context of the Reform

The Rainbow Plan reform has been called Japan's "third great educational reform" (Goodman & Phillips, 2003; Hood, 2003), after those that occurred in conjunction with the Meiji Era at the turn of the 20th century and the post-WWII Occupation in the 1940s-50s, although its ultimate impact remains to be seen (see Chapter 7). Interestingly, the current education reform in Japan shares with the prior two "great reforms" an emphasis on cultivation of the autonomy and individuality of both schools and students (see Lincicome, 1995; MEXT, 2000; Shibata, 2003). While terms such as "great reform" imply rapid and significant changes, it is important to note that historians have begun to recognize such changes as more gradual than revolutionary, involving adaptation as well as innovation (see Amano, 1990; M. Lewis, 2000; Lincicome, 1995; Shibata, 2003). In fact, as explained in a later section on continuous improvement and policy development, the Rainbow Plan may be seen as a product, or the continuing unfoldment, of reforms initially proposed during Prime Minister Nakasone's administration over 20 years ago (see Hood, 2003).

In many ways, Japan is quite a different place today than in the 1980s when the seeds of the current reform were being sown. This is largely due to what Cummings (2003a) calls "several profound mega-trends" in Japanese society, including urbanization and family nuclearization, a sharply declining youth population, "virtually universal" tertiary or higher education, and a stagnant economy with increasing unemployment (p. 36-37). Since the time of post-WWII reforms, the proportion of the labor force engaged in agriculture has shrunk from over half to a mere 4%, and the number of extended-

family households has declined from 50% to less than 10% of all households. Young people (particularly women) in Japan are postponing marriage and childbirth longer, and having fewer children than before. The number of places available in Japan's colleges and universities (approximately 1.3 million) is almost equal to the number of high school graduates (around 1.8 million), and might actually exceed the number of qualified applicants if demographic trends continue (Cummings, 2003a, p. 37). Between 1990 and 2000, the population of 18-year-olds in Japan declined 25% (from 2 million to 1.5 million), and it is projected to decline 40% (to 1.2 million) by 2010 (DeCoker, 2002, p. 142). Ironically, even though there are fewer and fewer of them, young people in Japan can no longer count on secure lifetime employment upon graduation from the "right" schools after surviving "examination hell" (see DeCoker, 2002), as the intensely competitive entrance examination system is sometimes called. After over a decade of economic recession, Japan's unemployment rate is now higher than 5%, with youth unemployment nearly double that figure and climbing (Cummings, 2003a, p. 38).

These trends stand in sharp contrast to the situation in the 1980s, when U.S. interest in Japanese education boomed (see Bennett, 1987; U.S. Department of Education, 1987) along with the Japanese economy. That era of prosperity in Japan is a significant time period in relationship to this study, because it constitutes a "baseline" or "touchstone" in two different ways. First, it is when I formed my first impressions of schools in Japan (as a high school exchange student in 1984, and as a junior high school English teacher on the Japan Exchange in Teaching [JET] Program from 1989-90). Second, for the vast majority of individuals currently teaching in Japanese schools, the "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) they underwent as students and the teacher

preparation they underwent at university occurred during times of economic prosperity, including the 1980s (for most participants in my study, ages 25-60, these formative experiences would have taken place sometime during the 1950s to 1980s). In both cases, these experiences are expected to exert an inevitable, if indeterminate, influence on later observations—particularly those regarding change and constancy—by myself and other participants in this study.

As Okano & Tsuchiya (1999) state, “most studies available in the English language” about Japanese education “focus on schooling’s role in modernization and economic development” (p. 3) and emphasize the successes of the system, such as: a literate workforce (see Duke, 1986); generally high test scores, in such subjects as math and science, when compared to other countries (see Baker, 1993; Linn, Lewis, Tsuchida, & Songer, 2000); and an egalitarian, “whole child” approach during compulsory education (see Cummings, 1980; C. Lewis, 1995; Sato, 1991). The images of Japanese schools presented in such books emphasize conformity, equality, group cooperation and harmony, parental involvement, and a high cultural value on education. These images rang true, for the most part, when I first worked in junior high schools in Hatanaka (my pseudonym for a small town in western Japan, the field site for this study) in 1989-90. Most of my students were obedient, conformist, and invested in a credentialist system leading toward university and/or well-paying jobs. Parents seemed truly concerned about their students’ education, taking time to stop and thank me profusely for teaching their children whenever they encountered me, at parent-teacher conferences or even on the street or at a shopping mall. A few *kyouiku mama*, or “education mothers,” (see Simons

in Finkelstein, Imamura, & Tobin, 1991) even invited me on outings so that their children could gain more exposure to this English-speaking foreigner.

During my first visits to Japanese schools in the 1980s, I encountered evidence of many of the positive aspects of the Japanese education system lauded by various Western writers, but I also observed some of the more controversial aspects described in more balanced accounts (such as Rohlen, 1983) and by others calling for greater fairness in descriptions of the Japanese system (see Finkelstein et al., 1991). In such accounts, the positive aspects of the system are counterposed against descriptions of the entrenched entrance examination system (or *juken taisei*), and the attendant pressures of “examination hell” (*juken jigoku*), which have been associated with teen suicide and delinquency, as well as with a “cram school” (*juku*) system which inherently favors students with the cultural and financial capital to attend such test-preparation centers (see Cummings, 1980; Rohlen, 1983; Russell, 2002).

When I first taught in Hatanaka, a significant number of my junior high school students attended private, for-profit *juku* (cram schools), conforming to patterns of positive correlation between socioeconomic status and college attendance (see Cummings, 1980; Rohlen, 1983). At that time, the student populations in the schools where I worked were mostly homogeneous, with non-native speakers of Japanese an insignificant proportion of the student body, and the only significant ethnic minority in evidence being the *burakumin* (descendants of outcasts of the 17th-century caste system; see Hirasawa, 1991; Davis, 2002; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999) concentrated at Kita Junior High School, where students seemed comparatively less compliant and less invested in the race toward higher education than students at the town’s other junior high schools.

Historically, both cram school attendance and discrimination against minorities had been opposed by the formidable national teachers' union (*Nikkyouso*) I had read about as an undergraduate, but that union was showing signs of weakening in the 1980s (it eventually split in two in 1989; see Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999; Roesgaard, 1998).

When I returned to teach again in Hatanaka almost a decade later, in 1998, I noticed significant changes consistent with the “mega-trends” described by Cummings (2003a), such as rising unemployment and declining motivation among youth toward school and employment, and the social problems mentioned by Okano & Tsuchiya (1999), including increased concerns about immigrant students and other minorities, bullying, and chronic truancy (including *futoukou*, or “school refusal syndrome,” in which “socially induced emotional causes” result in a student missing 50 or more days of school per year [Shimahara, 2002, p. 43]). Whereas during my first stint in Hatanaka, classroom management had been essentially a non-issue, eight years later I found myself and other teachers being openly challenged by students in class. Overall, I observed a notable increase in non-conformity and juvenile delinquency among the teenagers in Hatanaka between my 1989 and 1998 visits.

For instance, during my 1998 visit, I heard for the first time about students in this rural town using illegal drugs imported from South America and Asia through the harbor city of Nagoya. I also visited a newly-established municipal “youth center” designed to deal with students with chronic truancy and other problems, and watched numerous TV news reports about incidents of student violence toward classmates, peers, and family members, across the nation. (See Nemoto, 1999, for details about nationwide increases in juvenile delinquency of these types during the 1990s.) By 2003, teachers at three of

the four junior high schools in Hatanaka—all except Minami JHS—had begun carrying school-issued “personal handsets” or “PHS phones,” similar to walkie-talkies, as a security measure prompted by a 1999 fatal stabbing at a Kyoto elementary school. During my 1998 visit to Hatanaka, I observed an increase in vandalism (such as graffiti on school desks) and the flouting of school regulations about uniforms and personal appearance, conduct, and contraband items (such as students sporting dyed hair, jewelry, flamboyant T-shirts and accessories, unbuttoned uniforms, shortened skirts, non-regulation leg warmers, and so on; using skateboards and cell phones at school; and even hanging out in the staffroom while skipping class). I learned about another new challenge facing educators when I took part in newly-established Japanese-as-a-second-language classes for the increasing number of students whose parents had immigrated to Hatanaka from South America and Southeast Asia (see Tsuneyoshi, 2004; see also Ishida & Krauss, 1987, for details about the legal and social status of immigrants in Japan).

In sum, the historical context of the current integrated studies curriculum reform includes important social and economic shifts, such as a shrinking youth population, increasing ethnic diversity, a weakening economy, and rising unemployment and youth delinquency, both in Hatanaka and across Japan. Between my first stint as a teacher in Hatanaka in 1989-90 and my fieldwork there in 2003, I observed an increase in challenges to schools and educators there, including student nonconformity to rules, a growing population of immigrant students to serve, and the dwindling of employment opportunities to motivate students. This backdrop is consistent with a major premise of the reform policy—that recent social changes have resulted in a heightened need for

Japan's schools to provide young people with better training to become ethical, well-adjusted members of society. As stated in the policy rationale:

A dwindling birth rate, the trend toward nuclear families, and the advancement of urbanization have led to a striking decline in the educational functions of the home and local community which had always shouldered the responsibilities of teaching children how to behave with people, cultivating self-discipline and collective spirit, and passing on culture and traditions. Such circumstances have formed a backdrop against which various problems have emerged, including bullying, non-attendance at school, and the worsening issue of juvenile delinquency. (MEXT, 2000, para. 1)

Indeed, problems such as “school absenteeism, bullying, and eating disorders” have become “commonplace at every level of school,” and surveys show that few (50% of elementary, 15% of junior high, and 8% of high school) students in Japan believe “school life is enjoyable” (Azuma, 2002, p. 17). Concerns about the negative effects of educational pressures on Japanese adolescents’ “emotional, physical, and intellectual development” (Tsukada, 1991, p. 178)— including student isolation, alienation, violence, and suicide (Akiba, 2001; Cummings, 1979; Finkelstein et al., 1991; Schoppa, 1991; White, 1993)—have been voiced for decades.

In the reform policy, schools are seen as contributing to social ills such as juvenile delinquency by emphasizing transmission to students of the “school knowledge” (see McNeil, 2000) necessary for entrance exams in a “one-sided” manner that leads “to the neglect of...activities that cultivate thinking faculties and an enriched humanity” (MEXT, 2000, para. 2). Furthermore, the policy criticizes the customary egalitarianism of schooling, since with an “excessive emphasis placed on equal opportunities in education...the essentially diverse individuality and capabilities of each and every child have not been taken into full consideration” (MEXT, 2000, para. 2). Rationale for the

policy includes the idea that there is a “strong public feeling” that Japan needs “warm and humane schools” that focus more on individual students (Azuma, 2002, p. 6).

Accordingly, there is an emphasis on affective, rather than purely cognitive, development in the four major goals of the Rainbow Plan reform policy:

- 1) cultivating children’s sense of ethics and “zest for living”;
- 2) cultivating students’ individuality;
- 3) promoting autonomy of individual schools; and
- 4) promoting creative research and technology development at universities. (MEXT, 2000, para. 4)

To achieve these goals, the plan outlines the following seven strategies:

- 1) improve students’ basic scholastic proficiency in easy-to-understand classes;
- 2) foster open and warm-hearted Japanese through participation in community service and [other] programs;
- 3) provide a learning environment that is enjoyable and free of worries;
- 4) promote the creation of schools trusted by parents and communities;
- 5) train teachers as “real professionals” of education;
- 6) promote the establishment of universities of an international standard;
- 7) establish a new educational vision for the new century and improve the foundations of education. (MEXT, 2001a)

While most of these goals and strategies relate to the relaxation of curriculum in general, as a whole they are reflected most clearly in the institution of integrated studies, a subject area for which the *Course of Study* explicitly prescribes community involvement and the cultivation of school and student autonomy and creativity. (See Chapter 3 for a more extensive discussion of the goals of the integrated studies reform.)

Given the sociocultural perspective adopted for this study (see Chapter 2), placing the current reform effort in its historical context is intended to provide background about the origins of the reform and a basis for comparison and contrast over time—for later discussions about policy development, teacher professional development, and other issues related to teacher learning for implementation of the integrated studies curriculum

reform. This examination of the historical context in which Hatanaka's junior high school teachers are expected to implement the reform suggests various reasons why this task presents teachers with new, significant, and perhaps daunting, challenges, and why teachers might respond to them as they do. In order to understand more fully the nature of these challenges, and potential resources available for addressing them, we must also examine the cultural context of the teaching profession, or "cultures of teaching" (see Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Anderson-Levitt, 2002; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999; Shimahara, 2002), within which the reform is occurring.

Professional Context of the Reform

Despite various significant social changes, my observations of junior high school teaching in Hatanaka in the late 1990s exhibited many commonalities in structure with what I had observed in the prior decade. These commonalities are consistent with characteristics shared by the two descriptions (in admittedly highly generalized terms) of a "culture of teaching" in Japan by Okano & Tsuchiya (1999) and Shimahara (2002), such as holistic, egalitarian, and group orientations. Junior high school teachers in Hatanaka seemed to follow a prescribed curriculum handed down from the central authorities (Cummings, 1980; White, 1987) and to rely heavily on prescribed textbooks (see Lee & Zusho, 2002) and their accompanying *akahon*, or teacher's manuals (see Inagaki, 1993). In most of the classes I observed and those I co-taught in Hatanaka's four junior high schools, the following characterizations of teaching by observers of Japanese secondary schools seemed to apply:

Teaching...is by and large didactic and noninteractive at the middle and high school levels. Typically, forty students sit in several rows facing the

teacher who talks to them from the desk, and they are expected to be attentive but passive learners, diligently taking notes. The teacher's task is to maintain classroom order and efficiently transmit knowledge to students to cover all the areas required in high school and college entrance examinations. Individualized instruction is very rare in middle and high schools...[S]tudents tend to be disruptive and resist teacher authority, especially at the middle school level. (Shimahara, 2002, p. 59)

Teaching style and classroom organization were almost as homogeneous as the curriculum...[Most] instruction was large group instruction...and small group work was rare in academic subjects...This...illustrates that teachers are under pressure to provide "equal" education geared to the most efficient transmission of material for entrance exam preparation. Consequently, most classes were text-centered lectures...[F]ew classes had even 15 or 20 minutes of really student-centered activities...[C]ompared to both early elementary school in Japan and many American middle schools, instruction in Japanese middle school classes is soberingly intense, fact-filled, and routinized...There is little, if any, provision for individual differences either in interests or abilities. (Fukuzawa, 1998, p. 298-300)

Each school day included six class periods (Saturdays were half-days with only three periods) of 45 to 50 minutes each, of which each teacher would spend three or four periods on classroom instruction or homeroom duties, and the remainder on lesson preparation and other duties, typically in the *shokuinshitsu*, or central staffroom, where all of the teachers' desks and instructional materials, as well as photocopy equipment and refreshments (such as huge kettles of green tea), were located (see Rohlen, 1983). Class sizes ranged between 40-45 students per class (reduced from prior levels of 50 or more, and greater than the current average of 35), with each class divided into co-ed work groups, called *han*, of around six students each, which served as pre-determined units for instructional and classroom management purposes (see C. Lewis, 1995; Sato, 2004). Each *han* had a number and an appointed student leader, so teachers could easily assign tasks to groups and/or their leaders, without having to call students by name. While formal instruction in each subject area occurred almost exclusively in homeroom

groupings during a single class period, students were occasionally grouped by grade level, for annual class trips or outings, or as a whole school (usually in the gymnasium), for occasional assemblies regarding disciplinary issues or school events, such as graduation, sports festival, and cultural festival, and these special events often took more than a single class period, ranging from a few hours to a full day or more (see LeTendre, 2000).

Each of the junior high schools I visited used the homeroom structure noted by Rohlen (1983), in which students remain with the same group (and usually in the same classroom, except for such classes as physical education) all day long, as teachers of different subject areas rotate in and out of homerooms each class period to provide instruction. Classroom management of each homeroom was primarily the responsibility of each homeroom teacher, who was expected to facilitate morning and afternoon class meetings, eat lunch together with his/her homeroom class, and serve as instructor of the ethics course (*doutoku no jikan*) for his/her homeroom. Not only would misbehavior while under other teachers' supervision at school be reported to the homeroom teacher for his/her handling, but even cases of shoplifting or other delinquency outside of school would be immediately brought to the homeroom teacher's attention, by police or other authorities (Nemoto, 1999). (In fact, a 1997 survey of Japanese parents in Tochigi Prefecture found that 80% of them felt that responsibility for the "moral education" of their children belonged to their children's teachers [Nemoto, 1999, p. 164]; see also Rohlen & LeTendre, 1998, for discussion of other "out-of-school" duties of Japanese teachers).

Student participation in after-school clubs—primarily athletic and musical clubs—aimed at cultivating collectivism and egalitarianism was mandatory at each of Hatanaka’s junior high schools (in contrast to the optional high school clubs described by Rohlen, 1983), and every teacher was expected to act as a coach or advisor to at least one club (for little or no remuneration), in a pattern similar to that at junior high schools across Japan (see LeTendre, 2000; Nemoto, 1999; Shimahara, 2002). Hatanaka’s junior high school teachers were also responsible for various “administrative” tasks, such as student counseling and academic advising, acquisition of instructional materials and equipment, and keeping track of student attendance and financial affairs. More often than not, administrators such as curriculum coordinators and assistant principals (and sometimes even principals) continued to teach one or more classes each term, and to serve as substitutes in case of teacher absences. This overlap of teaching tasks and administrative tasks, or “cooperative management of schools” (Shimahara, 2002, p. 9), is part of the reason the ratio of school administrators and support staff to teaching staff is so much lower in Japan than in the U.S. (1:5 in Japan versus 1:1 in the U.S., according to Cummings, 2003b; see also OECD, 2001).

Between their instructional, administrative, and club-coaching duties, the junior high teachers I worked with spent long hours at school. Their workday stretched from before 8:00am to 5:00pm or later, with some regularly staying at school until 7:00 or 8:00pm Monday through Friday. On Saturdays, classes were held only in the morning, with club practices beginning right after lunch, so most teachers went home by 3:00pm on these “half-days” of school. During the five-and-a-half day week, teachers usually had no more than 15-20 hours of instructional time with students (see Kinney, 1997;

McConnell, 2000; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999; Shimahara, 2002; Stigler & Stevenson, 1991). Teachers collaborated regularly in the central staffrooms (see Rohlen, 1983), where they were organized into small work groups, usually by grade level, each headed by a designated experienced teacher (see Sato, 1991, for a discussion of the parallel organization of students and teachers in schools). Teachers of a given grade level or school would also periodically take part in staff trips (such as the overnight hot-spring excursion in which I took part during summer vacation in 1989) and *enkai*, or parties aimed at increasing fellowship or camaraderie among staff members, often held at local restaurants or pubs, with costs for food and alcohol split evenly among all participants. (In 2003, an assistant principal at Kita JHS proudly reported to me that his school's staff still engaged in such off-duty socializing, though this tradition was waning at other schools, especially among younger teachers.)

As noted by Kinney (1997), teaching is an attractive profession in Japan, with substantial and equal pay for males and females, the benefits of a public service position, traditionally respected social status, and high job security. After successfully completing teacher preparation programs at university (including an average of four weeks of student teaching, see OERI, 1998; Shimahara & Sakai, 1995), and competitive examinations given by each prefecture (roughly equivalent to a U.S. state), individuals are granted permanent teaching licenses valid in any prefecture for which they have passed the exam. Teachers are hired by a given prefecture and then assigned to a school by the prefectural board of education, and regularly transferred between schools every few years (approximately every three to seven years, Sato, 2004, p. 63; see also Ishizaka, 2001; LeTendre, 2002; OERI, 1998; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). Half of each teacher's salary is

paid by the prefecture for which s/he works, and half by the national government (Nemoto, 1999). In general, the administration of elementary and junior high schools (and some high schools) is the responsibility of municipal governments, while most high schools are run by prefectural governments. Each of Japan's 47 prefectures has at least one "education center" which conducts education research and sponsors in-service training for teachers on a ongoing, "systematic" basis; such activities are also sponsored by municipal/local governments, but on a more limited basis (see Ishizaka, 2001; Shimahara, 2002).

In contrast to the "unstaged" (Lortie, 1975) career structure of the teaching profession in the U.S., teachers in Japan are expected to remain in teaching until retirement age (currently 60), and to assume increasing levels of responsibility as they gain seniority, with attendant changes in title and salary (see Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999; OERI, 1998). For instance, as teachers gain experience and seniority, some will become grade-level leaders (*gakunen shunin*), then school curriculum coordinators (*kyoumu shunin*), and eventually (after passing the appropriate examinations and meeting other requirements) assistant principals (*kyoutou*) and principals (*kouchou*). Therefore, every member of the municipal and prefectural boards of education, and every principal I met while working in Japan, had been a classroom teacher, and had several years' or decades' experience as an educator in various capacities. (The Rainbow Plan has made it possible for individuals with non-education backgrounds, such as businessmen, to enter the teaching field, but they have so far been limited in both number and success; see Nemoto, 1999; *Hiroshima Minkan*, 2005.) With the economic and population decline noted earlier in this chapter, obtaining and hanging onto a teaching position has become an even more

attractive—and difficult—proposition, as the number of new positions available is shrinking, since more than 2000 schools have closed and 63,000 teachers have lost their jobs over the past decade (Faiola, 2005).

As discussed in detail in Chapter 6, professional development comprises an important part of Japanese teachers' career experiences. In Japan, pre-service teacher education tends to be theory-centered, with relatively brief stints of practical experience as a student-teacher (*sensei no tamago*, or “teacher egg”) in an actual school (often the student-teacher's own *alma mater*, at least in Yamato Prefecture). In-service teacher professional development includes a variety of formal study and training activities—including the “research lesson” or “lesson study” activities now gaining popularity in the U.S. (see Takahashi & Yoshida, 2004)—at the national, prefectural, municipal, and school levels, as well as informal activities, such as information exchange with colleagues within the same school or across the nation (see Shimahara, 1998b, 2002; OERI, 1998) throughout a teacher's career. In recent years, the implementation of integrated studies has become the focus of a wide variety of such professional development activities and resources (Shimahara, 2002).

In short, the professional context of the integrated studies curriculum reform includes a staged profession, with an expectation of lifelong employment, as well as long hours and heavy responsibility, particularly for homeroom teachers. Ongoing learning and collaboration with colleagues are not only expected of teachers, but seem “built into” the culture of teaching, through such structures as formal professional development activities, career stages, and “cooperative” management of school administrative tasks. In these ways, the professional context in which Hatanaka's junior high school teachers

are to implement the integrated studies curriculum reform suggests both the challenge involved in adding new and unfamiliar duties to the already-heavy workload of Japan's "self-sacrificing" and "chronically fatigued" teachers, and the potential usefulness of existing resources and structures built into a profession in which lifelong commitment and ongoing learning are expected (see Shimahara, 2002). Taken together, the historical and professional contexts of the reform suggest various reasons why the implementation of integrated studies poses challenges for teacher learning, particularly at the junior high school level, as explained below.

Rationale for Focus on Integrated Studies at the Junior High School Level

As mentioned earlier, integrated studies forms the crux of the Rainbow Plan reform of curriculum and instruction, as it embodies most intensely both the decentralization of curriculum development and the transformation of instruction toward increased personalization and application of knowledge. More specifically, the integrated studies reform of compulsory education curriculum features five characteristics that pose particular challenges for teacher learning, as follows: 1) the deliberate and unique lack of a prescribed curriculum or designated textbooks for integrated studies effectively forces local teachers to help design and use a locally-determined curriculum and instructional materials to a greater degree than previously; 2) the emphasis on community cooperation in integrated studies means that teachers must learn to interact and cooperate with guest speakers and other community resources, team-teach, and organize and oversee field trips and off-campus investigations more than ever before; 3) the emphasis on experiential learning means that teachers must devise and use more experiential learning

opportunities, and evaluate them in a more qualitative fashion; 4) the emphasis on information technology and cross-disciplinary studies requires teachers to work collaboratively with teachers of other subjects more than before; and 5) the emphasis on investigations, self-expression, and student presentations means that teachers must learn to facilitate and assess skills with which they themselves have limited experience (as students and/or as teachers). For these reasons, the implementation of the new practices associated with integrated studies cannot be coincidental, or indistinguishable from established practices, but instead, distinct enough to require a significant degree of teacher learning and to be readily apparent to an observer such as myself. Therefore, I have chosen to focus this study on the integrated studies aspect of the overall curriculum reform.

My reasons for focusing on the junior high school level relate to inherent features of the reform and the Japanese education system, as well as practical issues of personal connections and field site access. As noted by Fukuzawa (1998), junior high school marks a “key transition point in Japanese education” (p. 295). Junior high school is where the “dual” education/ examination system (see Kitamura, 1991) begins to be keenly relevant; where the egalitarian, holistic, experiential learning that is characteristic of elementary school meets the text- and lecture-centered instruction and competitive credentialism characteristic of high school and university, as most (about 96% nationally [Shimahara, 2002]) students make the transition between compulsory and post-compulsory education (see also Cummings, 1980; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). The transitional nature of curriculum and instruction in junior high school in Japan renders it the level at which tensions between the proposed models of reduced, relaxed instruction

and established models of high-pressure academic and social competition are likely to be most salient.

A major dilemma of the Rainbow Plan is that, while it reduces curricular content and instructional hours in public schools in order to provide students with *yutori*, or “breathing room,” it leaves intact an established model of education with which it directly conflicts—the current system of competitive college entrance exams, through which young people’s career choices and future socioeconomic status are essentially determined. Due to the extremely high stakes of this system, the majority (almost 70%) of school-age children in Japan prepare for entrance exams by attending *juku* (cram schools) after hours. This “dual educational structure” (Kitamura, 1991, p. 162-165) in Japan is not addressed by the Rainbow Plan, which seems to tacitly allow *juku* (private enterprises) to continue to exist as long as universities (public and private) determine admission primarily through entrance examination scores. By definition, all junior high school teachers have been successful participants in this dual education-examination system, and it has become a fact of life affecting virtually all of their students. For these reasons, the junior high school level is likely to hold more numerous and/or interesting challenges regarding teacher learning for implementation of the integrated studies curriculum than at, for example, the elementary school level, where existing instructional patterns adhere more closely to the proposed reforms and examination pressures are still far off.

Another reason I chose to focus on the junior high school level is that, by the time I did my fieldwork in late 2003, teachers at the elementary school level in Hatanaka had already had three or more years to learn to implement the new reform while junior

high school teachers had only had a little more than one year (see a fuller description of this graduated implementation process in Chapter 3). I wanted to investigate teacher learning as teachers were beginning to grapple with implementation, so their efforts at establishing new practices would be fresher (for their recall and my observation), subject to change, and still in formative stages. Therefore, I chose to focus on the junior high level, at which the implementation of integrated studies officially began in April 2002.

Other reasons for my focus on junior high school include the fact that it is the level with which I am most familiar, at which I taught the longest, and at which I had the greatest number of personal contacts in Hatanaka who (I hoped) could ease my access to classrooms, staffrooms, and professional development meetings as research field sites. Finally, junior high school is probably the school level in Japan about which the least English-language research is available, so I hoped my study could contribute to expanding that body of knowledge (including the very informative works of Fukuzawa & LeTendre, 2001, and LeTendre, 1998, 2000). For all these reasons, examination of the integrated studies aspect of the Rainbow Plan reform at the junior high level seemed to promise the most feasible and interesting look into how teachers learn to do something new.

Conclusion and Outline of Subsequent Chapters

In this chapter, I have presented an overview of the integrated studies reform of curriculum and instruction, its historical and cultural contexts, and the challenges it poses for teacher learning, as well as describing my central research questions and rationale for focusing on this particular subject area at the junior high level. Similar in purpose to two

previous education reforms in Japan, the current reform seeks to increase individual and school autonomy, through unprecedented increased participation by local teachers in curriculum design and use of more experiential and customized instructional techniques, as exemplified by the new subject area of integrated studies. At the junior high level, teachers implementing the new curriculum face the additional challenges posed by the intersection of compulsory education with the postcompulsory entrance-examination system in which most junior high school students participate, and which features approaches to teaching and learning that are diametrically opposed to the proposed instructional approaches.

In the following chapter, I will explain in detail the research methods and analytic framework used in this ethnographic case study, and what I mean by calling this a case of “continuous improvement.” In subsequent chapters, I shall use various forms of evidence to support my argument that what I observed in Hatanaka constitutes a case of continuous improvement in terms of policy (Chapter 3), implementation (Chapters 4 and 5), and professional development and teacher learning (Chapter 6). Finally, I shall discuss the implications of this case for efforts toward teacher learning and continuous improvement in education elsewhere and more generally (Chapter 7).

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODS AND ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

Goals of the Study and Research Questions

In this study, I investigate teacher learning in the context of the integrated studies component of the Rainbow Plan curriculum reform currently ongoing in Japanese junior high schools. The goals of this case study are to examine how educators in a given community learn to translate the new integrated studies curriculum reform from policy into practice. My central research question is: *How do teachers learn to do something new?* This suggests several related questions, including the following:

- 1) What is the new thing that teachers must learn to do, and what makes it new?
- 2) What must teachers learn in order to do it?
- 3) What tools, information, and resources are available to facilitate teacher learning, and which do teachers use, in what ways, and why?
- 4) What evidence is there that learning has taken place?

By investigating one case of teacher learning for reform implementation, I hope to shed light on the processes involved, and the cultural and structural factors that play a part in such learning, in this case and more generally. In this chapter, I shall describe in detail the analytic framework and research methods used in that investigation.

Analytic Framework

I begin from the premise that education is at once a complex product and producer of the cultural ecology in which it exists. Therefore, I adopt a sociocultural perspective (see Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) to examine this case of teacher learning as it relates to implementation of a reform policy in a nation other than my own. To better understand the complex phenomenon of teacher learning for reform implementation, I make use of ideas from the fields of psychology, anthropology, and organizational learning, as well as

education, in a multi-level analytic framework (see Bray & Thomas, 1995; Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Cole, 1996; Fullan, 1991).

Theories from psychology, including cultural-historical theory and constructivism, seem useful in attempting to understand the processes by which teacher learning associated with the curriculum reform interacts with various aspects of the multi-layered social, cultural, and historical contexts in which it occurs. Anthropological concepts, including cultural models and communities of practice, help illuminate the ways in which certain knowledge and practices are shared, both within groups and across “boundaries” between different groups to which educators belong (including classroom, grade-level, school, local, national, and professional groups). Concepts from organizational learning, particularly that of *kaizen*, or “continuous improvement,” help clarify the unifying purpose or direction that links together the wide variety of practices and activities engaged in by the various groups in which educators have simultaneous membership and its implications at the broadest levels of the education system.

To begin with, cultural-historical theory and constructivist learning theory both emphasize the role of context in human learning and development. Cultural-historical theory, which originated with Vygotsky and was further developed by psychologists such as Scribner, Cole, and Rogoff, acknowledges the situated and social nature of learning, as well as its mutually interactive relationship with its environment (see Harre & Gillett, 1994; Kindermann & Skinner, 1992). Three major tenets of cultural-historical theory, concerning the social and contextual nature of learning, that are particularly relevant to the study of teacher professional development include: 1) learning is social; 2) learning

always occurs in a socio-historical context; and 3) individuals and contexts have a recursive relationship.

Rejecting single-factor explanations of human development as a product of purely evolutionary or behavioristic processes, Vygotsky and Luria posit that human behavior is a product of the “simultaneous and interrelated operation of more than one force of development,” including “natural” and “social” or “cultural” forces (Wertsch, 1985, p. 41). They see learning as comprising “a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the [learner] is interacting with people in his environment” in a “zone of proximal development” between independent problem solving and “problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Accepting the premise that learning is social means that my investigation of teacher learning for reform implementation must focus on more than a single individual and must examine various forms of social interaction as potential sources or sites of teacher learning.

Cultural-historical theory also suggests that learning always occurs in context, or more accurately, in a variety of simultaneous, interrelated contexts (the temporal, social, and cultural environments surrounding the learner). Separation of cognition and context is regarded as an artificial construct that may facilitate the study of such complex phenomena, but which ultimately conflicts with how cognition actually works in practice. Dewey (1938) argues that, even though psychology often takes a “singular object or event” for analysis, in actual experience, “there is never any such isolated singular object or event; an object or event is always a special part, phase, or aspect, of an enviroing experienced world” (p.66-67). Building on Durkheim’s assertion about the collective

origin of certain aspects of cognition, Piaget (1966) claims that “educational transmissions...[and] cognitive processes can vary from one culture to another” (p. 303), as confirmed by numerous cross-cultural studies in the 1970s, which revealed that members of different cultures handle common cognitive tasks in divergent ways (see Rogoff, 2003).

Since cultures, communities, and individuals all change over time, we must also acknowledge the historical aspect of the context in which learning occurs (see Rogoff, 2003; Wertsch, 1985). Historical development may not be as unidirectional or uniform in effect as suggested by Vygotsky, since the same innovation can have different effects at different times in different cultures (Scribner, 1985), but change over time remains an important aspect of the contexts in which learning takes place. An ahistorical approach can limit the explanatory power of research, as happened, for example, in studies that linked Japanese economic success in the 1980s to the Japanese education system of the 1980s (e.g., Bennett, 1987), despite the fact that the captains of industry and government at that time had been educated in the 1940s-50s, and other aspects of context had also changed during the intervening decades (see DeCoker, 2002). In contrast, studies that acknowledge the historical development of certain institutions and practices have greater power to explain them more fully (e.g., Alexander, 2000; Anderson-Levitt, 2002; Boli & Ramirez, 1992; M. Lewis, 2000; Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985; Shimahara, 2002). Given the repetitive nature of education reform in general (see Ginsburg et al., 1990; Powell et al., 1985), and in Japan specifically (see Azuma, 2002), it seems particularly important for this study of teacher learning related to education reform in Japan to

acknowledge historical aspects of the cultural contexts in which the reform is taking place.

Finally, cultural-historical theory posits that individuals and contexts have a recursive relationship, or put another way, that individual and cultural processes are “mutually constitutive” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 52), at once products and producers of each other. In contrast to Vygotsky, Piaget, and others who concentrated on the influence exerted by culture (as subject) on the individual (as object), contemporary scholars recognize the agency of individuals and the influence they can and do exert on culture (Rogoff, 2003). Shweder provides a rather two-dimensional metaphor of the “interpenetration” of persons and their cultural worlds (Valsiner & van der Veer, 2000, p. 399), while Cole (1996) presents a more complicated picture of “cultural mediation”—the “multidirectional” relationship of individuals, their activities, and cultural “artifacts” (such as tools and language) in a complex series of levels of context that also influence each other (p. 144-145).

For some time now, education researchers have recognized that schools both reflect and produce the societies in which they are located (LeTendre, Baker, Akiba, Goesling, & Wiseman, 2001; see also Tyack & Cuban, 1995). In general, they acknowledge the ability of schools to change reforms as much as reforms change schools (Sarason, 1971; Tyack & Cuban, 1995), and the role of teachers as “policy brokers” (Schwille et al., 1983) in the translation of macro-level policy into micro-level classroom practice (McLaughlin, 1987; see also Cohen, 1990). Less widely acknowledged is the power of “transformative change”—as embodied in reforms and teacher learning—to alter not only organizations, but also communities and individuals, and to challenge their

very cultures and identities (see Sykes, 1994, p. 6). Given the “complex and often messy” nature of the “reform implementation process” (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002, p. 11) that occurs in a “multistage, iterative” evolution which “creates a new reality and changes the system [as] new issues, new requirements, new considerations emerge” (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 174-175), the use of a “mediational system” model, in which structure, culture, and agency work reflexively in a triangular relationship (Cole, 1996; Datnow et al., 2002) seems particularly appropriate for a study of teacher learning for reform implementation. (Here, “structure” includes social and organizational realities, particularly tangible aspects, of teachers’ contexts; “culture” includes less-tangible, shared ideas about those contexts and how to function within them; and “agency” means a participant’s ability to make decisions regarding and affecting the other two.) In applying this model to education reform, my study must take into account each of the three elements—structure, culture, and agency—and acknowledge their ability to influence, and be influenced by, the others during the course of the reform.

Not only can teachers shape the reform policies they are expected to implement (and vice versa), but they can also influence their learning related to that reform. Constructivist concepts of learning, such as schema theory and mental models (developed by Bartlett, Craik, Johnson-Laird, Minsky, Schank and Abelson, and others), acknowledge the role played by the learner and his/her experience in the construction of knowledge. According to these theories, information is not simply passively received and transmitted, but actively developed, structured, and restructured by the learner, through interaction with others. The learner uses existing cognitive structures to understand, interpret, and store incoming information, and may alter or create new

schemata in the process (Anderson, Spiro, & Montague, 1984). Therefore, teachers (and the contexts in which they work) have the power to influence two major steps in the process of teacher learning for reform—the “comprehension” of new knowledge, and “transformation” of it into classroom practice (Shulman, 1987, p. 15). First, teacher interpretations of reform policies are “filtered through teachers’ own prior beliefs and values” (Kennedy, 2002, p. 364), so their comprehension of the new knowledge associated with the reform may vary from teacher to teacher, regardless of how consistently or clearly a given policy is communicated (see McLaughlin, 1987). Next, these interpretations must necessarily be adapted to the “existing setting” in which teachers and students function, and fitted into the “multiple demands, priorities, and values operating in their environment,” so transformation of the new knowledge into practice may differ from teacher to teacher and from situation to situation, making “local variability” in reform implementation unavoidable (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 176).

For these reasons, education reforms can be seen as “co-constructed” by the reflexive interaction of participants (agents), structural factors, and cultural factors (Datnow et al., 2002, p. 10-11) in the complex ecology of schools, and teacher learning for reform implementation as much more than simple “transmission” of reform goals or recommended practices from policymakers to teachers. Purely structuralist, “technical-rational” views of reform as something that is done to schools, in a unilateral (and usually top-down) transmission model, have proven inadequate (Datnow et al., 2002, p. 11). Educational researchers have shown that not only do reforms shape schools, but schools, teachers, and their contexts also shape reforms (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Fullan, 1991; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Sarason, 1971, 1996; Schwille et al., 1983; Tyack &

Cuban, 1995). These contexts are “historical, political, cultural, social, and interpersonal” (Harre & Gillett, 1994, p. 25) and include “local routines, traditions, [and] resources” as well as “individual incentives, beliefs, and capacity” (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 175). Therefore, my analysis makes use of psychological theories and concepts that acknowledge cultural as well as structural factors, and the recursive influence of participants and contexts on each other, during the process of teacher learning for implementation of the integrated studies reform.

Next, given my acknowledgment of cultural factors and their role in teacher learning for reform implementation, I make use of concepts from anthropology—including “culture,” “cultural models,” and “communities of practice”—to explain how contextual factors relate to teacher cognition and actions. “Culture” itself is an anthropological concept, which has been defined in over 160 different ways (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952 in Ting-Toomey, 1999). There is some consensus that culture concerns both values and behaviors, is shared by members of a group, and though mutable, is transmitted across generations (see Anderson-Levitt, 2002; Erickson, 1987; Geertz, 1973; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Novinger, 2001; Spindler & Spindler, 1987). For the purposes of this study, I interpret “group” loosely, to include groups of teachers, as well as classes, grade-level faculty groups, school staffs, communities, and members of a profession (see Anderson-Levitt, 2002; Holland & Quinn, 1987). Since I see the process of teacher learning for reform as consisting of the “comprehension” of new knowledge and “transformation” of it into classroom practice (Shulman, 1987), I use James Spradley’s definition of the term culture, “the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior” (in Anderson-Levitt, 2002, p. 8).

Related to the psychological theory that learning is “situated” in social settings is the anthropological theory that learning consists of “legitimate peripheral participation” in “communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991). “Legitimate peripheral participation” is an “evolving form of membership” in a group of practitioners, involving meaningful participation in the practices of that group, in a progression from the more peripheral toward the more central (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53). A community of practice is a group engaged in the “sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise,” which necessitates learning (the “engine of practice”) and results in a “shared repertoire” of practices (“ways of doing things”) that sustain that enterprise (Wenger, 1998, p. 96-152). In such a community, knowledge and its application are fully contextualized rather than abstract.

Communities of practice are one example of “cultural communities”— groups of people with common and continuing “organization, values, understanding, history, and practices” who try to “accomplish some things together” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 80). Since teachers have “multimembership” (Wenger, 1998), or function simultaneously in multiple communities of practice (see Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001), some education researchers have recently moved toward examining the links between cultures at various levels, including classroom, school, district, community, national, and transnational levels (e.g., Alexander, 2000; Anderson-Levitt, 2002; Britton, Paine, Pimm, & Raizen, 2002; Fullan, 1991).

One reason that researchers have begun to examine culture at broader and finer geographic levels than those delineated by national boundaries is the declining importance of nation-states in our “increasingly interdependent” globalizing civilization

(Torres, 2002; see also Ginsburg, Cooper, Raghu, & Zegarra, 1990). Another is the concept that “models of national cultures” may not only “overemphasize cultural differences and underestimate the impact of institutional isomorphism in schooling” but may also give inadequate attention to regional and local variation from posited “national scripts” (LeTendre et al., 2001, p. 3-4). For instance, in a cross-national study of teacher induction, Paine and her colleagues explicitly limit their case study to the city of Shanghai rather than generalizing their local-level findings to all of China because of significant variations in context (see Britton et al., 2002).

In addition to expanding concepts of culture to include local, regional, national, transnational, and other levels of context (see Bray & Thomas, 1995), researchers have begun to examine multiple levels of culture in single studies. Whether these levels are seen as “nested” layers of context or in a more complicated “multi-directional” configuration, each level influences, and is influenced by, the other levels (Cole, 1996). In matters of policy implementation, research shows that not only do national-level phenomena have an impact on what occurs locally, but local-level phenomena also shape those at the national level (see M. Lewis, 2000; McLaughlin, 1987). Given the complex “ecology” of educational contexts (Sarason, 1971), multiple-level analysis is advocated by both psychologists (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Cole, 1996) and comparative education researchers, who warn that single-level analysis may lead to “incomplete and unbalanced perspectives” (Bray & Thomas, 1985, p. 472; see also Fullan, 1991; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Sarason, 1971, 1996). Indeed, most studies explicitly concerned with context make use of sets of levels, such as classroom, school, and national levels of context (Alexander, 2000); classroom, school, professional, and societal levels (Sato &

McLaughlin, 1992); and microgenetic/interpersonal, cultural-historical, institutional, and societal levels (Cole, 1996). Since the “cultures of teaching” are certainly plural, as Feiman-Nemser & Floden (1986) suggest, I employ multi-level analysis of teacher learning for reform implementation, by paying attention to cultural and structural factors at various levels of context (including classroom, grade-level group, school, municipal/local, prefectural, regional, and national), treating the communities of practice at each of these levels as individual “cultures,” and acknowledging the dynamic interaction between levels.

A final anthropological concept used in this study is that of “cultural models,” an idea that originated in cognitive anthropology, a field concerned with the intersection of human thought and human culture, as highlighted in the work of Boas, Conklin, D’Andrade, Frake, Goodenough, Lounsbury, and Romney. The field is closely associated with psychology, and schema theory forms the basis for the concept of cultural schemata or cultural models used by cognitive anthropologists to describe what is expected and what is socially/culturally appropriate in given situations, circumstances, and contexts (D’Andrade, 1995). Cultural models are mental interpretive frameworks through which members of a society or group make sense of the objects, events, and experiences that make up their world. These “presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world...play an enormous role in [people’s] understanding of that world and their behavior in it” (Holland & Quinn, 1987, p. 4). They carry “motivational force” because they indicate not only how things are, but also how they should be (D’Andrade & Strauss, 1992; see also Anderson-Levitt, 2002), and so can guide decisions and actions.

Cultural models are often held and transmitted unconsciously but can also be taught explicitly, and like psychological schema, are mutable and subject to constant adaptation (Shore, 1996). Unlike mental models, which concern the interpretations and actions of individuals, cultural models are shared by members of groups, and therefore have greater explanatory power for social and cultural phenomena (such as teacher learning and education reform). Cultural models are of key importance in this study, because they “frame teachers’ educational decisions and their response to students” (Lipman, 1998, p. 25), as well as the types of learning and professional development practices in which teachers engage.

If teachers are seen as members of multiple cultures at once, and as learning through participation in communities of practice at various levels, their work-related learning is “best understood...in terms of the communities being formed or joined and personal identities being changed” and centers on “becoming a practitioner, not learning about practice” (Brown & Duguid, 1996, p. 69). When groups or organizations are seen as (sets of) cultures capable of altering their collective knowledge or shared meanings (see Cook & Yanow, 1996; Weick & Roberts in Cohen & Sproull, 1996), we may argue that “organizational learning” occurs. In fact, some organizational learning theorists argue that “small, self-constituting” communities of practice actually have greater capacity for innovation and change, as they are less susceptible to “ossification” around existing canons (Brown & Duguid, 1996, p. 73). This is yet another reason for examination of teachers’ communities of practice at finer levels of context in addition to the more obvious, broader levels of national and professional contexts.

Building the capacity of organizations to innovate and improve their practices has been a focus of both educational and organizational/business research in recent years, often with an emphasis on the concept of “continuous improvement.” Continuous improvement, or *kaizen* in Japanese, has been a prominent concept in English-language organizational literature since the 1980s, in attempts to explain Japan’s economic success. Often associated with “lean manufacturing” (see Dennis, 2002) and W. Edwards Deming’s “Total Quality Management” approach (see Deming, 1986; Schmidt & Finnigan, 1992; Richardson, Blackburn, Ruhl-Smith, & Haynes, 1997), continuous improvement connotes built-in, ongoing, incremental improvement (see Imai, 1986). According to Imai (1986), Japanese-style continuous improvement contrasts with Western-style “innovation,” particularly because of its emphasis on “process and effort” over immediate results, “long-term, long-lasting” results over dramatic changes, and a collective “systems approach” involving everyone rather than the individual efforts of a “select few champions” (p.24).

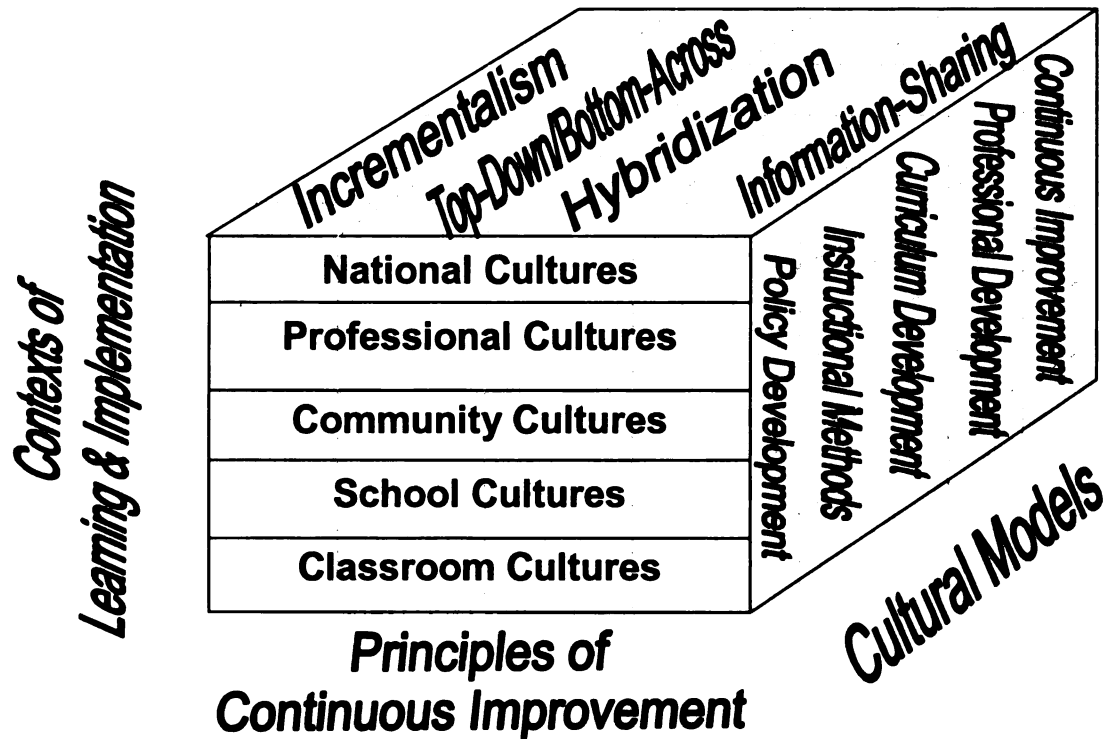
The concept has been applied more recently to educational organizations, by such authors as Fullan (1991, 1992); Richardson et al. (1997); and Senge (2000), echoing similar themes labeled differently by Huberman, 1995; McLaughlin, 1987; Sarason, 1971, 1996; and Tyack & Cuban, 1995. Continuous improvement has been described in terms of “sustained improvement” involving “interactive professionalism” on the part of educators (Fullan, 1992, p. 120); “better schooling...[resulting] from the steady, reflective efforts of the practitioners who work in schools and from the contributions of...parents and citizens” (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 135); “evolutionary, ‘rolling’ models of change” in a metaphor of “not the orchestra...but rather the jazz group, improvising

continuously within the bounds of implicit understandings, even rituals, among its members” (Huberman in Fullan, 1992, p. 9); and “mutual adaptation” by McLaughlin (1976, p. 169). Most of these works are conceptual in nature, and I am unaware of any existing research that documents a case of continuous improvement. In this study, I use concepts of continuous improvement to argue that what I observed in Japan constitutes such a case.

Four key principles of continuous improvement used in my analysis of this case of teacher learning for reform are: 1) a commitment to gradualism or incrementalism, including an orientation toward process over product and future over the present (see Imai, 1986; Richardson & Lane, 1997); 2) a combined top-down/bottom-across approach (see DeCoker, 2002; Fullan, 1992; Imai, 1986); 3) the act of building on existing technologies, including the hybridization of familiar and less-familiar strategies (see Imai, 1986; Tyack & Cuban, 1995); and 4) information-sharing and collaboration across all levels (see Imai, 1986; Gooden & Carlson, 1997; Suzaki, 1987). Among other reasons, the direct relationship between continuous improvement and the themes of “perfectibility,” “mutuality,” and “effort” found in Japanese ideas about teaching and learning (Rohlen & LeTendre, 1998) render it useful in understanding teacher learning and professional development in the context of a curriculum reform in Japan. While there are certainly other principles and themes that have been associated with continuous improvement (see Imai, 1986) and with prevalent concepts of teaching and learning in Japan (see Rohlen & LeTendre, 1998), here I make use of those that are most fundamental to each process and most applicable to this case of teacher learning for reform implementation.

The three-dimensional model in Figure 1 depicts the various intersecting elements of my analytic framework. The first dimension includes examples of the variety of cultures, or communities of practice, in which teachers learn. The second dimension illustrates how cultural models—regarding such things as how teachers (should) teach; how policy development, curriculum design, professional development, and continuous improvement (should) occur—exist at, and may vary according to, differing levels of context. The third dimension shows how the four key principles of continuous improvement intersect with cultural models at various levels of context (relative size and position in the figure are not indicative of relative significance). This multi-level analytic framework was used to help me identify and interpret the various types of data I collected for this ethnographic study of teacher learning for reform implementation, the methodology of which is explained below.

Figure 1. Framework for Multi-Level Analysis of Teacher Learning for Reform Implementation



Research Methodology

Given the complex nature of my topic (teacher learning for reform implementation) and central research question (*How do teachers learn to do something new?*), an ethnographic case study approach seems particularly appropriate for this study. Participant observation and analysis of a variety of situations in which teachers are expected to be engaged in learning, teaching, and implementation related to the integrated studies reform should afford both an “in-depth” (OERI, 1998) and “fine-grained” (Wright, 1994) look at the processes through which teachers comprehend and transform knowledge into classroom practice (see Shulman, 1987). My use of an open-ended research question, omission of any preconceived hypothesis, and firm commitment to making systematic descriptions, using the participants’ terms and perspectives (rather than my own) to the extent possible, should all help reduce the dangers of confirmation bias and other forms of subjectivity. Indeed, I intend to take Wolcott’s (1995) advice “not to deny...or pretend to suppress” the bias inherent in ethnographic methodology, but to “recognize and harness it” in order to “stimulate inquiry” and lend focus to my investigation, so I may achieve the “disciplined subjectivity” recommended by Frederick Erickson (in Wolcott, 1995, p. 165). Indeed, I believe my unique status as both a foreign researcher and a (former) member of the communities of practice being studied lends me an invaluable insider/outsider perspective with advantages—such as ease of access to participants and their honest thoughts and feelings—that far outweigh its potential disadvantages (see Bohannan & van der Elst, 1998; Peshkin, 1982).

For this study, I decided to gather and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data about the implementation of the integrated studies curriculum reform by conducting

ethnographic research in a set of public junior high schools in Hatanaka, a small town (population 55,000) in Yamato Prefecture in western Japan where I had previously worked as an English teacher. My purposive sample consists of teachers and administrators at the town's four junior high schools (with varying student demographics, such as socioeconomic and college-bound status), as well as educators associated with the municipal and prefectural boards of education with jurisdiction over these schools. I chose more than two schools in hopes of avoiding simplistic dichotomization (see Fukuzawa, 1990, for an example of a three-school ethnography), and chose four to guard against the "Goldilocks effect" that Tobin, Wu, & Davidson (1989) warn about in the case of comparison of threes—one being too this, another too that, and the third just right. By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches (as recommended by McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001), I hope to achieve the "disciplined inquiry" Shulman (1988, p. 3) recommends, quantifying and categorizing responses to my questions but also preserving the context in which they are embedded (see Alexander, 2000 for an impressive example of such integration).

With the permission and cooperation of Hatanaka's municipal board of education, I was able to conduct fieldwork research in the town's four junior high schools for 10 weeks in late 2003. My status as a former member of the town's educational community, and as a current member of the U.S. research community, proved useful in facilitating my access to the research sites and participants, and lent me some background knowledge about school and community demographics and the like. Rather than relying simply on educators' descriptions of what they perceived themselves to be learning (see Kennedy, 1999), I heeded Stein & Brown's (1997) assertion that "researchers should observe and

document *what teachers do* as a measure of what they know” since “[t]eacher learning...is measured by transformation of their participation patterns” in a community of practice (p. 165). Furthermore, in an attempt to achieve some form of triangulation for the data I collected, I decided to apply a “disciplined eclectic” approach of the type that characterizes the “most effective programs of educational research” (Merton and Schwab as cited in Shulman, 1988, p. 16). I therefore used a deliberate combination of methods within an ethnographic case study approach, including: semi-structured interviews, staff survey questionnaires, classroom observations of integrated studies classes, participant observation at several teacher professional development activities, and examination of policy documents, instructional materials, student work, and commercially published guidebooks for teachers (see “Data Collection” section below for details).

Perhaps the strongest aspect of my research design is its validity. It satisfies all five “types of validity in qualitative research” described by Joseph Maxwell (1992)—descriptive validity, interpretive validity, evaluative validity, theoretical validity, and generalizability. My commitment to rigorous, disciplined inquiry enhances my study’s descriptive validity, the “factual accuracy” of what I describe. For example, during fieldwork, I strove to type up field notes and transcribe interviews during or immediately after the events in question whenever possible, to limit possible distortions due to gaps of memory or the influence of subsequent events and observations. My familiarity with the local context, ability to communicate in the local dialect, and years of experience as an educator lend my research both interpretive validity (seeking to portray and comprehend phenomena from the perspective of the participants, rather than my own) and evaluative validity (making grounded, reasonable assessments about the effectiveness and value of,

for instance, various strategies for facilitating teacher professional development that I encountered). The theoretical validity of my study—the extent to which it effectively constructs the case described as an explanation of some phenomenon—stems from use of the conceptual frame of continuous improvement, and is enhanced through use of multi-level analysis, including historical analysis, and a combination of sociological, psychological, and anthropological theories in that framework. While the fifth type of validity, the generalizability, of an ethnographic case study is necessarily limited, it can be argued that generalization from qualitative research is possible in terms of “analytic extrapolation using theory” (Firestone, 1993, p. 16; see also March, Sproull, & Tamuz, 1996). Since, as anthropologists Kluckhohn & Murray observed, “every man is in certain respects: like all other men, like some other men, and like no other man” (in Wolcott, 1995, p. 173), there will be certain aspects of what I observe that can have application in different contexts, and my findings may therefore inform theory. In sum, the ethnographic approach used in this study is strengthened by its deliberate synthesis of diverse research methods, theoretical traditions, and multi-level analysis. How this methodological orientation plays out in terms of data collection and data analysis is explained below.

Data Collection

Participants in this study include teachers, administrators, and students at the four junior high schools in Hatanaka, as well as educators and students at elementary and secondary schools in and near that town, and members of the municipal and prefectural boards of education with jurisdiction over Hatanaka. Over the course of 10 weeks in late

2003, I conducted fieldwork research at the town's four junior high schools (referred to here as Higashi JHS, Kita JHS, Minami JHS, and Nishi JHS) and attended teacher professional development activities at various sites around Yamato Prefecture. Contrary to my original intention of scheduling observations of as many integrated studies classes as possible, through discontinuous visits to all four junior high schools, I ended up visiting each of the four schools in a rotation of around two weeks each (for political and logistical reasons), which therefore limited the amount of data I was able to collect. (Please see methodological appendix [Appendix A] for a detailed description of the various factors that shaped my data collection.)

Nevertheless, I was able to collect a tremendous amount of data through a variety of methods, including interviews with educators, observations of integrated studies classes, participant observation in teacher professional development activities, a survey questionnaire of instructional staff at all four junior high schools, and review of various documents, such as school handbooks, policy documents, guidebooks for teachers, and samples of student work for integrated studies classes. Every day of my fieldwork, I typed up my field notes, which recorded information about my interactions and discussions with school staff members and students, and observations of classes and teacher professional development activities. In total, I conducted classroom observations of 34 different homerooms (eleven 7th-grade, twelve 8th-grade, and eleven 9th-grade homerooms) in integrated studies classes over 13 class periods at three of the four junior high schools (in addition to observations of other classes at these and other junior high and even elementary schools), due to scheduling difficulties that precluded my observation of integrated studies classes at Higashi JHS. Whenever possible, I later

interviewed the teachers whose classes I had observed (again, scheduling difficulties made this possible only at Nishi JHS and Kita JHS). Field notes about classroom observations and informal interviews were typed up as soon as possible on the same day.

In all, I conducted a total of 14 formal interviews (with four principals, four curriculum coordinators, and six homeroom teachers) and also had many informal conversations (taking notes at some) with educators from these and other junior high schools in the area. My interviewees included one principal and one curriculum coordinator from each of the four junior high schools, and six homeroom teachers (five from Minami JHS, Nishi JHS, and Kita JHS, and one from a New JHS in a nearby town). With participant consent, I audiotaped and took notes during each interview (averaging 60 to 90 minutes each), which was then transcribed and immediately translated into English. To both administrators and teachers, I asked questions about what teachers have to learn in order to implement integrated studies; what resources teachers draw on to learn about and implement the reform; how teachers, administrators, and students at their school spend their newly-freed-up Saturdays; and how the education their students are currently receiving differs from the education they themselves received. To administrators only, I asked how the themes and content of integrated studies were decided at their school (teachers were asked a very similar question on the staff survey questionnaire). Only in interviews with teachers, I asked questions about how long they had been teaching integrated studies; how their previous experience had affected that teaching; and, if applicable, how they decided and/or learned to use a specific instructional strategy in a class I had observed. (See Appendix B and Appendix C for a copy of the teacher and administrator versions of the interview questions.)

I also attended a total of 12 formal teacher professional development activities—as many as were available during my 10-week stay—at the regional, prefectural, municipal, ward, and school levels. Seven of these meetings dealt directly with integrated studies and/or themes in the integrated studies curriculum; all of them presented examples of what professional development looks like in this region of Japan. The activities I attended included one regional and two prefectural meetings about integrated studies, one prefectural seminar and one municipal research presentation meeting on human rights (a common integrated studies theme), a municipal ward preschool-through-junior-high-school conference on student discipline, four schoolwide “public lesson” or “lesson study” events (see Bass, Usiskin, & Burrill, 2002; C. Lewis, 2000), and two schoolwide meetings about inclusion and human rights. Whenever possible, I audiotaped and transcribed these sessions as well, and as a rule, took notes and collected instructional materials at each of them.

In addition, I distributed questionnaires to all instructional staff members at each of the four junior high schools and tabulated the results from the total of 96 completed questionnaires that were returned to me. The response rates at each school were quite respectable, as follows: Kita JHS, 63%; Minami JHS, 71%; Higashi JHS, 79%; and Nishi JHS, 83%. The survey included questions about how grade-level themes and classroom activities for integrated studies were decided; how teaching integrated studies compared with teaching other classes and to what degree it may have changed their teaching style; what kinds of resources were most useful in implementing integrated studies; what the respondent usually did on Saturdays; and how long the respondent had

been a teacher in this town and at this school. (See Appendix D for a copy of the staff survey questionnaire instrument.)

Finally, I also examined national, prefectural, and local policy documents and professional development materials; school reports, administrative handbooks, and other documents; and newspaper articles, instructional materials, and student work related to integrated studies, as well as collections of case studies and commercial trade books intended to help teachers with implementation of the new subject area. In order to protect the privacy of my participants, no person, organization, school, or geographic area is identified by real names in this dissertation, copies of which will be provided to key participants and officials as a matter of course, and available to other participants upon request. In sum, I collected plentiful data related to the integrated studies reform, and the teacher learning related to its implementation in and beyond Hatanaka's junior high schools, through a variety of means, including interviews, questionnaires, observations, and document review.

Data Analysis

Once my fieldwork in Hatanaka was completed, I embarked on the daunting task of analyzing the copious data that I had collected. First, I compiled the results of the staff questionnaires, calculating the absolute and proportional numbers of responses for each question, charting them by school and as an aggregate whole. Then, using the "sorting and sifting" strategy described by Miles & Huberman (1994), I reviewed my field notes and interview transcripts, looking for themes and patterns. It soon became apparent that there were too few discernable patterns among groups of teachers or schools to justify

analyzing the data by school, grade level, or homeroom, so I examined the aggregated data from all sources and developed a set of over a dozen themes related to my key research questions. After double-checking (with professional translators, including native speakers of Japanese) the accuracy of my translations of all interview transcripts, I began coding them according to this set of themes, and compiling lists of quotes and observation notes that shared a similar theme. During this process, more themes emerged, and I expanded my coding to include field notes and even documents (such as policy documents and teacher guidebooks), using a total of 16 coding categories or themes.

It was only after I had identified continuous improvement as one of those themes that I began to recognize its prevalence in virtually all important aspects of the curriculum reform—policy, implementation, and professional development activities related to integrated studies—and at all four schools. At that point, I came to regard what I had observed in Japan as a case of continuous improvement, and began to examine my data through that lens. I reviewed literature on continuous improvement, in both the education and business fields, and began evaluating the extent to which what I had observed was consistent or inconsistent with the major principles of continuous improvement, and what those relationships might suggest about teacher learning for reform implementation.

Conclusion and Outline of Subsequent Chapters

In this chapter, I have described the analytic framework, research methodology, and methods of data collection and analysis used for this study. Assuming a sociocultural

perspective, I have constructed a multi-level analytic framework that draws on cultural-historical and constructivist theories in psychology, theories about cultural models and communities of practice from anthropology, and continuous improvement theories from the field of organizational learning. I have argued that an ethnographic case study approach is particularly appropriate for this study, and features the advantages of using both qualitative and quantitative data, and possessing high validity of various types. The methods used for data collection are diverse, including interviews, observations of classroom and professional development activities, staff survey questionnaires, and examination of policy and instructional documents relevant to integrated studies curriculum implementation.

In the next four chapters, I will discuss my interpretations of the data in detail. In each of these chapters, I will focus on one or more principles of continuous improvement, and offer evidence of how these principles manifest in the data concerning the policy (Chapter 3), implementation (Chapters 4 and 5), and professional development and teacher learning (Chapter 6) related to implementation of the integrated studies curriculum reform in Hatanaka, in support of my argument that this case of teacher learning is actually a case of continuous improvement. In the final chapter (Chapter 7), I will discuss the conclusions and implications of this study.

CHAPTER 3: GRADUALISM AND THE REFORM POLICY

Introduction

This chapter is the first of four in which I shall discuss in detail my interpretations of the data collected, including participant responses to surveys and interviews, and information gleaned from observations of classroom practice, teacher professional development activities, and related documents. These data will be organized as evidence of continuous improvement, as related to specific aspects of this case of teacher learning for reform implementation, namely policy (this chapter), implementation (Chapters 4 and 5), and related professional development (Chapter 6). Within each chapter, evidence will be presented in terms of four key principles of *kaizen*, or continuous improvement (as described earlier in brief, and later in more detail): 1) gradualism or incrementalism; 2) a combined top-down/bottom-across approach; 3) expansion of existing technologies and hybridization of old and new; and 4) information-sharing and collaboration across all levels. Although all four principles are evident in all three aspects of this case of reform, gradualism will be a major focus in the chapter on policy; the top-down/bottom-across approach and hybridization will be emphasized in the chapters on implementation; and information-sharing and collaboration will be highlighted in the chapter on professional development. My aim is to demonstrate that continuous improvement is an important theme manifest throughout this instance of teacher learning for reform implementation, with important implications for other such efforts. To begin with, I shall focus in this chapter on the policy aspect of the reform, particularly as it intersects with the gradualism principle of continuous improvement.

Gradualism/Incrementalism as Manifest in Rainbow Plan Reform Policy

As mentioned earlier, the current curriculum reform, of which integrated studies is a part, has been called Japan's "third great educational reform" and has similarities with the two major reforms that preceded it (see Goodman & Phillips, 2003). Despite these repeated, large-scale reform efforts, some researchers contend that Japan's modern education system has remained essentially unchanged since it was established a century ago, due to "immobilist politics" at the national level (Schoppa, 1991) or to the lack of a "favorable context for comprehensive reform" (Cummings, 2003a, p. 41). Recently, however, other researchers have documented changes in such areas as teacher education (Ferguson, 1985; Shimahara, 1998a, 2002a); school organization, curriculum, and instruction (Cave, 2003; DeCoker, 2002; Whitburn in Goodman & Phillips, 2003); and national education policy and standards (DeCoker, 2002; Roesgaard, 1998). Therefore, this difference in perceptions appears to be a matter of the relative speed of change. Taking a long-term perspective, it appears that education in Japan has, in fact, been evolving and changing in many ways over the decades (see Azuma, 2002; Goodman & Phillips, 2003; Hood, 2003; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999), though perhaps at an "incremental" (Roesgaard, 1998) or "glacial" pace (McConnell, 2002).

While some may question whether such incrementalism in educational change can be effective or "[keep] up with the needs of society" (Cummings, 2003a, p. 41), it can also be argued that "incremental change is preferable to the dizzying pace of innovation in the United States," where "any given school district typically has dozens, if not hundreds, of independent, ongoing reform initiatives in its schools and classrooms" (McConnell, 2002, p. 138; see also Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985). In *Tinkering*

Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform, Tyack & Cuban (1995) observe that ahistorical, utopian policy talk in the U.S. has tended to occur in recurrent “cycles of gloomy assessments of education and overconfident solutions” that have resulted in “incoherent guidance in actual reform practice” (p. 134) and often some degree of change, but not necessarily improvement. Rather than instant cure-all schemes, they argue, it is “tinkering” or “gradual and incremental...revisions of practice” that can, over long periods of time, “substantially improve schools” (p. 5). They conclude that true improvements in schooling result “chiefly from the steady, reflective efforts” (p. 135) of educators and other stakeholders, and recommend an incrementalist orientation for future reforms.

Similar conclusions are reached by educational researchers Sarason (1971), who emphasizes the importance of the “culture of the school” and the need for a “time orientation” in “any conception of the change process in regard to schools” (p. 219), and Fullan (1992), who argues that changes in the “culture of teaching and culture of schools” require “strong, persistent efforts because much of current practice is embedded in structures and routines and internalized in individuals, including teachers” (p. 121). Just as historians have recently begun to acknowledge the gradual and adaptive nature of events formerly perceived as abrupt “revolutions” (see M. Lewis, 2000; Lincicome, 1995), political theorist Peter Drucker (2003) reminds us how long it takes even “revolutionary” events to fully develop and yield fruit. Drucker observes that, since computers were invented in the 1940s and yet the internet did not begin to flourish until the 1990s, it may be argued that the effects of the modern “information revolution” are equally as slow and incremental as those of the first and second Industrial Revolutions (of

the 1770s and late 1800s) (p. 232-233). Similarly, educational innovations take time to be fully integrated into the existing system. In his studies of education reforms, researcher Paul Mort found that about 50 years elapsed between the introduction and widespread implementation of a new practice (cited in Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 4).

A deliberately incremental approach to implementing change is characteristic of organizations committed to continuous improvement. Instead of rapid innovations or “breakthroughs,” characterized by “short, intensive bursts of activity,” the process of Japanese-style continuous improvement is characterized by the “day-by-day, week-by-week discovery of small steps that make the [work] process increasingly more efficient...and...dependable” (Schmidt & Finnigan, 1992, p. 40). Imai (1986) contrasts the “abrupt and volatile” change of Western-style innovation with the “gradual and constant” change of Japanese-style continuous improvement. He notes that the “dramatic” and “big steps” of Western-style innovation tend to be intermittent, with “short-term” effects, while the “undramatic” and “small steps” of continuous improvement tend to be incremental, but with more “long-term and long-lasting” effects (p. 24). In business and manufacturing, continuous improvement moves beyond simple “economies of scale,” capitalizing on the “accumulated knowledge and experience” of each member of the organization, through such mechanisms as suggestion programs, in which even suggestions about minute aspects of the overall work process are given serious consideration (Suzaki, 1987, p. 222-224). The application of continuous improvement principles in the field of education is not the “quick fix” often sought by those with a “cookbook mentality,” but instead “takes time, commitment, and effort” (Richardson & Lane, 1997, p. 58-59). In continuous improvement, the focus is not on

instant results, but on the long-term results of a never-ending process. Rather than a “program,” “project,” or “experiment” (Schmidt & Finnigan, 1992, p. 43), continuous improvement is more of a “philosophy” or “way of thinking” (Richardson & Lane, 1997, p. 59) that requires ongoing learning and an incremental approach to change.

Incrementalism, or gradualism, is evident in the Rainbow Plan curriculum reform policy in at least two ways: 1) in the gradual development of the policy itself (see Azuma, 2002; Hood, 2001, 2003; Ishizaka, 1999); and 2) in the graduated nature of the implementation timeline it prescribes, particularly for the new integrated studies course (see MEXT, 1999; see also Cave, 2003). While the incremental nature of the implementation schedule, in contrast to that of the policy’s development, is perhaps more clearly the product of intentional planning, both reflect a thoughtful and deliberate overall approach to change. Here I shall present data from prefectural and national policies concerning integrated studies, as well as from interviews and observations, to illustrate the gradual nature of the reform policy’s development and its implementation timeline.

Gradual Development of the Curriculum Reform Policy

The impetus for the Rainbow Plan education reform can be traced back at least three decades, to recommendations made by the Central Council for Education (CCE), an advisory committee to the Ministry of Education, between 1971-2001, and by the National Council on Educational Reform (NCER), an advisory body to the Prime Minister’s office, between 1985-2000 (Azuma, 2002; Ishizaka, 2001). In 1971, the CCE first called for “flexible curricula...and emphasis on international understanding” (Azuma, 2002, p. 13) and education “responsive to the various abilities and aptitudes of

individuals” (Schoppa, 1991, p. 174), with emphasis on “lifelong learning” (Ishizaka, 2001, p. 13). In the mid-1980s, the NCER—whose membership included representatives of business groups and political conservatives—made similar recommendations for increased “liberalization” and “flexibilization,” adding an economic rationale based on the “business community’s demands that the education system be made more flexible, international, and creativity-orientated” in order to enhance Japan’s competitiveness in international markets (Schoppa, 1991, p. 134), and emphasizing not only lifelong learning, but also individuality, internationalization, and adaptation to an information society (Roesgaard, 1998). In both cases, despite backing by the dominant, conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), these recommendations ultimately had little immediate effect on educational policy or practice, and the original postwar structure of education remained “essentially unchanged” by the proposed reforms (Schoppa, 1991, p. 246).

Many of the initiatives in the current Rainbow Plan reform had previous incarnations as proposals put forward by the administration of Yasuhiro Nakasone, an LDP leader and prime minister of Japan from 1982-1987. While they were not implemented during his administration, these reform proposals continued to gradually gain support, until finally, in the early 1990s, at a time of economic decline and weakened political opposition to education reform, the recommendations of the advisory councils became formal education policy. (Nakasone himself acknowledged that it would “take 30 years to achieve educational reform—like planting a forest” [quoted in Hood, 2003, p. 77], though it is likely that he was referring to the actual implementation, rather than mere enactment, of his proposed reforms.) Hood (2001) likens this model of reform enactment to a tsunami (a Japanese word that literally means “harbor wave”),

because after the initial impetus, its effects remain mostly undetectable “until it reaches a point where the pressure for change builds up and the reforms gain speed and there is more rapid change to the system.” By the time the wave of change hits the harbor, so to speak, there has been “time for these changes to develop and for attitudes to change,” increasing the likelihood that the change will be accepted and lasting (Hood, 2001, p. 7-8).

In 1992, reforms proposed during the Nakasone administration began to be implemented in schools across Japan, most visibly as changes in the *Course of Study* (the national curriculum for public elementary and secondary schools) and the phasing out of Saturdays from the school week (Ishizaka, 2001; DeCoker, 2002). When the time came to revise the *Course of Study* for another decade (2002-2011), the CCE reorganized, creating a central “Curriculum Council” to advise the Ministry of Education, which itself had been newly reorganized and renamed the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, or MEXT (Ishizaka, 2001), and the NCER issued a report containing such goals as “foster within the Japanese people a rich sense of humanity” and “develop the talent of individuals and foster...creativity” (Azuma, 2002, p. 16). Under the administration of current prime minister Junichiro Koizumi, an LDP leader who won re-election in 2002 using campaign slogans like, “From government to private business,” and “From centralized government to local rule” (Ishizaki, 2005, p. 3), at least some of these reform proposals have come to fruition, in the form of the various initiatives that make up the Rainbow Plan, including the integrated studies reform of curriculum and instruction.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the overall goals of the Rainbow Plan reform policy include the cultivation of “children’s sense of ethics and ‘zest for living’” and “individuality” as well as the “autonomy of individual schools” (MEXT, 2000, para. 4), concepts and terms found in recurrent recommendations by government advisory bodies such as CCE and NCER. These buzzwords, which cropped up regularly in my conversations with Hatanaka educators, seem to have particular relevance to the integrated studies aspect of the reform, as the localization of its curriculum design relates directly to school autonomy, and its emphasis on experiential learning and student-determined topics of inquiry seems aimed at heightening individuality and student autonomy. In addition, the *Course of Study* guidelines explicitly link integrated studies to the cultivation of students’ “zest for living,” by subsuming its goals under the rubric of that buzzword:

The goals of integrated-type studies time are the acquisition of ways of learning and ways of thinking about things [and] the cultivation of “zest for living”—including being able to learn independently, think independently, and solve problems; and deepening the knowledge and skills acquired in the various subject areas and having them work together in an interrelated way. (MEXT, 1999, p. 55)

In these ways, integrated studies embodies the key purposes and goals of the overall Rainbow Plan education reform. The timeline specified in the policy for implementation of this new subject area is certainly shorter than the almost 30-year-long process of the development and enactment of the policy itself, but it likewise reflects an incremental series of steps in an evolutionary process. Next, let us consider how gradualism manifests in the implementation guidelines specified in the curriculum reform policy.

Graduated Implementation of the Curriculum Reform Policy

In some ways, the gradual nature of the enactment of the Rainbow Plan reform policy may have been the result more of political happenstance than deliberate planning, but the incremental nature of its approach to implementation appears quite intentional. First, the policy specifies a graduated or staggered implementation deadline by school level—requiring elementary schools to implement the new curriculum (including integrated studies courses) between the 2000-01 and 2002-03 school years, junior high schools by 2002-03, and high schools by 2003-04 (see Mombusho, 1999a, 1999b)—with formal assessment of student performance in integrated studies to be phased in after the first few years while the course is being established at each level. Second, the policy grants schools a “transition period” (*ikou kikan*) of three to five years before their respective implementation deadlines, during which they are permitted and encouraged to begin implementing the new curriculum (see Mombusho, 1999a; Cave, 2003). Accordingly, the revised *Course of Study* for 2002-2011 was published and disseminated in 1998.

This incremental approach to implementation provides educators with time and opportunity to develop, test, and refine various ways of implementing the new curriculum, well before the official implementation deadline. While this approach is not unique to this reform, it was particularly necessary in the case of integrated studies, for which MEXT deliberately refrained from issuing textbooks, instead providing general guidelines for local educators to follow while developing each school’s own curriculum (see MEXT, 1999). As discussed below, this type of incremental approach to implementation is reflected in pilot programs at “research and development schools”

(*kenkyuu kaihatsu gakkou*), experimentation and staff development at regular schools (such as those in Hatanaka), and the accumulation and use of examples of “reformed” teaching practice for teacher learning. It also appears to provide educators with time and opportunity to identify and embrace multiple goals of the reform, and to create, obtain, and use multiple examples of how to implement the reform. What this means for teacher learning about the goals of the reform and the teaching practices to be implemented is illustrated below, using data from policy documents and interviews, followed by an example of the type of professional development activity made possible by, and used during and after, the gradual transition period.

Goals of the reform as described in policy. One of the most innovative aspects of integrated studies is that, in contrast to every other subject area (including ethics), for which MEXT approves a limited set of textbooks precisely aligned with the national curriculum (see Azuma, 2002; Sato, 2004; Schmidt et al., 2001), no textbooks have been commissioned or approved for the integrated studies course. Neither is there a teacher certification specialization for integrated studies, as there is for every other subject area (except ethics, which like integrated studies, is usually taught to each homeroom by its homeroom teacher). As stated in the guidelines that accompany the *Course of Study*, this departure from standard practice is quite deliberate: “No textbook has been made for this course, and there will be no teacher certification for an ‘integrated studies’ specialization” as “teachers are not required to have expertise about a specific problem or issue, simply the expertise to decide how to provide students with an appropriate learning environment” to investigate that issue (MEXT, 1999, p. 61).

When faced with the challenge of designing and implementing the integrated studies curriculum, one resource to which junior high school teachers in Hatanaka turned was information about the goals of the reform. The principal of Minami JHS, Mr. Kurano, explained it to me in the following way during an interview:

AMH: In order to implement integrated studies, what kinds of resources are teachers at this school using—for instance, things like books or magazines or knowledge or colleagues, or the internet?

Kurano: When integrated studies first came out, the Ministry of Education put out...something like a *Course of Study*...with all the goals, [saying] “This is how we’re going to proceed.” First, what the goals [of integrated studies] were...and there were also a lot of books and booklets about that...For instance...for math, there’s a math *Course of Study*, right? With all the goals and how...For integrated studies, it wasn’t just, “You’re free to do whatever you want, go ahead,” [rather] we were told that the goals for integrated studies were this and that, and then the rest was left up to us...So if [teachers] don’t thoroughly understand [the basic goals] they can’t teach [effective] lessons. For the most basic elements—the fundamentals—of integrated studies, there are various books...and magazines...and so on.

Perhaps the most authoritative example of the publications to which he referred is the *Junior High School Course of Study: Explanation and Guidelines* issued by MEXT in 1999, which contains the goals and general guidelines for the course. It states quite clearly that instructional content of the integrated studies curriculum is to be locally determined:

In this revision [of the national curriculum], integrated-type studies time will be newly established in the junior high school curriculum. In it, educational activities that bring to life creativity and originality—such as cross-disciplinary, integrated-type studies—shall be implemented at each school, in accordance with the actual conditions of the students, school, and community...Accordingly, the purposes, objectives, educational activities, and points of consideration for proper implementation of integrated-type studies time are set forth in [these] *Guidelines*, but specification of what to teach to which grade level, as is done for subject area studies, ethics, and special activities...is not done for integrated-type studies time. Consequently, other than specifying standards regarding the

aims and mandatory inclusion of this [integrated-type studies] time in each school's curriculum, and the required number of class hours allotted to it, the Nation refrains from prescribing the content, as is done for other subjects... For the purposes of implementation, [only] such things as the purposes and objectives of this [integrated-type studies] time are specified in the *Guidelines*... [For] integrated-type studies time, each school will decide not only the content and educational activities, but also the appropriate number of class hours for each. This will expand the amount of discretion each school has. (MEXT, 1999, p. 51-52)

Under the heading "Aims of Integrated-Type Studies Time," the *Course of Study Explanation and Guidelines* specifies two primary goals of the new course, and then lists various examples of desirable skills for students to acquire through the course:

The aims of integrated-type studies time are:

- 1) Developing the ability and resources to identify issues independently, learn independently, think independently, make judgements proactively, and solve problems more effectively; and
- 2) Developing dispositions toward proactively and creatively engaging in problem-solving and inquiry so [students] will be able to think about their own ways of life and learn how to learn and how to think about things.

As indicated by the phrase, "during integrated-type studies time, instruction shall be carried out with the following objectives," the primary purpose is not [for students] to gain knowledge specific to chosen topics, nor to find concrete solutions to the problems studied. Rather, during this [integrated-type studies] time, through a curriculum of studies based on student interests and interdisciplinary, integrated-type studies, the purpose is to cultivate students' "zest for living," including such things as the ability to identify issues independently, learn independently, think independently, and solve problems, as well as teaching them ways of learning and thinking about things, such as how to use information technology, gather and organize research data, and make presentations, reports, and debates; developing dispositions toward proactively and creatively engaging in problem-solving, self-examination, serious consideration of the past and future, and making concrete plans about post-graduation career pathways, so they may be able to choose meaningful ways of life for themselves...

[T]he goals of integrated-type studies time are the acquisition of ways of learning and ways of thinking about things; the cultivation of "zest for living"—including being able to learn independently, think independently, and solve problems; and deepening the knowledge and skills acquired in the various subject areas and having them work together in an interrelated way. (MEXT, 1999, p. 54-55)

The *Course of Study Explanation and Guidelines* refrains from specifying which of the suggested skills (and the instructional activities they imply) should be taught at which grade level, or in which sequence, as is customarily done for other subject areas. Neither does the national curriculum specify topic areas about which the students should “identify issues” and engage in “problem solving.” It does, however, offer several examples of possible topic areas to include in the integrated studies curriculum, but stresses that these are only “examples” and that individual schools must develop their “own concrete plans” for the curriculum:

In light of the overall purpose of integrated-type studies time, each school shall make use of learning activities that match the aims of the course, and develop activities that bring to life creativity and originality, in accordance with the actual conditions of the students, school, and community. These learning activities may include: interdisciplinary, integrated issues related to such things as international understanding, information technology, the environment, health and service learning, for example; issues based on students’ interests and concerns; issues related to the characteristics of the school and community.

Since this course is now being established for the first time, the above are provided as points of reference for each school to consider as it develops its own concrete plans about specific learning activities. Therefore, specific learning activities at each school [are to be determined] using these examples as a premise; there is no real point in trying to figure out which of these is most relevant. As long as each school implements appropriate activities that match the purpose and aims of integrated studies, that is acceptable. Schools are not required to implement activities such as those given as examples here, and it is no problem to use activities other than those specified here... The overall annual instructional plan for this course is to be determined by the school and/or its teachers. (MEXT, 1999, p. 56-57)

The Prefectural Board of Education with jurisdiction over Hatanaka’s schools takes a similar approach in its guidelines for integrated studies, quoting and paraphrasing from the *Course of Study Explanation and Guidelines*, but then adding its own set of sample topic areas or themes for study:

Examples of Basic Themes:

- Other Issues of Modern Society – human rights, human life, peace, industry & economy, etc.
- Issues of Self – career pathways/ways of life, humanity, gender/sexuality, etc.
- Local Community Issues – hometown identity, local industries, culture and tradition, environment and nature (rivers, lakes, mountains), etc. (Yamato Prefectural Board of Education, 2000, p. 11; all translations of this document are mine)

These sample themes offered by the prefecture seem a bit more specific than the general topic areas of “international understanding,” “information technology,” “the environment,” and “health and service learning” suggested in the national *Course of Study*, and indeed have significant overlap with the specific themes used in the integrated studies curricula of Hatanaka’s junior high schools (see discussion of grade-level themes in Chapter 4).

The prefectural guidelines also emphasize a goal of integrated studies that is related more to the increased autonomy of schools than of students. Expanding on the general principle cited in the *Course of Study Explanation and Guidelines*, that “one fundamental principle of the reform [*kaizen*] of curriculum standards is ‘promoting the creation of distinctive schools, distinctive education, and enlivening creativity and originality at each school’” (MEXT, 1999, p. 53), the prefectural guidelines link this goal explicitly to integrated studies, as a means by which it may be achieved:

In addition to the overall purposes of its establishment, integrated-type studies time also plays an extremely important role in the creation of distinctive schools. (Yamato Prefectural Board of Education, 2000, p. 13)

Calling the new course the “core element in creating distinctive schools,” the prefectural guidelines go on to recommend ways in which schools should go about selecting topics of study for inclusion in their integrated studies curricula, providing examples from

hypothetical schools. Schools are advised to take into consideration the “distinctive activities particular to each school (school events and educational activities that promote originality)” as well as “required subjects, elective subjects, special activities, ethics courses, and school events, always keeping in mind their natural links and differences [relative to integrated studies]” (Yamato Prefectural Board of Education, 2000, p. 13).

Indeed, both the national and prefectural guidelines acknowledge that the implementation of integrated studies has multiple goals, acknowledging (sometimes in a single sentence) both the “overall purpose” and “aims” of the course, including the development of more autonomous, well-rounded students with positive attitudes and enhanced ability to learn and solve problems, and the development of more autonomous and distinctive schools. As Fullan (1991) points out, one fundamental requirement for effective reform implementation is the development of shared understandings by teacher colleagues about the purposes and rationale, as well as the processes, of an educational “innovation” such as integrated studies. Since local educators are advised and expected to take the goals of the new course into consideration when devising plans for its implementation, the variation in the perceptions of these goals among the Hatanaka educators I interviewed seems significant.

Goals of the reform as perceived by educators. Although it was not a question specifically included in my interview protocol, the teachers and administrators I interviewed almost invariably made reference to the goals or intended outcomes of integrated studies when telling me about how the new course was being implemented at their school. The perceived goals of integrated studies fell into four general categories,

each of which was cited by staff members from at least two of the four junior high schools, in the following decreasing order of frequency: 1) life skills for students, 2) “genuine” academic ability for students, 3) international competitiveness for Japan, and 4) increased local autonomy for schools. Interviewees from each of the four schools described various intended outcomes associated with the development of students’ life skills. Having students acquire a “zest for living” (*ikiru chikara*) and learn “how to live” (*ikikata*), both key phrases or buzzwords found in the reform policy, were each mentioned by four different interviewees. Three administrators stated that the goal of integrated studies was to produce students who could “co-exist” (*kyousei*, another buzzword) with nature, people, and/or society. Three educators from three different schools felt the goal was to have students integrate knowledge from different subject areas and apply it to current societal problems in order to “help build a new world.” In a similar vein, the principals of Minami JHS and Higashi JHS suggested integrated studies was designed to help reduce delinquency, violence, suicide, and other societal problems, while another administrator at Minami JHS indicated that it could help students develop positive attitudes, “attitudes of success.” Obviously, given that I only formally interviewed 14 educators, several of those interviewed perceived more than one goal for integrated studies.

The second most frequent characterization of the goals of integrated studies had to do with “genuine academic ability” (*tashika na gakuryoku*) for students. While I was unable to find this phrase in the 1998 *Course of Study* or the 1999 *Course of Study Explanation and Guidelines*, it was a central concept in the “2002 Appeal: A Call to Learning” brochure disseminated by MEXT in response to public outcry against potential

loss of academic ability due to the relaxation of curriculum in the Rainbow Plan reform. In the “2002 Appeal,” MEXT argues that the type of learning the reform promotes, in integrated studies as well as other courses, fosters “genuine” academic ability, including not only “the basics” (*kiso kihon*), but also the ability to think independently, make judgements, express oneself, solve problems, be motivated to learn, and so on (MEXT, 2003). The implication, of course, is that “genuine” academic ability is preferable to the traditional emphasis on “homogeneity of graduates” with uniform “knowledge bases and skills,” which is no longer as useful as Japan makes the “transition from a traditional manufacturing-based society to an information society [and] internationalized society” (MEXT, 2000, para. 1). This new type of academic ability is tacitly, if not explicitly, contrasted with the conventional “fact-cramming” (*tsumekomi*) academic ability valued in high-stakes examination-oriented education (see Amano, 1990; Russell, 2002).

While only two of my interviewees used the phrase “genuine academic ability,” several of the others (from all four schools) mentioned the types of learning cited by MEXT as components of such ability. For example, five Hatanaka educators characterized the goal of integrated studies as having students learn through investigating and experiencing things on their own, another four as teaching students how to learn and/or engage in inquiry, and four others as improving students’ ability to solve problems. Using terms almost verbatim from the reform policy, three educators at Nishi JHS and Kita JHS described the goal of integrated studies as having students learn to identify an issue on their own, make a plan for how to research it, and then investigate it. Again, many of the respondents cited more than one goal, within this category and in the first category described above.

The next most frequent description of integrated studies' intended outcomes was mentioned only by administrators, at three of the four schools, and had to do with an overarching goal of the reform for Japanese society. These three administrators described goals of integrated studies in terms of Japan's ability to compete internationally, a theme found in MEXT rationale for the reform as well as early recommendations by the National Council on Educational Reform (see MEXT, 2000; Schoppa, 1991). The curriculum coordinator at Kita JHS saw integrated studies as a response to demands of the current "internationalized information society." The principal of Higashi JHS saw integrated studies as addressing a need for Japan to "not fall behind other countries." The curriculum coordinator at Nishi JHS said the course addressed a "lack of imagination" on the part of the Japanese, as revealed in international comparisons (Hood, 2003, terms this perception a "myth" shared by both Japanese and Westerners; see p. 82).

Finally, the least frequent characterization of the goals of integrated studies was an intended outcome for schools, rather than individual students or society as a whole, explicitly stated in the 1998 *Course of Study* and supporting documents. It was given by a teacher at Minami JHS and an administrator at Higashi JHS, each of whom stated that the course was intended to promote each school's "unique characteristics." Again, several of the interviewees mentioned multiple goals, from two or even three of the four categories above. In fact, one teacher at Minami JHS, a rather vocal critic of various aspects of the current education reform, voiced concerns that teachers lacked a "unified" concept of the goals of integrated studies, which he considered a prerequisite for effective implementation:

Wada: [I]n Japan up to this point, particularly at junior high school, subject areas have been central. So the concept of “integrated” [*sougouteki*], that concept of education is not quite, not yet shared among teachers—I mean, not a unified, common idea. Individual teachers probably each have their own idea of what integrated means, but I think it’s not yet a unified, common thing...[L]ike I said before, if we don’t first come together on that....ultimately, we have to figure out what kind of thing integrated studies is, how it fits into the rest of school education. It’s something we haven’t had until now, so...it’s brand new. As a new area, what exactly is it? I think that we have to have everyone have a common understanding of it.

Of course, the concurrent existence of multiple educational goals is nothing new to those who work in public schools, in Japan and elsewhere (see Cummings, 2003; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Labaree, 2000; C. Lewis, 1995; Sato, 2004). One illustration of this is the multiple “school goals” listed in the handbooks (*gakkou keiei kanri keikaku*) for each of Hatanaka’s junior high schools. (These handbooks are created annually, documenting the school goals, yearly and daily schedules, courses and instructional hours, staff rosters and seniority lists, staff administrative task and homeroom assignments, number of students in each homeroom, in-school research and professional development agendas, and other information pertinent to a given school, for distribution to parents, visitors, and interested others.) In both the 1998-99 and 2003-04 versions of these handbooks, each school lists three qualities of the “type of student we strive for” (*mezasu seito zou*), three to four characteristics of the “type of school we strive for” (*mezasu gakkou zou*), and dozens of sub-goals for seven to 12 specific components of the school’s educational program, such as “human rights education,” “education about the environment,” and “health and safety education.” These goals are sometimes phrased as desired outcomes (such as “respect for life and human rights”) and more often as processes aimed at a given outcome (such as “fostering attitudes and customs that

promote health in mind and body” and “cultivating students who can take action to conserve the environment around them”), but always in rather broad terms.

In the 2003-04 handbooks, each of the four schools includes some reference to its goals for integrated studies—as short as a single phrase (in the case of Nishi JHS), or as extensive as a full-page chart about the integrated studies curriculum (at Kita JHS)—but in equally broad terms that leave significant room for interpretation. At Minami JHS, integrated studies is listed as one of many educational components aimed at the overall goal of “promoting experiential learning that cultivates rich hearts and values life and human rights,” with the overall course goal being “cultivating students who can co-exist with nature, people, and society.” At Nishi JHS, integrated studies is intended to “hone individuality and character” by “valuing individuals while cherishing relationship,” but no specific course goals are listed. Integrated studies at Kita JHS is depicted as a means toward achieving the desired type of student (one with motivation, consideration, and discipline), with four course goals: “cultivation of rich humanity,” “the ability to learn and think independently,” “promoting individuality and a thorough grounding in the basics,” and “creating a distinctive school that is open to and trusted by the community.” Finally, at Higashi JHS, integrated studies is intended to “deepen learning about [ourselves] as human beings” and has four specific course goals including giving students “zest for living” and “genuine academic ability,” as well as using activities that involve “community cooperation” and are “proactive.”

In any case, the goals for integrated studies, as perceived by the Hatanaka educators charged with their accomplishment, are—perhaps inevitably— multiple in number and broad in concept. This could also be said of other subject areas, so the

argument could be made that teachers implementing curriculum in any subject have equally numerous and vaguely-worded goals to guide them (see Goodlad, 1966; Sarason, 1971). However, in this respect, there are at least two important differences between integrated studies and the other subject areas in the junior high curriculum—namely, the lack of designated textbooks and of teacher specialization for the new subject area called integrated studies. Rather than relying on textbooks or academic coursework for guidance about how to go about implementing integrated studies, teachers are encouraged to make use of examples of actual teaching practice, as detailed below.

Incremental implementation and examples of teaching practice. Instead of textbooks or specific national guidelines, the national policy document provides suggestions and examples of themes and activities that teachers might use in their school's integrated studies curriculum. The policy makes it clear that the examples it contains derive from real schools and practitioners:

The examples provided are based on such things as the recommendations of the Central Council for Education and the Curriculum Council, and cases [*jissen-rei*] of actual learning activities used for integrated-type studies at a relatively large number of schools around the country. (MEXT, 1999, p. 57)

Given that this document was published in 1999, three years before the official implementation deadline, the “cases of actual learning activities” to which it refers must be from the “research and development schools” customarily used by MEXT to pilot new educational practices (see Ishizaka, 1999; Cave, 2003; McConnell, 2002). These include schools under the direct administration of the national government (*kokuritsu gakkou*) and other public schools (*shiteikou*) designated by national or prefectural government

agencies to conduct pilot studies of the new curriculum, before, during, and even after the “transition period.” Azuma (2002) notes that MEXT designated 500 schools to develop pilot programs about integrated studies (p. 15).

These research and development schools, which customarily disseminate case studies about their work and host public lessons which teachers from other schools can observe (see Bass, Usiskin, & Burrill, 2002; Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004; LeTendre, 2002; C. Lewis, 2000), are the source of two collections of case studies of integrated studies implementation efforts published by the Ministry of Education in 1999 and available for purchase at heavily-subsidized, token prices of about ¥200 (roughly US\$2) each (Mombusho, 1999a, 1999b). (Due perhaps to the staggered nature of the implementation schedule, the elementary school volume contains 60 cases, while the combined junior high/high school volume contains a total of only 37 cases—23 junior high; 14 high school.) When I visited one such national-government school during my fieldwork in 2003, I was informed that they had been engaged in integrated-studies-type activities for the past 10 years or more.

Indeed, the Hatanaka educators I interviewed differed not only in their perceptions of the goals of integrated studies, but also in perceptions of just how long integrated studies had been around, perhaps due to the transition period and gradual implementation schedule. Even though the official deadline for implementation at the junior high level was April 2002, when I asked junior high teachers in fall 2003 how long they had been teaching integrated studies, I received varying answers from my interviewees. Two mentioned the “past year or two”; two said they had been teaching it for “two years”; one said “three or four years”; and another said “four years.”

Administrators also varied when describing when integrated studies had begun: the curriculum coordinator at Nishi JHS told me the principal had decided the main themes “four or five years” before; the curriculum coordinator at Kita JHS stated that integrated studies “just started last year;” while the principal of Higashi JHS alluded to students having had integrated studies in elementary school “two to three,” and even four years before, during the transition period. At a prefectural professional development seminar I attended, an elementary school teacher mentioned that his school had been offering integrated studies for about six years, while a high school administrator indicated that their program was only a year old. All of these varied perceptions seem to reflect the staggered, or graduated, nature of MEXT’s implementation schedule for the reform.

In any case, it is quite clear that teachers are expected to learn from the examples of other practitioners and other schools, and the transition period and gradual approach to implementation make that possible. In fact, the *Course of Study Explanation and Guidelines* for junior high schools explicitly recommends that educators use as a model the integrated studies curriculum at the elementary school level, where implementation began several years earlier than at the junior high level:

The overall annual instructional plan for this course is to be determined by the school and/or its teachers. Use of issues—or specific learning themes and procedures based on these issues—from which students may choose according to their interests, concerns, and level of awareness...is desirable...For this, it may be useful to consider how experiential learning activities have been used in integrated-type studies time at the elementary school level. (MEXT, 1999, p. 57)

Such recommendations were taken seriously by educators in Hatanaka, several of whom described to me how they made use of examples of implementation practice at other schools as they began fashioning their own schools’ integrated studies programs during

the transition period. At Minami JHS, a 9th-grade homeroom teacher told me that the “most useful” resource for teachers at his school learning about integrated studies was “other schools—what other schools are doing,” leading to the following exchange:

AMH: When you talk about “other schools,” do you mean designated schools during the transition period, or just other schools that are doing it now?

Kamata: Well...when they first said that integrated studies would be starting, there were some selected schools—research schools—that piloted it, so we used things from those schools as reference [materials]. Now that integrated studies has begun, schools are making various revisions as they go along—“This year, let’s try this,” “For next year...let’s try changing this part”...that’s how we’re [implementing] it, so...I think our school’s program of integrated studies...is shaping up as we go along and revise it. Until we reach that point, we ask how other schools are doing things and engage in information exchange [with them].

This teacher’s allusion to gathering examples of practice and experimenting with them is consistent with the comment a prefectural official made to me about the transition period being a time in which schools were encouraged, though not required, to try out (*tameshite mite*) various approaches to the new integrated studies curriculum.

The principal of Kita JHS, Mr. Hashimoto, described experimentation during the transition period in similar terms, adding that the internet now serves as an additional source of examples of teaching practice from other schools around the nation:

Hashimoto: From around the year [1999], each school had to think about how they were going to handle the upcoming integrated studies time. [At this school] we discussed it all during the transition period as a staff, trying things out and then changing the ones that didn’t work, and... basically, deciding things as a school ...at staff meetings... There are prefectural [and] national teacher professional development [activities] that...teachers go to and then come back and share with everyone what they learned there...And then, nowadays, there’s the internet, so they [the teachers] use that as a reference, and can find out how schools around the country are dealing with integrated studies.

When I interviewed the principal of Higashi JHS, he acknowledged that examples from designated pilot schools served as a resource for teacher learning at his school, but also mentioned other sources of examples, such as local schools from which teachers on his staff had recently transferred:

AMH: In order to implement integrated studies, what kinds of resources are teachers at this school using—for instance, things like books or magazines or knowledge or colleagues, or the internet?

Kurano: First, what the goals [of integrated studies] were...there were also a lot of books and booklets about that...A second thing is, in developing integrated studies...there are “advanced schools”...to which teachers go and observe lessons. They study how to grapple with integrated studies there. There are things like that [available].

AMH: Was that during the “transition period”?

Kurano: During that time, and now, too...Most of it takes place during the transition period...The Ministry of Education...designates certain schools around the country to pilot [programs]...and those [schools] take it on with gusto...and those are the kinds of places that [teachers] visit for professional development, and observe.

AMH: And Higashi JHS teachers visited those kinds of places?

Kurano: Yes, that’s right...There are also subcommittees made up of our city elementary and junior high school teachers...where they exchange information about integrated studies. For instance, “What are they doing at Higashi JHS?” “What are they doing at Hatanaka Elementary?” “Well, we’re doing it like this...” Then...teachers move around, after all...

AMH: Oh...Through job/school transfer [of school assignment]?

Kurano: Yes, through transfer. So, they can [share] how things were done at their previous schools. Therefore, [our school’s] teachers can take that kind of information, too, and think about how to do integrated studies here.

From these data, it seems clear that teachers in Hatanaka’s junior high school teachers gained access to examples of teaching practice at other schools in several ways, including written documentation produced by pilot schools (in print or electronic form), actual

observation visits to such schools, the verbal or written reports of such visits by colleagues, and the exchange of information between colleagues with experiences working at other local schools.

I was able to observe firsthand one example of teacher learning through examples from other schools when I attended a regional professional development conference about integrated studies and “daily living” (*seikatsuka*), the corresponding course for lower elementary grades. The conference included “public lessons” (see Bass, Usiskin, & Burrill, 2002; LeTendre, 2002; C. Lewis, 2000) at three different elementary schools, open for observation by educators, parents, and community members, and followed by educators-only debriefing sessions. For the sake of brevity, I shall focus my descriptions on the public lesson and debriefing portions of the all-day conference, and then comment on their significance.

On a Friday in mid-November 2003, I attended a combined regional and prefectural teacher professional development conference held at town about 30 minutes south of Hatanaka by train. It was a joint session of the “Sixth Annual Western Region Convention on Elementary School Daily Living Course Research” and the “2003-04 Yamato Prefecture Conference on Elementary School Daily Living Course and Integrated Studies Research,” with the shared theme of “Toward a Daily Living Course that Cultivates the Foundations of Children’s Independence.” (As an elementary school principal in Hatanaka had explained to me, “integrated studies” is part of the curriculum from the third grade up, while “daily living” is its counterpart in the first and second grades.) According to various handouts I received there, the overall purpose of the

conference was to discuss ongoing classroom research about how to use the “eyes and hands of the teacher” to achieve the aims of the daily living/integrated studies courses.

In the morning, teachers from Yamato Prefecture and other prefectures in the Western Region, as well as local parents, observed daily living course and integrated studies “public lessons” in first- through sixth-grade classrooms at their choice of three elementary schools in the school district hosting the joint conference. Then, the visiting teachers gathered at three civic centers located near the schools for a 90-minute debriefing session. There were two debriefing sessions held concurrently at each site, featuring presentations about daily living course lessons by first- and second-grade teachers from around the prefecture, as well as discussion of the morning’s public lesson observations. The following is from my field notes:

From 9:15-10:15am, I observed public lessons at Yama Elementary School. While the first- and second-grade lessons consisted mostly of group activities, the third- through sixth-grade lessons were primarily dedicated to student presentations about issues they had investigated in their integrated studies classes. Like the other participants, I received a stapled packet containing the typed lesson plans, schedule, and classroom map for the morning’s 24 public lessons. As I moved from classroom to classroom, I noticed that there were at least 8-10 parents (mostly women) observing, some with infants and toddlers, in each room. Observers were invited to leave their “impressions and opinions (*kansou*)” of the day’s lessons on half-sheets available on desks in the hallways.

In all, I saw dozens of students make presentations, using handmade posters as visual aids and answering questions from audience members, mostly peers from their own or the next grade level. The fourth graders addressed the theme of “Friends with the River,” discussing living things found in and around rivers, while the fifth-graders discussed their experiences with service learning under the grade-level theme of “A Pleasant Town to Live In.”

Each of the homerooms at Yama Elementary had apparently been split in two for logistical reasons, so homeroom teachers shuttled between the various classrooms where their students were alternately making presentations and asking questions of presenters. It seemed, however, that the students were largely in charge of facilitating the sessions and adhering to the tight schedule (five minutes per presentation). Students in

each group were responsible for introducing themselves and their presentation to the audience, and upon finishing, to thank the audience and ask for questions and reactions (*kansou*). While the degree of public speaking proficiency varied from group to group, I found the overall quality of the presentations impressive.

For example, one group of fifth graders (two boys and two girls) made a very clear and effective presentation about their experience serving as volunteers at a local kindergarten. Three of the four wore their (recommended-but-not-required) school blazers over their street clothes as the group members stood at the chalkboard, two on either side their poster. While one student spoke, clearly and audibly, facing the audience, another student would point to the relevant pictures and text on the poster. The group finished by briefly stating what they would like to do if given future opportunities to volunteer, and then asked the audience for their comments (*kansou*). Promptly, one boy in the audience stood and told them, "I think you spoke very clearly and well." One parent asked the group if they had thought of all the activities they had done with kindergarteners by themselves. One boy answered that the kindergarteners had suggested certain things they wanted to do, and the teachers had helped them choose from among those suggestions. Lastly, the fifth-grade homeroom teacher asked the audience if they had any further comments before inviting the next group up to the front. None of the groups received applause at the end of their turn; instead, applause was offered to all groups at the very end when the teacher officially wrapped up the presentation session.

From 10:30am to noon, I took part in one of the "breakout sessions" (*bunkakai*) held in a conference room at a nearby civic center, with the theme, "Having a Conversation about Teaching Practice that Values the Inclusion of People and Things." There were 24 teachers (18 women and 6 men) in the audience, seated at long tables in rows facing the head table, at which sat a five-person panel (3 men and 2 women), including three teachers, a professor, and a representative from the Prefectural Board of Education named Mr. Iguchi. Mr. Iguchi, a "teacher's consultant" in charge of daily living and integrated studies curriculum at the Yamato Prefectural Board of Education, was the designated discussant for this breakout session.

After brief introductions and an outline of the session agenda, the emcee turned the floor over to the first of two presenters. She was an elementary school teacher in a town near Hatanaka, and gave a Power Point presentation about her 1st-grade daily living course unit called "Lots of Autumn Treasures!" in which her students gathered acorns in a forest behind the school and made various things out of them. The two-page outline of her unit (included in the 44-page booklet each participant received) included four student drawings and one photograph of their acorn products. At one point, the teacher played for us a brief recording of a student telling about his experiences during the unit.

After 25 minutes, it was the second presenter's turn. He was an elementary school teacher in the prefectural capital, an hour away from Hatanaka by train, and his presentation was more low-tech. Using only handouts to supplement the unit outline in the booklet, he spoke about his 2nd-grade class' daily living course unit called "Let's Go Explore—A Trip to Fun Town," in which they had to take a public bus to a children's adventure park outside of their city. The two-sided handout included photos of the students in their classroom practicing lining up for, entering, and exiting the bus, as well as handwritten notes from family members detailing their student's reaction to the experience. Like the first presenter, he closed with a summary of the achievements and remaining issues (*seika to kadai*) of the unit.

The second presentation had taken only about 15 minutes, so at 11:10, the emcee invited questions or comments from the audience, beginning with teachers from the school that had hosted the public lessons that morning. One first-grade teacher from Yama Elementary finally spoke up, saying her class had had a lot of fun with an outdoor activity during that morning's public lesson, but that it did not compare to what the presenter's first graders had accomplished with their "autumn treasures" unit. Next, the emcee invited participants from other prefectures to comment. Finally, a male teacher from a neighboring prefecture commented that he had watched a 2nd grade class at Yama Elementary this morning working hard to make some games by themselves, but he wondered if that kind of activity really supported the overall aims of daily living and integrated studies. When the emcee asked for a response to this rather critical comment, the audience was silent, and when he finally called on the first-grade teacher who had spoken up earlier, she remained silent for a full minute before making a rather noncommittal response.

The emcee then changed gears and asked Mr. Iguchi, the discussant, for his initial comments or questions about the presenters' units. Both teachers responded to his brief comments with more details about instruction and assessment in their units. The female teacher noted that she had conferred with preschool and kindergarten teachers during summer vacation before deciding to build the unit around gathering acorns. She admitted that she herself was not originally interested in gathering acorns, but as she watched the students figure out they could throw them, make noise with them, crush them, play with them, and so on, she too eventually wanted to gather and make things with the acorns. The male teacher described how he capitalizes on children's natural motivation to do more and bigger things as they get older—getting 1st-graders to look forward to the annual 2nd-grade outing, and so on. He asked the teachers in attendance if they were enjoying their daily living and integrated studies classes, declaring, "As for me, I'm enjoying myself a lot."

Around 11:40, Mr. Iguchi took the floor and addressed the assembled group of teachers for the remaining 20 minutes. First, he praised the female teacher's selection of important key words, like

“autumn,” upon which to build her unit goals, and her realistic consideration of the kinds of activities her students could handle that would also accomplish even larger purposes. He commented that teachers often focus too much on the activities and not enough on their overall aims and objectives. Next, Mr. Iguchi made comments about the male teacher’s unit, stating that there seemed to be good articulation between grade levels. Lacking this, he noted, students tend to forget whatever they learned or did, especially in the lower grades. Mr. Iguchi appreciated how the teacher used specific praise and linked it to the students’ future goals, “so the students can aim even higher next time.” He gave a concrete example of how to give specific praise: “Don’t say just, ‘Good job!’, but ‘Good job! Let’s count how many acorns you were able to pick up’.”

Mr. Iguchi offered further tips about linking lessons to students’ interests, assessment of student performance, and the importance of student motivation. In closing, he drew from his own experience as a classroom teacher and posed questions to push the teachers’ thinking: “Even if we say ‘investigate,’ and the students do investigate, they may not really get it. They may not understand. One time, when I took my students on a bus trip, they mistook ‘9:25’ for ‘Sept. 25,’ and totally misunderstood the bus schedule...I believe we’ll be doing more and more investigations from now on but...I’d like teachers to think about when and how to have students get motivated and to whom the students want to communicate [that motivation]...The important question now is, ‘What kinds of experiential activities do I want to use to address these goals?’ and ‘How can I organize these things to work?’”

Overall, the morning segment of this professional development conference illustrates how deliberate gradualism in implementation of the integrated studies reform facilitates cross-level sharing of examples of teaching practice among educators from various schools. Teachers of any grade level, from schools anywhere in the region, were able to observe firsthand actual classroom lessons at the elementary grade level of their choice. For a public lesson observation by parents and others, I felt the use of student presentations about concrete experiential learning activities was particularly apt. Rather than abstract concepts or obscure facts, the content focused on people and places in the local community, and the information was presented by the students themselves, rather than a teacher.

When I saw one of the 5th-grade groups using a wheelchair as a prop and talking about their experiences with service learning, I realized to what degree junior high school curriculum planners were apparently heeding MEXT’s advice to “consider how experiential learning activities have been used in integrated-type studies time at the

elementary school level” (MEXT, 1999, p. 57), and why the integrated studies curricula I was investigating seemed to be in flux, particularly at the seventh-grade level. If students gained exposure to certain experiential learning activities and topics—such as public speaking and service learning—while still in elementary school, they would require new integrated studies topics and activities to challenge them once they reached junior high school. With integrated studies introduced between 1998-2002, the 7th graders in Hatanaka had already had one to five years of integrated studies at the elementary level, and so the 7th-grade curriculum would logically be the first to require alteration to avoid redundancy with previous experiences. In any case, the public lessons at this conference would have provided a junior high school teacher facing the challenge of teaching a theme like “service learning” with the opportunity to observe that theme being put to use in an actual (albeit elementary-level) classroom.

In addition to the public lessons, the debriefing meetings held afterward also provided participants with various examples of how the new reform was being implemented. In the debriefing session I attended, examples of teaching practice included both those from direct observation at Yama Elementary that morning, and secondhand examples shared by Mr. Iguchi and the presenters, in spoken and written form. The booklet distributed to all participants included 12 examples of actual units designed and used by the teacher-presenters from schools around the region, and organized around the theme of using a teacher’s “eyes and hands” to achieve the goals of the course. Many of the outlines and handouts themselves also included examples of student products and photos of students at work during various activities. Even the comments from the discussant, Mr. Iguchi, involved his personal experiences as a

teacher, and contrasts between more and less effective instructional techniques.

Participation by members of the audience consisted mostly of comments about personal experiences and observations, rather than questions or references to theory.

This focus on documented examples of actual classroom practice would not be feasible in a “quick-fix” or “instant” implementation scheme. Rather, the transition period built into the gradual approach taken to implementation of integrated studies makes it possible for teachers to develop and share examples of practice, on the one hand, and to gather, experiment with, and adapt examples for use in their own school, on the other. The staggered timeline for implementation at various grade levels also makes it possible for teachers of different grades to learn from each other’s experiences, and to facilitate the “articulation between grade levels” that Mr. Iguchi praised in his comments during the debriefing session. In these ways, the incrementalism of a continuous improvement approach to education reform provides teachers with the time and opportunity to develop and experiment with examples of classroom practice as they learn to implement the integrated studies reform.

Conclusion and Outline of Subsequent Chapters

In this chapter, I have presented evidence of the incremental approach to implementation that characterizes the integrated studies reform. While the gradual nature of the development of the reform policy may have been circumstantial in some ways, the graduated and incremental nature of the implementation timeline is certainly deliberate. By designating special “research and development schools” to pilot the curriculum reform years ahead of time, and then granting regular schools a three-year (or longer)

“transition period,” during which to experiment with the new curriculum, MEXT gave teachers and schools an opportunity to gather, create, and experiment with examples of teaching practice before being held officially accountable for results. In addition, by staggering the implementation schedule, policymakers gave teachers and schools at the secondary level the opportunity to benefit from the earlier experiences of their colleagues at the elementary level, and teachers at all levels the opportunity to experiment with instructional strategies before formal assessment of student performance was required.

Of course, the gradual development and implementation of this reform has also allowed for multiple and varied perceptions of its goals by the educators expected to implement it, thereby perhaps contributing to the lack of a “unified, common” vision for integrated studies, as decried by Mr. Wada at Minami JHS. Even though educators’ differing perceptions are essentially congruent with the multiple goals stated in national and prefectural policies concerning the reform, such differences between colleagues have the potential to hamper the collaborative efforts it requires (see Chapter 6). Paradoxically, the incrementalism that gives teachers access to a variety of examples of how to implement the reform may also foster a variety of viewpoints about the aims of that implementation.

In the next chapter, I will focus more directly on the implementation aspect of the curriculum reform, with a focus on how it interacts with a second principle of continuous improvement, that of a combined “top-down/bottom-across” approach to the implementation of change. In Chapters 5 and 6, I shall focus on the third and fourth principles of continuous improvement, as they intersect with integrated studies reform

implementation and related professional development. In the final chapter (Chapter 7), I will discuss the conclusions and implications of this study.

CHAPTER 4: COMBINED TOP-DOWN/BOTTOM-ACROSS APPROACH AND THE REFORM IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

As shown in the previous chapter, the policy development and implementation timeline of the ongoing curriculum reform in Japan exhibits various characteristics that are consistent with principles of continuous improvement, particularly that of gradualism or incrementalism in approach to change. Another principle of continuous improvement that is closely related to its gradualism orientation is the combination of “top-down” and “bottom-across” approaches to implementing change. I shall focus in this chapter on the implementation aspect of the reform, particularly as it intersects with this “top-down/ bottom-across” approach to implementation of change.

Combined Top-Down/Bottom-Across Approach as Manifest in Rainbow Plan

Reform Policy

Directives for change that are handled in a purely “top-down” managerial style—in which decision-makers above expect their decisions to be implemented, exactly as planned, by those on the front lines below, who have little or no input into the process—are problematic and often doomed to failure, according to criticisms in both organizational and educational literature (see Cuban, 1998; Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002; Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988; Fullan, 1991, 1992; McLaughlin, 1976, 1987; Sarason, 1971; Scott, 1998; Shimahara, 2002; Wada, 1993; Winter, 1996). More promising approaches include a continuous improvement, or *kaizen*, style of management, in which information and decision-making responsibility are shared more broadly, by members at various levels of an organization (see Imai, 1986; Richardson &

Lane, 1997; Suzaki, 1987). In a book on techniques for continuous improvement, in a chapter called, “People Make It Happen,” Suzaki (1987) describes manufacturing organizations in which leadership is provided by a central manager or group of managers, but the skills and knowledge to run the organization are “decentralized” (p. 221), in that they are shared by large numbers of people in the organization, as are information and responsibility for the success of the organization.

In such organizations, Imai (1986) argues that continuous improvement operates simultaneously at various levels, and he provides examples of three different levels of kaizen activities. At the management level, “just-in-time production” optimizes the use of space and resources available to a given manufacturing organization; at the group level, in “quality control circles,” groups of workers collaborate to solve problems relevant to their everyday work; and at the individual level, suggestion box programs allow individuals to contribute ideas toward the improvement of the organization. This type of organizational arrangement allows those in management to focus on performing such key functions as providing vision and leadership (Schmidt & Finnigan, 1992) and coordination of different units (Imai, 1986), and empowers members at all levels to contribute their diverse ideas and experiences toward actual changes for the betterment of the organization. Information, ideas, suggestions, and recommendations with the power to effect change flow not only from the top down, but also from the bottom up, and across various units and levels (see Imai, 1986; Schmidt & Finnigan, 1992; Suzaki, 1987).

This type of hybrid arrangement can be seen in the Japanese educational system’s approach to reform. Indeed, Japan’s “overall educational system...can be characterized

as one of loose vertical linkages with strong lateral connections” (LeTendre, 2002, p. 23). Unquestionably, the system appears highly centralized in some ways, particularly in comparison to the U.S. (see LeTendre, 2002), but “built into the hierarchical structure of Japan’s educational system...are ‘feedback loops’ that allow information to move back and forth across national, prefectural/municipal, and local governmental levels” (DeCoker, 2002, p. xvi) along with other structures, particularly professional development mechanisms, that allow for input and decisive action from and across various levels.

LeTendre (2002) explains that, despite Japan’s “centralized” system of government and education administration, prime ministers are “not able to effect policy change through a ‘top-down’ approach” but instead must “gain the support of rank-and-file bureaucrats when they make dramatic calls for reforms.” Once enacted, the “implementation of curriculum revisions occurs at the local and regional levels through institutionalized teacher research programs and groups,” such as public demonstration lessons and teacher research meetings, which help “curricular innovations developed at the local level spread rapidly to the regional level” (p. 22). Such “bottom-across...collaborative networking” by teachers is the “most extensively developed form of teacher development in Japan” (Shimahara, 2002, p. 62), and is one reason that teachers’ rather indirect “contributions to national policies have been...no less significant” than their direct “contributions to school-level policy making” (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999, p. 246). For these reasons, implementation of reform in the Japanese education system may be seen as occurring in a type of hybrid, “top-down/bottom-across” arrangement characteristic of continuous improvement.

Teacher influence at the local level on the implementation of reform is particularly salient in the case of integrated studies, for which each school is supposed to design its own curriculum and instructional activities. While the new *Course of Study Explanation and Guidelines* is quite specific about the types of curricular themes and instructional strategies to be used in integrated studies, it repeatedly emphasizes that the examples it offers are merely for reference rather than adoption *in toto* (see MEXT, 1999). Indeed, I noticed that the guidelines disseminated by the prefectural board of education with jurisdiction over Hatanaka included some revision or refinement of the national guidelines, and that implementation of integrated studies varied significantly among the four junior high schools in Hatanaka. Here I shall examine the various changes that the new policy requires teachers to make, including the design and implementation of integrated studies curriculum using specific instructional strategies (such as innovative scheduling and student groupings, team-teaching arrangements, experiential learning activities, and qualitative assessment), and consider how those changes are translated into actual practice in a top-down/bottom-across system.

Curriculum Design for Integrated Studies

One of the first things that teachers must learn to do for integrated studies is help design its curriculum. In a system in which MEXT-approved textbooks are a “concrete representation of the *Course of Study*” that teachers “study and teach with” to the point that “most...classes revolve around the textbooks” (Azuma, 2002, p. 10), particularly at the secondary level (Fukuzawa, 1996), the lack of a textbook or teacher specialization for integrated studies is a radical departure from precedent, with significant implications for teaching practice and teacher learning (see Lee & Zusho, 2002, for contrasts with U.S.

teachers' attitudes toward textbooks). This change means that, for integrated studies at least, teachers can no longer simply "assume the role of transmitter of officially legitimated knowledge to students," and are required to do more than supplement an officially-designated textbook which "constitutes the official curriculum" with "relevant materials" of their choice (Shimahara, 2002, p. 141), based on their knowledge of the subject area in which they are specialized. Instead, teachers are required to help develop the curriculum that they and their colleagues will teach, regardless of their areas of specialization.

The challenge this poses for educators was described in the following way by administrators at two of the schools I studied. The curriculum coordinator at Nishi JHS emphasized the need for teachers to "study more" due to the lack of a textbook:

Tamura: [F]or teachers, up until now, it was OK to just [chuckles] teach what's in the textbook. But now, they're in courses that don't have a textbook, so for the teachers, too, it's a different style from what they've used up until now, and they have to start anew [*atarashiku haitatsu shite iku*], I guess you could say. With that kind of expectation, teachers' workloads [*futan*]... have become more difficult [*taihen*], and I think they have to study more now.

Meanwhile, the Minami JHS curriculum coordinator mentioned the added challenge of finding sources of information to study outside a teacher's area of specialization (such as the popular integrated studies theme of environmental issues):

Taguchi: Teachers aren't experts in everything, so...but they need some minimum knowledge...With things like environmental problems, for instance, the non-science and non-social studies teachers don't have that knowledge...[and] the issue becomes where to have them learn about those kinds of things.

The teacher learning required by the integrated studies reform includes not only finding ways to access resources and knowledge outside one's area of specialization and

not contained in any textbook, but also learning to design a curriculum specific to the school to which one is currently assigned. Regarding the design of integrated studies curriculum, the overall *Course of Study* published in 1998 makes general recommendations, including examples of “interdisciplinary and integrated-type studies that cross the boundaries of individual subject areas,” but these tend to be rather broad and general. It also offers sample topics to which issues of study might be related:

Each school shall implement learning activities appropriate to the actual conditions of its students, school, and community about cross-disciplinary, integrated issues related to such things as, for instance, international understanding, information technology, the environment, health and service learning; issues based on students’ interests and concerns; and issues related to the characteristics of the school and community. (MEXT, 1998, p. 3-4; all translations of this document are mine)

MEXT’s 1999 *Junior High School Course of Study: Explanation and Guidelines*

restates and elaborates on this stipulation, but emphasizes that the examples it provides are merely “points of reference” and that individual schools must ultimately decide how to achieve the overall goals of integrated studies:

[E]ach school shall make use of learning activities that match the aims of the course, and develop activities that bring to life creativity and originality, in accordance with the actual conditions of the students, school, and community. These learning activities may include:

- 1) interdisciplinary, integrated issues related to such things as international understanding, information technology, the environment, health and service learning, for example;
- 2) issues based on students’ interests and concerns;
- 3) issues related to the characteristics of the school and community.

Since this course is now being established for the first time, the above are provided as points of reference for each school to consider as it develops its own concrete plans about specific learning activities. Therefore, specific learning activities at each school [are to be determined] using these examples as a premise. (MEXT, 1999, p. 56)

The concept of using “themes” in the construction of a school’s integrated studies curriculum surfaces later in the *Guidelines*:

The overall annual instructional plan for this course is to be determined by the school and/or its teachers. Use of issues—or specific learning themes and procedures based on these issues—from which students may choose according to their interests, concerns, and level of awareness—is desirable...For example, each student may choose from a given set of various issues and then investigate it independently, or, given a selected issue, students may choose from a set themes related to that issue, and may study it in theme-specific groups. Alternatively, there may be ways to construct activities in which individual students could select specific themes they would like to investigate independently. (MEXT, 1999, p. 57)

These instructions are given even greater specificity in the prefectural guidelines, where they are first restated verbatim (though in a slightly different order) in a section on potential “issues for study,” and then fleshed out with examples. Directly beneath the quotes from the MEXT *Guidelines* appears a list of “examples of basic themes”, including issues related to self, society in general, and the local community, as shown below:

Examples of Basic Themes:

- Other Issues of Modern Society – human rights, human life, peace, industry & economy, etc.
- Issues of Self – career pathways/ways of life, humanity, gender/sexuality, etc.
- Local Community Issues – hometown identity, local industries, culture and tradition, environment and nature (rivers, lakes, mountains), etc.

(Yamato Prefectural Board of Education, 2000, p. 11)

Virtually all of the integrated studies themes chosen by Hatanaka’s junior high schools are consistent with those specified in the prefectural guidelines. This was not required by those guidelines, which in fact paraphrased a section of the MEXT *Guidelines* granting schools broad license in this regard: “Schools are not required to implement all of the

activities given as examples here, and it is no problem to use activities other than those specified here” (Yamato Prefectural Board of Education, 2000, p. 11; see also MEXT, 1999).

While sometimes using differing terminology, each of the four schools seemed to choose themes from each of the three categories of sample “basic themes” in the prefectural guidelines—issues of self, society, and community (see Table 2). By far, the theme most commonly selected by Hatanaka junior high schools was that of “career pathways,” some version of which was used at the 8th- and/or 9th-grade levels at all four schools. (During an interview, the Kita JHS principal told me that he’d read in the newspaper that *shinro*, or “future career pathways,” was the most commonly-used theme in integrated studies nationwide; this is not surprising during this time of economic uncertainty and high unemployment in Japan.) The next most popular theme in Hatanaka was “the environment,” which was used at 7th-, 8th-, and/or 9th-grade levels at three of the four schools. The theme of “human rights” was used at two of the four schools, and a theme called simply “hometown” also appeared at two schools. One school had a theme of “international understanding” for 8th graders and one called “peace studies” for 9th graders, while another school chose “global citizenship” as a 9th-grade theme. Themes that occurred at only one school were “self-improvement” (9th grade, Higashi JHS) and “co-existence [with people, society, and nature]” (9th grade, Minami JHS).

Table 2

Integrated Studies Themes by School and Grade Level
(from official publications by each school and teacher interviews)

Grade Level	Higashi JHS	Kita JHS	Minami JHS	Nishi JHS
7	Service learning	Service learning; environment	Hometown; environment	Hometown
8	Job shadowing; career exploration	Job shadowing; service learning; human rights	Job shadowing; environment	Job shadowing; human rights; international understanding
9	Self-improvement (“global citizenship”); career exploration	Human rights; career pathways/ exploration	Service learning; “co-existence”	Environment; Service learning; “peace studies”

This “variability” among schools might be “the rule” in the U.S. (see Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988), but it is a striking departure from tradition in Japan, where the central textbook-approval system promotes uniformity of content (see Ishizaki, 2001; Nemoto, 1999). While Ishizaki (2001) notes that there are 21 publishers in Japan who produce textbooks for junior high schools (71 approved series for 15 different courses in 1999, an average of less than five series per course), a given prefecture might only adopt a handful of these for a given subject area. In my experience in Yamato Prefecture, schools in a given region of the prefecture tended to adopt the same textbook series to ensure conformity of academic preparation among students vying to enter that region’s high schools, and in Hatanaka, all the junior high schools in the city would use the same textbook series for a given subject area, as a rule. Therefore, inter-school variations in themes and topics of study within the same subject area are a hallmark of integrated studies’ innovation and localization.

All of the grade-level themes chosen by Hatanaka’s four junior high schools seem to relate, more or less directly, to the broad categories of self, society, and community

suggested in the prefectural guidelines. Indeed, the only major theme not included in the prefectural list of examples is “service learning,” a theme used at various grade levels at all four schools. At first, I thought this might be because service learning is arguably more of an instructional method than a theme, as compared to the topical nature of the themes suggested in the prefectural guidelines. Alternatively, the term *fukushi*, which I have rendered here as “service learning,” can also be translated as “public welfare,” so it could be seen as a topic encompassing “issues of modern society” related to the recipients of volunteer efforts (such as preschoolers, the elderly, and people with disabilities) and the challenges faced by such members of society.

Eventually, I realized that “service learning” is in fact included in MEXT’s list of suggested “issues for study,” and also appears in the prefectural guidelines—not in the list of sample themes, but in an example about a hypothetical “Junior High School A” provided later for illustration, as follows:

Junior High School A began by redefining its values through a survey asking what its distinctive educational activities were, what kind of community it was situated in, and what types of skills they would like to give students in order to achieve their educational goals. Then, following a tradition of experiential learning...they decided to put into place “integrated-type studies time” through which students would study how to learn and learn how to live. They built their program around three pillars (career pathways/ways of living; hometown/ environment; and service learning/human rights) as well as information technology basics. (Yamato Prefectural Board of Education, 2000, p. 12)

Later, I learned that “service learning” was also a theme in other examples to which Hatanaka educators had referred when designing their junior high school integrated studies programs, namely models from two research and development schools designated by MEXT to pilot integrated studies programs. A group of teachers from Minami JHS had been sent as observers to these junior high schools—laboratory schools

of the Fukuoka University of Education and the Osaka University of Education—and had then made reports at meetings attended by representatives from each of the four junior high schools. Both of these models were included in a *Collected Case Studies* guidebook about integrated studies published by the Ministry of Education (Mombusho, 1999b), and I discovered in that document that “service learning” is an integrated studies theme at both schools, and featured in both case descriptions. Other similarities between themes in the models and in Hatanaka’s junior high schools include “international understanding” (for 9th grade at the Fukuoka University school, 8th-9th grade at Nishi JHS, and 9th grade at Higashi JHS); “traditional/hometown culture” (8th grade at Fukuoka, and 7th grade at Minami JHS and Nishi JHS); and “the environment” (8th grade at Fukuoka and students in various grades at the Osaka University school, and 7th-8th grade at Minami JHS, 8th grade at Nishi JHS, and 7th grade at Kita JHS).

While the Osaka model used themes generated and/or selected by groups of students regardless of their grade level, Hatanaka schools appeared to adhere more closely to the Fukuoka model, which specified a set of one or two themes for each grade level. Aware that the theme-setting required for integrated studies was quite a new aspect of curriculum implementation in Japanese junior high schools, I asked educators in Hatanaka about it through a questionnaire circulated to the entire instructional staff at each school. The survey contained the question, “How were the grade-level integrated studies themes [at your school] set?” and asked respondents to choose one or more of the following:

- a) by teachers in each grade-level group (31% of total responses)
- b) by the grade-level faculty leader (16%)
- c) by the school’s curriculum coordinator (8%)
- d) by the grade-level integrated studies coordinator (32%)

- e) using themes from other schools as examples (7%)
- f) other: (6%)

Responses to this question suggest that theme selection is not generally perceived to be the responsibility of an individual administrator (such as the curriculum coordinator), as one might expect in a purely top-down arrangement, but a responsibility shared by teacher colleagues. (See Appendix D for detailed survey results for each school.)

Specifically, the questionnaire responses reveal two different patterns of theme selection for integrated studies in Hatanaka junior high schools. At two schools (Minami JHS and Nishi JHS), responses were almost evenly divided between “teachers in each grade-level group” and “the grade-level integrated studies coordinator.” Around half of the respondents at these schools indicated that the teacher serving as grade-level integrated studies chair selected the themes, while a third or more indicated that the teachers in each grade-level group made the selections. In the other pattern of response, at Kita JHS and Higashi JHS, the most prevalent responses were “teachers in each grade-level group” and “the grade-level faculty leader.” At Kita JHS, almost half (41%) of the respondents indicated that the grade-level leader set the grade-level themes, while over a third (36%) felt it was the teachers in each grade group. At Higashi JHS, 42% of the respondents saw the teachers in each grade group as responsible for theme selection, while 26% pointed to the grade-group leader, and another 26% to the grade-level integrated studies chair (at this small school of fewer than 300 students and 31 staff members, the latter two roles are usually filled by the same person).

The survey results suggest that, at half of the schools, there is a perception that grade-level themes for integrated studies are decided by the integrated studies chair at

each grade level, and to a lesser extent the colleagues in his/her grade group; while at the other two schools, it is the grade-level faculty leader and his/her colleagues who decide. Both patterns suggest to me that there is some degree of shared responsibility and collaboration in the decision-making process. Overall, those with designated duties regarding integrated studies and/or their grade-level group are clearly seen (by 26% to 53% of respondents at each school) as having influence on the selection of grade-level themes, but at the same time, teachers in each grade-level group are also perceived to wield such influence by a significant proportion (23% to 42%) of the respondents at each school. Therefore, even at the school and grade-group level, it appears that a combined top-down/bottom-across approach is used to decide curricular themes for integrated studies.

In interviews with teachers and administrators, I gleaned more details about the cooperative process of theme-setting that occurred at each of the four schools. The principal of Kita JHS and the curriculum coordinator at Minami JHS told me that possible themes were first discussed at staff meetings during the transition period (1998-2002), before official implementation of integrated studies was required, but neither administrator specified whether those themes emerged in more of a “top-down” or “bottom-across” fashion. Even in cases that sounded more “top-down,” I found that there was some degree of input from teachers and grade groups. For example, at Nishi JHS, the curriculum coordinator told me that the principal decided the “big themes,” while the grade groups decided how to put them into practice, and the principal himself told me that he and the other administrators would “present the big...areas of study or themes...to the staff” and then appoint “a leader within each grade level...a teacher who will handle

integrated studies for that group [to decide] in what direction to proceed, and then what concrete activities to use to get there.” However, an 8th-grade teacher at that school told me that the grade-level faculty groups decide the grade-level themes, and the principal himself asserted that teacher input was vital because “when it comes to bringing out the children’s best...the grade-level teachers know their students’ conditions the best,” so it is possible that the “big themes” were a reference to the overarching themes or categories from which the grade-level teachers then planned grade-level and/or instructional unit themes and activities.

In two cases, interviewees mentioned not the principal, but the curriculum coordinator, as playing a central role in the decision-making about integrated studies themes. Mr. Kamata, the 9th-grade integrated studies chair at Minami JHS, told me:

In the case of this school, the curriculum coordinator is the...main person in charge of integrated studies. So he made a basic three-year plan for all three grades, including what kinds of experiential learning activities [we would have] for the 9th graders—of course, in consultation with the others in charge [of the 9th graders]. The details of how to put it into practice—scheduling and so on—is up to the person in charge [of integrated studies] for that grade level.

In his first year as curriculum coordinator at Kita JHS, Mr. Rikuda indicated that the previous curriculum coordinator had “drafted a plan and then discussed it with everyone at a staff meeting, and then revised” the overall plan for integrated studies at their school. Using that plan as a base, he explained, “We have each grade-level group think about how to put it into concrete action. Not just the grade-level groups, but...also the committee chairs for each topic—for instance, the chair of international understanding.” (International understanding was a 9th-grade theme at his school the previous year.)

A similar type of distributed decision-making was described by administrators at Minami JHS and Higashi JHS, but in these cases, the initial recommendations were formulated by groups of staff members rather than individuals. The curriculum coordinator at Higashi JHS told me that the school's administrators (principal, assistant principal, and curriculum coordinator) would first meet with the grade-level leaders to make a recommended plan of major themes to present to the rest of the staff. Then, he told me, "We all discuss it together and then each grade group...tries to find a theme that fits their grade level. Based on that [theme], they discuss it and decide together." Mr. Taguchi, the curriculum coordinator at Minami JHS also indicated that, at his school (with over 500 students and 39 staff members), certain members of the school staff deliberated about possible themes and then made recommendations to the full staff. At their school, he explained:

We don't have time to gather everyone together and say, "OK, what shall we do?" So, we use the technique of having some people do the legwork and make recommendations, and then make a decision...Of course, sometimes their recommendations don't work out; we have to listen to the requests of the students, think about what kind of integrated studies we really want to do, and sometimes revise things...There's not enough time to do everything.

In sum, according to questionnaire and interview data, the process by which Hatanaka's junior high schools decided the content of their integrated studies courses involved both administrators and teachers (of various ranks), in a combined top-down/bottom-across fashion at the school level. Over three-fourths (79%) of the questionnaire respondents indicated that grade-level integrated studies themes at their school were determined by one or more teachers (not the curriculum coordinator or another administrator), while the selection of lesson activities was made by teachers in

grade-level groups (52%) or left up to the curriculum coordinator, grade-level faculty leader, and/or grade-level integrated studies coordinator (34%). Interview data suggest that administrators often took the lead in making recommendations about school-level and even grade-level themes, but then presented these recommendations to the staff for their consideration and input, generally leaving decisions about the content of lessons and instructional activities to teacher grade-groups. (I have very little data about the reasons why particular themes or activities were chosen by a given staff, but see Chapter 7 for a discussion of possible parallels between school demographics and themes chosen.) In any case, classroom teachers had significant involvement in the design of curriculum for integrated studies at their schools, particularly when compared to the other subject areas (for which there are both detailed curriculum guidelines in the *Course of Study* and MEXT-approved textbooks and teacher's manuals; see Inagaki, 1993).

This task of curriculum design required by the integrated studies reform constitutes one new aspect of teaching practice that teachers in Japan must learn to perform. At minimum, it requires teachers to learn how to collaboratively design themes of study and instructional activities aligned with the goals of the reform (without detailed curriculum guidelines, textbooks, or teacher's manuals) yet specific to a given school, and how to gain knowledge about topic areas outside their specializations and to which they may never have been exposed as students. In Hatanaka, at least, the transformation of national and prefectural curriculum guidelines into classroom practice clearly involved a top-down/bottom-across collaborative approach to curriculum design, involving at least the school, prefectural, and national levels. This type of approach is also evident in the implementation of instructional strategies for integrated studies, as demonstrated below.

Instructional Strategies for Integrated Studies: Changing Teaching Practices

In addition to designing the integrated studies curriculum, teachers must also learn how to plan for and teach it. Therefore, the instructional strategies mandated by the reform pose additional challenges for teacher learning. In contrast to the general nature of the *Course of Study*'s suggestions about themes of study and their selection by school staffs, the MEXT curriculum guidelines are quite specific about the types of instructional strategies to be employed in junior high school classes. Indeed, the *Course of Study Explanation and Guidelines* stipulates that instructional strategies such as experiential learning and problem solving be used not only in integrated studies, but in all subject areas:

In order to cultivate learning fundamentals that will last a lifetime in our rapidly-changing society, school education needs to emphasize development of students' ability to think for themselves and learn by themselves, and to equip them with the ability to learn in a proactive manner with heightened motivation, intellectual curiosity, and a spirit of inquiry. There is also a great need for the cultivation of skills such as the ability to think logically, make judgements, and express oneself. In order to cultivate these skills and qualities, there is a need to use more and more experiential-type learning and problem-solving-type learning. To this end, the current revision [of the national curriculum] places even greater emphasis in every subject on observations, experiments, investigations, field trips, problem-based learning, and so on. Techniques aimed at the improvement [*kaizen*] of the content in every subject area may include, for example, explanations and debates in Japanese language class, studying ways of learning in social studies class, mathematical activities and problem-based learning in mathematics class, and goal-focused observations, experiments, and inquiry activities related to everyday life in science class... This type of learning should be present not only in certain subjects, but should be emphasized throughout school education as a whole... [I]t is important that instruction in every subject be thoroughly and comfortably infused with experiential-type learning and problem-solving-type learning. (MEXT, 1999)

It is obvious, however, that the integrated studies course is to be the locus of this type of learning activities. In other subject areas, experiential learning and problem-solving may be incorporated into established teaching practice supported by existing textbooks, teacher's manuals, and teacher repertoires, but for integrated studies, these instructional strategies constitute the central, and perhaps exclusive, teaching approach—by default and by design. After recommending the use of experiential learning and problem-solving “throughout school education,” the *Course of Study Explanation and Guidelines* goes on to prescribe a variety of learning activities to be used in the integrated studies course and provides additional rationale for such approaches:

Furthermore, “integrated-type studies time” will involve the active incorporation of experiential-type learning and problem-solving-type learning, such as experiential learning with nature and with society, observations and experiments, field trips and investigations, presentations and debates, and crafts and industry. Experiential-type learning and problem-solving-type learning are useful for fostering in students the motivation to learn independently and a proactive attitude toward learning, as well as a sense of achievement and of the joy of learning...[I]t is important...to expand instruction that emphasizes student interests and concerns. Not only is emphasis on student interests and concerns useful for increasing students' motivation to learn, it is also related to proactive, autonomous learning...[I]t is important to consider how use of proactive, autonomous learning can help students realize the goals of learning, be aware of what it means to make progress in learning, and gain a positive attitude toward further learning. (MEXT, 1999, p. 83-84)

The implication of this call for expanded use of experiential learning and problem solving in Japanese education is, of course, that the education system to this point has had an insufficient quantity of such activities. According to MEXT publicity about the reform, with the traditional emphasis on high-stakes college-entrance exams, schools have focused on transmitting knowledge to students in a “one-sided” manner that has led to “the neglect of...activities that cultivate thinking faculties and an enriched humanity,”

while an “excessive emphasis placed on equal opportunities in education” has resulted in a situation in which the “essentially diverse individuality and capabilities of each and every child have not been taken into full consideration” (MEXT, 2000, para. 2).

Although some researchers have found significant evidence of experiential learning and active problem-solving in Japanese schools (see C. Lewis, 1995; Sato, 2004; Stigler & Heibert, 1999), their work has primarily been at the elementary-school level, where the pressures of entrance exams for high school and university are much less salient. Rohlen & LeTendre (1998) describe the sharp contrast between instructional patterns at the elementary and secondary levels in Japan:

Secondary-level teaching employs a pedagogy almost entirely dependent on teacher-centered lectures to large classes of students engaged in note taking for the purpose of passing exams. The use of small groups for instructional purposes is extremely rare, and student presentations are limited. Classroom proceedings center on a teacher, who elaborates at length on a fixed lesson. Indeed, comparing elementary and high school instruction, one wonders if they are a part of the same system...Middle school and high school together are a time when students are expected to move beyond being well socialized to being challenged to strive for personal attainment in a narrowing and competitive field of knowledge. (p. 7-8)

As a sort of bridge between the relative freedom of elementary school and the credentialist competition (see Labaree, 1997) of (post-compulsory) high school in Japan, junior high school education involves a mixture of “teacher-centered academic classes and student-centered non-academic activities” (Fukuzawa & LeTendre, 2001, p. 9). While the purpose of such non-academic activities may appear similar to that of integrated studies, the *Course of Study* explicitly distinguishes “special activities” (*tokubetsu katsudou*) and “school events” (*gakkou gyouji*) from the learning activities appropriate for integrated studies:

The school events carried out as part of special activities include activities intended to utilize what is learned in regular subjects and ethics class and so on—to integrate and expand it—but these are ultimately intended to achieve the goals of the special activities [curriculum] itself. We must recognize that these activities are not specifically designed to achieve the goals of integrated-type studies time *per se*. Therefore, it is necessary to plan and carry out learning activities for integrated-type studies time at each school, giving sufficient consideration to the aims of integrated-type studies time detailed here. It is also important to make use of the skills acquired through integrated-type studies time in subject-area courses as well. (MEXT, 1999, p. 55-56)

The above distinction effectively prohibits schools from simply filling integrated studies class hours with existing special activities, such as traditional school events eliminated from the school schedule by the overall reduction in annual class hours—although such events were certainly incorporated into the integrated studies curriculum at all four of Hatanaka’s junior high schools. (See Chapter 5 for further discussion of how this incorporation occurred and of changes in class hour allocations for various subjects.)

Compared to the varied perceptions about who decides grade-level themes of study at the various schools, there was a greater degree of consensus about who decides which instructional activities to undertake once the themes are set. In a survey questionnaire, I asked school staff members, “How are the integrated studies lessons/activities [at your school] set?” and supplied the following choices:

- a) homeroom teachers decide individually (3% of total responses)
- b) by teachers in each grade-level group (52%)
- c) we leave it up to the curriculum coordinator/grade-group leader/grade-level integrated studies coordinator (34%)
- d) we use an integrated studies teacher’s manual (1%)
- e) we use lessons/activities from other schools as examples (5%)
- f) other (4%)

At every school, the most common response (52% total) to this question was “teachers in each grade-level group,” with “leave it up to the curriculum coordinator/grade-level

faculty leader/grade-level integrated studies coordinator” the next most frequent (34%) response. Between one-half and two-thirds (48% to 68% at each school) of the respondents felt that decisions about the kinds of lessons and instructional activities used in integrated studies classes at their grade level were the purview of teachers in each grade-level group. One-quarter to almost one-half (23% to 44%) of the respondents indicated that such decisions were made by a staff member with such officially-designated duties (the curriculum coordinator, grade-group leader, and/or grade-level integrated studies chair). Again, this variation in response, consistent across all four schools, suggests that the decision-making process involves a top-down/bottom-across combination of hierarchical leadership and collaborative input. (See Appendix D for detailed survey results for each school.)

The Fukuoka and Osaka research and development school models described in MEXT’s 1999 *Collected Case Studies* about integrated studies appear to also have influenced choices about types of instructional activities as well as themes at Hatanaka’s schools. At the Osaka school, inquiry-based learning and experiential learning were emphasized, and students were expected to acquire the proficiency with computer technology and public speaking required to make presentations about what they learned. At the Fukuoka school, problem-solving and experiential learning about contemporary social issues were emphasized, and students were expected to interact with people from outside their school (such as guest speakers and parents/guardians), to use the internet and actual site visits to gather information, and to make summary reports about what they learned (in forms such as graduation theses and web pages). Both schools used “off-campus learning” activities, such as investigative field trips, and service learning projects,

such as volunteering at nursing homes. All of these types of activities were represented in Hatanaka's junior high school integrated studies curricula.

As with the grade-level themes, no two schools in Hatanaka used exactly the same set of integrated studies activities for a given grade level. There were both significant similarities and differences between the instructional activities used by the four junior high schools. All four schools used outdoor camping, job shadowing, service learning, and "off-campus learning" field trips in integrated studies, but at different grade levels and/or in conjunction with different themes and activities for the same grade level.

Outdoor camping and job shadowing were the activities used most consistently. At every school, 7th graders participated in an overnight camp called "Nature's Classroom" in a nearby prefecture, and 8th graders took part in job shadowing activities. "Off-campus learning" activities included class field trips for 8th graders at all four schools, as well as for 7th graders at Kita JHS. Service learning also formed part of the integrated studies curriculum at all four schools, but was done by 9th graders at Minami JHS and Nishi JHS, by 7th and 8th graders at Kita JHS, and by 7th graders at Higashi JHS. At each school, units on service learning included some combination of activities about wheelchair use, sign language, and/or simulations of visual-, hearing-, and age-related impairments.

The above examples suggest that, while schools in Hatanaka conformed somewhat to a traditional reliance on centralized curriculum by keeping within the scope of "suggestions" and "examples" provided in national and prefectural government guidelines, they also broke with tradition by exercising autonomy in their selection of themes and activities in the design of their integrated studies curricula. There appears to be a significant degree of not only variation in implementation patterns between different

schools and levels (see LeTendre, Baker, Akiba, Goesling, & Wiseman, 2001), but also of practitioner input into the implementation process through top-down/bottom-across information sharing and decision making. Of course, practitioner input into the implementation process usually manifests as differences in implementation strategies, but it can also manifest as failure to implement reforms as intended. Below I shall consider some examples of such failure in the implementation of integrated studies in Hatanaka's junior high schools.

Nonimplementation or Redirection of Integrated Studies Class Time for Other Activities

McLaughlin (1976) notes that reform implementation may take one of three forms: 1) the "mutual adaptation" of the project design and local institutional structures, as found in successful reforms; 2) "co-optation," in which the project design might change, but the local structures remain unchanged; or 3) "nonimplementation," as found in reforms that begin but flounder or are simply "ignored by the participants" (p. 169). During my fieldwork in Hatanaka, I found some examples of co-optation and nonimplementation of the integrated studies reform that seem to illustrate the degree of "agency" (see Datnow et al., 2002, p. 62) possessed by teachers and schools at the local level as well as the competing interests that teachers must somehow balance while implementing a reform.

To begin with, fully 43% of the teachers I surveyed reported that their teaching style had changed "very little" (38%) or "not at all" (5%) since the advent of integrated studies. They did not elaborate as to why or how on the anonymous questionnaires, but during my classroom observations, I observed the use of integrated studies class time for

non-integrated-studies activities. By this, I do not mean the instances in which integrated studies classes were suspended or postponed so those time slots might be used for other subject-area classes (as happened, for instance, during the week of midterm exams and the week of final exams at all four schools). Such “flexible scheduling” is explicitly permitted in the policy, and concentration of integrated studies activities over full days and so on over the rest of the year would allow schools to “make up” any missed time so they could still meet the minimum annual class-hour requirements.

What I mean by the use of integrated studies time for non-integrated studies activities is the instances in which homerooms met at their regularly-scheduled integrated studies class time but the teacher used some or all of that class period for instructional or administrative activities unrelated to integrated studies. For example, once when I conducted a classroom observation of a 6th-period 9th-grade integrated studies class at Nishi JHS, I found three of the homerooms engaged in preparing or presenting student reports about the ozone layer and acid rain as part of an environmental issues unit in their integrated studies curriculum, but in the other three homerooms, the focus on integrated studies was less clear.

In one class, most of the 35 students were chatting, writing letters, and doing free reading, while five students hovered over a poster, busily adding finishing touches. The teacher explained to me that the class was waiting for the last group to finish their poster before beginning the student presentations, which he would likely postpone until the next week, anyway. Down the hall, another homeroom teacher faced a similar situation, in that only 60% of the class (in his estimation) had completed their posters; that teacher used the time to hold career counseling sessions with his students. One by one, students

who had finished went out in the hallway to meet with the teacher, while in the classroom, eight or ten students worked to finish their posters and the rest did other homework or free reading—a couple of them even practicing handstands. In contrast, the third homeroom was a picture of quiet productivity—but the instructions on the chalkboard and the essays the 31 students were busily writing seemed to have nothing to do with acid rain, ozone, the environment, or integrated studies. On the chalkboard, the teacher had written several instructions, including: “Write down honestly what you were thinking during today’s Japanese language class,” and “Write what you would like to say to Ms. Mikawa [Japanese language teacher].” When I asked a student, “Is this integrated studies class?” she replied that yes, it was. It turned out that the homeroom teacher had decided to use the class period to have her students write reflective essays (*hansei*) as a consequence for the class’ inappropriate behavior during Japanese language class earlier that day.

In addition to the above examples, which could be attributed to idiosyncratic classroom management practices, I also observed the deliberate and overt appropriation of integrated studies time by an entire grade level for test review. The test was not an in-school test, however, but a *kentei shiken*, or national proficiency certification examination, about Japanese *kanji* (ideographs). These national proficiency exams are authorized by MEXT, but are not a required part of school curriculum. They are available, for a fee, to virtually anyone, and are being recognized by more and more institutions as transferable for academic credits or entrance examination waivers. The test’s official website (<http://www.kanken.or.jp/target/tyugaku.html>) claims that over 2,000,000 people ages four to 94 take the national proficiency exam on *kanji* every year.

Due to their optional and commercial nature, I was surprised to find these national proficiency exams being used in connection with integrated studies time at public schools, including both Minami JHS and Higashi JHS. When I was scheduled to do classroom observations of 7th-grade integrated studies classes at Minami JHS, the grade-group leader took me aside at first to explain why the student activities I would observe would have little or nothing to do with the 7th-grade integrated studies themes of “hometown” and “environment.” Mr. Yamada, an athletic 48-year-old social studies teacher, explained that this year’s 7th-graders had inadequate proficiency in *kanji* (Japanese students are expected to master around 1000 of the 1800 most common *kanji* by the end of 6th grade). They were therefore being encouraged to take the national proficiency exam and being given in-school time to practice for the out-of-school exam. Indeed, when we visited the five 7th-grade homerooms, the students spent the entire integrated studies class period diligently practicing writing *kanji* and working through the commercial practice workbooks published by the test company.

While national proficiency exams received no mention in any written materials about the integrated studies curriculum at Minami JHS, the use of national proficiency exams for *kanji*, math, and English was prominently featured in official documentation about integrated studies activities at Higashi JHS. There, the purpose of these exams was explicitly linked to the goals of increasing basic academic ability, problem-solving ability, ability to communicate well and use information selectively, and international understanding (in the case of English). In a publication reporting the certification levels achieved by Higashi JHS students on these exams in 2002 appeared the enthusiastic declaration that, every year, more and more Higashi JHS students were taking the exams,

achieving passing scores at higher levels, and doing well on all three exams (*kanji*, math, and English), and that this trend was expected to continue. This emphasis on test scores seems completely at odds with MEXT's redefinition of "genuine academic ability" in its publicity about the new integrated studies curriculum (as discussed in Chapter 3).

Perhaps my greatest surprise (and gratification at their trust) derived from the matter-of-fact manner in which educators shared with me the ways in which integrated studies time was being appropriated for purposes that seemed, at best, out of sync with the intent of the curriculum reform. Rather than striving to hide them from the overseas researcher's view, Hatanaka educators showed little reservation or embarrassment about sharing with me these less-than-polished aspects of their implementation of the integrated studies curriculum. This may have been due to the teachers' level of comfort and trust for me, or simply a product of the gradual, incremental approach to implementation that allows room for experimentation with various techniques and approaches. The redirection of integrated studies class time into other activities seemed more planned and deliberate in some cases than in others, but its very occurrence carries implications about certain educators' perceptions of the relative importance of integrated studies compared to other subject areas (such as Japanese language, math, and English) and other concerns (such as class discipline, academic basics, and entrance examinations), at least at this point in the implementation process. Perhaps those teachers who deliberately redirected integrated studies time shared the dismissive attitude expressed by Ms. Murano, an English teacher at New JHS, who indicated that the distinct nature of integrated studies renders simple imitation of one's past teachers an unworkable strategy:

AMH: So what do you do?

Murano: What do we do? Well...pray that it [integrated studies] will go away! [laughs]

Regardless of teachers' current attitudes toward integrated studies, it is a part of the curriculum they are responsible for implementing, and unless MEXT takes the unusual step of imposing significant mid-course changes to the current *Course of Study*, integrated studies will not "go away," but will remain a part of the junior high school curriculum through at least 2011. It remains to be seen whether attitudes toward the reform will change when formal assessment requirements for integrated studies take effect in the next few years.

Together, the examples of implementation and non-implementation of curricular design and instructional practices for the integrated studies reform constitute ample evidence of a combined, collaborative "top-down/bottom-across" approach to implementation in the Japanese education system. As mentioned before, this approach is closely related to the gradualism of the reform policy, as the prescribed transition period and graduated implementation schedule provide schools and teachers with the opportunity for information exchange, experimentation, and "mutual adaptation" (McLaughlin, 1976) before full implementation is officially required. While the descriptions above tend to focus on implementation at the school and municipal levels, the top-down/bottom-across approach also involves national, regional, and prefectural levels. Below I shall describe a professional development activity in which I participated during my fieldwork, as an example of how national, regional, prefectural, and local levels intersect during teacher learning for reform implementation.

Various Levels Intersect at a Regional/Prefectural Professional Development Activity

In Chapter 3, I described the first half of a day-long regional/prefectural conference on integrated studies and “daily living,” an integrated-studies-type course for the early elementary level. In this section, I shall describe the remainder of that joint conference and comment on how this professional development activity illustrates the intersection of various levels of the Japanese education system and the top-down/bottom-across nature of professional development in that system.

As stated earlier, the regional conference involved a morning of public observation lessons of daily living classes at three local elementary schools in Yamato prefecture, followed by debriefing meetings for the dozens of educators in attendance. In the afternoon, the regional conference segued into a prefectural professional development session on daily living and integrated studies. During a 90-minute lunch break, participants were encouraged to visit the “poster session” being held at one end of the gymnasium. There, several groups of sixth-graders (ranging from two to six students per group) were clustered around handmade posters displayed on pegboards. When a potential “audience” approached, the students would launch into their rehearsed presentations about their integrated studies investigations of environmental units. The following vignette derives from my field notes:

I visited three of the poster presentations. In one, a group of five boys showed me how they had measured the air quality in various areas around their school by looking at the stripes on pine needles they had gathered—the darker the stripes and more numerous the spots on the needles, they informed me, the more polluted the air is. They showed me the measurements they had recorded in charts and on a large map they had drawn. In another, a group of four girls explained how they had counted the number of pine trees destroyed by insect infestation in various sections of the forest around their school. They had made a map of the area around their school, using colored stickers to represent the trees, with each section

labeled and colored, according to the percentages of dead trees. Another pair of girls gave a clear and nicely-illustrated presentation about measuring the pH of dirt samples from around their school grounds. When I asked them questions about it, they were able to respond quite deftly, rephrasing some of the more technical terms in laymen's language I could understand more easily.

From 1:30 to 2:00pm, the closing plenary session of the Regional Convention was held. Around 300 attendees (presumably mostly elementary school teachers from around Yamato Prefecture) sat in rows of folding chairs facing the stage at the end of the gymnasium opposite the poster session area. On the stage, a group of five local dignitaries and a panel of four invited speakers sat at two cloth-covered tables, in front of a vertical banner proclaiming the Convention's theme in hand-lettered calligraphy. Placards in front of the speakers indicated that those four men were the convention chair, the assistant superintendent of the Prefectural Board of Education, the superintendent of the local school district hosting the event, and a professor from a university in Osaka.

After initial welcoming remarks, the first speaker thanked the teachers who had opened their classrooms for "wonderful" public lessons that day, and made some comments about the importance of the environmental issues the elementary students were studying. Next, the Prefectural Board of Education representative made brief remarks about the "new subject area" of integrated studies and daily living, alluding to the aims of the reform, and using several key phrases from the policy. The local superintendent of schools explained how his district was on the leading edge of a new trend toward a businesslike "management system" for schools, in which "customer service" would play a larger role than ever before in compulsory education. The professor was introduced, along with other special guests, but did not address the crowd, and the session was officially closed.

Five minutes later, the stage had been rearranged, and a new banner unrolled, and the 2003-04 Yamato Prefecture Conference on Elementary School Daily Living Course and Integrated Studies Research officially began. The three speakers for this plenary session, scheduled for 2:00-4:20pm, were now seated at a single table on the left side of the stage. First, Ms. Harano, a local elementary school teacher and the chair of the conference's Research Subcommittee, gave a Power Point presentation about the elements of a successful daily living course lesson, centered on the conference theme, "Toward a Daily Living Course that Cultivates the Foundations of Children's Independence." She argued that the proper combination of three elements would result in the type of learning required to cultivate children's independence and "zest for living" (*ikiru chikara*): 1) clear objectives; 2) a comfortable setting; and 3) the teacher's eyes and hands guiding students and seizing teachable moments. I noted that these three elements had been included (as "three frames of reference of the research") in a type of template followed by all the unit

plans and lesson plans distributed that day, and in a Venn diagram in the five-page copy of her address in the unit-plan booklet.

At 2:25, the next speaker came to the podium on the stage. It was Mr. Iguchi, the Prefectural Board of Education official in charge of daily living and integrated studies courses. After thanking the local board of education, teachers, and PTA members from the host schools, he began to share what he had “felt and learned” that day. Mr. Iguchi stated that he had been enthralled by the enthusiasm of the students he observed in the public lessons that morning. He had felt that “breathing room” (*yutori*) for students to move around, explore, and think of things on their own had been apparent in the lessons he observed. It was also apparent, he noted, that experiential learning (*taiken*) was the cornerstone of the daily living course—even mistakes constituted potential opportunities for learning.

True to his earlier declaration about the importance of specific feedback, Mr. Iguchi made comments specific to a 2nd-grade lesson he had observed, in which the students created various games and toys using plastic wrap, and a 1st-grade lesson in which the students were to draw pictures of objects associated with autumn. In the former, the teacher had reinforced, through comments, whatever aspects of the plastic wrap the students found interesting—its transparency, ability to be stretched and rolled into different shapes, and so on. In the latter, the teacher quietly observed students working on their pictures, and refrained from offering advice on how to improve their pictures, instead simply discussing each picture with its creator. In both cases, Mr. Iguchi said, he saw how it was possible for teacher and students to have affective experiences (*kandou*) together. In fact, he asserted, “the teacher has a great responsibility to listen to the students and feel what they are feeling,” and should build lesson objectives on feedback (*hansei*) from the students.

At 2:50, the stage was again rearranged and the keynote speaker, Mr. Nomura, a MEXT official and author of several books on integrated studies, introduced. A three-page synopsis of his address was included in the unit-plan booklet, along with Ms. Harano’s address. Mr. Nomura’s speech, entitled “Teaching and Assessment to Achieve the Aims of the Daily Living Curriculum,” was supplemented by a few slides of children involved in various learning activities outdoors, but was primarily a college-style lecture about the aims of integrated studies and daily living, and qualities teachers must possess to help achieve those aims.

A bespectacled man in his mid-50s, Mr. Nomura spoke clearly and energetically. He first introduced himself and mentioned his latest book on integrated studies, then launched into a speech about the need for integrated studies in the 21st century. The main goal, he said, is to revolutionize the whole idea of academic ability (*gakuryoku*). The “zest for living” (*ikiru chikara*) that integrated studies is supposed to foster has cognitive, affective, and physical components. When university department chairs were asked in a survey what kind of citizens were needed in the future, Mr. Nomura said, one of the most frequent responses

was people with “logical thinking ability and ability to answer questions.” The problem, he pointed out, is that traditional examinations and so on do not measure such problem-solving ability. Of course, he conceded, students must master the basics—such as reading, writing, and math—but they also need motivation, or they won’t be able to achieve academic ability in any case. “If you say, we can’t have just activities, we have to have knowledge,” he asserted, “that’s a false dichotomy.” Mr. Nomura acknowledged that the integrated studies curriculum is a work in progress, and might have to be tweaked or revised as needed. To my surprise, he also confirmed a rumor I had heard from teachers and administrators—that MEXT might break with its tradition of revising the *Course of Study* once every decade, and might begin revising it more often.

He also offered specific examples, using a few slides as visual aids, of student experiences with integrated studies, such as elementary students’ reactions to earthquakes and encounters with historical events during investigations of local traditions. Finally, Mr. Nomura addressed the types of qualities and practices teachers need to effectively implement daily living and integrated studies courses, writing key words on a whiteboard with a marker and occasionally referring to a slide. He argued that teachers need “educational vision” (*kyouikukan*) and an “educational philosophy” (*kyouiku tetsugaku*) that is consistent with integrated studies aims. They also need “insight” (*dousatsu*) and “perspective” (*mitoushi*) when dealing with student questions that may come up during experiential learning activities. Teachers need a certain “empathy” (*kyoukan*) or “resonance” (*kyoumei*) with students and their feelings, and the ability to value intangible aspects of life. In addition, teachers need the ability to “draw out” (*tsumugidasu*) of students further and deeper information. To illustrate, Mr. Nomura described a teacher who took his class to the same park in the winter as he had in the summer, and heard one of his students say, “The sky was small when we came here last time, but now it’s big.” Rather than simply giving a factual lecture about the changing seasons, he said, a teacher in that situation should further investigate the student’s perception and try to understand where the student is coming from. He also showed another teacher’s written responses to two students’ essays. Though the essays were quite different, the teacher’s response to each was identical, and Mr. Nomura found that problematic. Teachers need to be specific in their feedback to students, he asserted—in advice reminiscent of Mr. Iguchi’s—and there is a need for more research and development of new methods of qualitative assessment appropriate for integrated studies.

In closing, Mr. Nomura reiterated some of the key concepts of daily living and integrated studies—starting with clear goals, developing each child’s individual strengths, letting students try things out for themselves, and so on. Daily living and integrated studies courses, he concluded, are about raising the next generation, using their “heads, hearts, and bellies.” He predicted that such courses were not only

necessary, but would become more and more necessary from this point on. His speech ended by 4:20, and after announcements of thanks and reminders, the assembled crowd of teachers dispersed from the auditorium by 4:30 p.m.

Overall, this joint regional/prefectural professional development conference featured the skills, knowledge, and perspectives of education specialists at more than just the regional and prefectural levels. The morning's public lessons and debriefing sessions involved examples and discussion of actual teaching practice at the school, municipal, and regional levels. The national and prefectural levels were represented by Mr. Nomura and Mr. Iguchi, respectively, whose presentations consumed two of the three hours allotted for the afternoon sessions.

Significantly, both of those speeches, from officials at relatively high levels of the education system, did not dwell on the overall goals and aims of the daily living/integrated studies course, but made extensive use of examples of actual practice at the classroom level. The local representative, Ms. Harano, focused her remarks on the aims of the research tied to the daily living/integrated studies courses highlighted at today's conference. The three instructional strategies that she outlined were made even more concrete by the techniques that the later speakers recommended and, to some extent, even modeled—such as using specific and individualized feedback, trying to assume the student's point of view, and using student feedback (and even their mistakes) to fashion learning opportunities. In this way, a single professional development activity facilitated interaction and exchange of information on multiple levels, including classroom, school, municipal, prefectural, and national levels, in a prime example of the top-down/bottom-across approach to teacher learning for reform implementation. The

fact that this type of professional development activity is not restricted only to “traditional” subject areas, but is also used for integrated studies, suggests that the importance of coordination between a variety of levels for the successful implementation of national curriculum is widely recognized and openly acknowledged.

Together, the examples in this chapter illustrate a combined top-down/bottom-across approach to implementation—including curriculum design, adaptation of instructional practices, and professional development—for the integrated studies reform. This approach provides teachers with guidance from above about the intended direction for their reform efforts, as well as the opportunity to exert their own agency and have input into how the reform is implemented (including instances of co-optation and non-implementation discussed above). In these ways, the top-down/bottom-across continuous improvement approach to reform implementation makes possible teacher learning that allows for local variability and individual agency, but is still focused and oriented to the overall goals of the reform.

Conclusion and Outline of Subsequent Chapters

In this chapter, I have presented examples of the top-down/bottom-across approach to implementation that characterizes the integrated studies reform. The examples related to curriculum design, incorporation of certain instructional strategies, and even non-implementation or co-optation of the reform, all demonstrate how teachers and administrators exercise agency during the reform implementation process, rather than simply implementing *in toto* mandates handed down from above. In addition, the example of a regional/prefectural professional development activity about integrated

studies demonstrates how information regarding implementation flows not only from the top down, but also from the bottom and among various levels, in a manner consistent with principles of continuous improvement.

The potential of this top-down/bottom-across approach for fostering more standardization than variation in instruction at the local and regional levels has been acknowledged in terms of traditional, pre-reform subject areas (LeTendre, 2002; see also Shimahara, 2002). When applied to integrated studies, which has an explicit emphasis on decentralization and school autonomy, it is unclear whether or not this tendency toward standardization will occur. If it does, it may be problematic to the extent that it interferes with localization and innovation, though on the other hand, it may counteract the disunity of educators' perceptions about the aims of the reform (as discussed in Chapter 3) to the extent that it causes educators to use practices aligned with overall reform goals.

In the next chapter, I will continue my discussion of implementation, with a focus on how it interacts with a third principle of continuous improvement, that of hybridization or "mutual adaptation" and building on existing technologies. In Chapter 6, I shall focus on the fourth principle and its intersection with professional development related to integrated studies reform implementation. In the final chapter (Chapter 7), I will discuss the conclusions and implications of this study.

CHAPTER 5: BUILDING UPON EXISTING TECHNOLOGIES AND THE REFORM IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the implementation aspect of the current curriculum reform in Japan possesses various features that are consistent with continuous improvement, including that of a combined top-down/bottom-across approach to change. A third principle of continuous improvement that is clearly apparent in the implementation aspect of the integrated studies reform is that of “mutual adaptation” or “hybridization”—the act of building upon existing technologies to create new practices and effect change. In this chapter, I shall once again focus on the implementation aspect of the reform, but particularly as it intersects with the hybridization of existing technologies and prescribed practices, which comprises yet another principle of continuous improvement.

Hybridization & Building upon Existing Technologies in Rainbow Plan

Reform Implementation

Educational reform that involves the complete dismantling and discarding of current practices and their total replacement by some unprecedented panacea is more the stuff of utopian rhetoric by opportunistic politicians or idealistic reformers than of actual, lasting change in education (see Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Instead, effective and lasting improvement is most often the result of “tinkering” or the making of “gradual and incremental...revisions” of existing practice that acknowledges the “need to adapt change to local knowledge and needs” (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 5) including the “multiple demands, priorities, and values” operating in a given school

environment (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 175). As Tyack & Cuban (1995) argue, rather than “starting from scratch in reinventing schools, it makes most sense...to graft thoughtful reforms onto what is healthy in the present system” (p. 133). They argue that reforms “should be designed to be hybridized” so that “innovations are regarded as resources a teacher may adapt” to local circumstances in order to improve instruction, with the expectation that implementation will vary from “school to school and classroom to classroom” (p. 135-138).

The reciprocal nature of such reform implementation is acknowledged by Huberman (1995), who states that this type of “*bricolage*” entails a “continuous dialogue with the...situation as it evolves” (p. 195) and by McLaughlin (1976) who observes that successful reform implementation, in which “significant change in participant attitudes, skills, and behavior occurred” is characterized by a “process of mutual adaptation in which project goals and methods were modified to suit the needs and interests of the local staff and in which that staff changed to meet the requirements of the project” (p. 169). This model assumes that “local variability” in implementation patterns is “not only inevitable, but a good thing, if a proposed innovation is to result in significant and sustained change in the local setting” (McLaughlin, 1976, p. 178). From a cultural-historical theory perspective, this type of mutual adaptation seems the most logical route to achieving the “cultural change” (Fullan, 1992, p. 121) that is education reform, a highly “complex endeavor” in which “[c]hange must contend with individual personalities, situational conflict, lofty goals, and insufficient resources” (Fullan, 1992, p. 81) as well as internalized “structures and routines” (Fullan, 1992, p. 121), any of which can influence, as well as be influenced by, the reform.

This type of “hybridization” of the familiar and the new is consistent with the continuous improvement principle of refining, rather than replacing, existing structures and resources, as described in organizational research literature. In business and manufacturing, Imai (1986) argues that a major difference between Western-style innovation and Japanese-style continuous improvement is the tendency of the former to “seek new technology” and of the latter to “build on existing technology” (p. 32). In educational reform, even though teachers are socialized into a familiar and persistent “grammar of schooling,” they have “led the way in reshaping instruction” by embracing “ideas and practices that they saw as useful and interesting [and]...incorporating them into their [existing] daily routines” (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 135-137).

The mutual adaptation of prescribed changes and existing practices appears to be a deliberate and explicit strategy for implementation of Japan’s integrated studies reform policy. In a section on instructional activities to use for integrated studies, MEXT’s *Junior High School Course of Study: Explanation and Guidelines* offer the following advice:

To obtain cooperation from local people and utilize the instructional resources and learning environments in the community, a great number of schools will be able to use the know-how they have gained from prior practice, including things like elective courses and productive labor/service activities done as part of “special activities.” They may create lists (“human/facility resource banks”) of human resources and facility resources, such as places to hold consultations with key individuals in the community, that could possibly be helpful for integrated-type studies time activities. (MEXT, 1999, p. 62)

The utilization of prior practice is more than simply a convenient fallback used by policymakers with no better recommendations to offer schools. The need for hybridization had apparently been foreseen during the lengthy process of policy

development, and components accordingly built into the prior (1992-2001) national curriculum that could later be incorporated into the current (2002-2011) curriculum. For example, the *Guidelines* about the new integrated studies curriculum encourage junior high schools to “expand on” an element of the previous *Course of Study* called “activities to promote originality”:

It is desirable for each school to actively expand on activities that enliven creativity and originality, and to build on experience with activities previously used (during so-called unallocated time) to promote imagination. (MEXT, 1999, p. 57)

Unfortunately, I have very little data about what these “activities to promote originality” entailed, but it seems they did not constitute an official subject area or course, as integrated studies now does, and therefore shared the “co-curricular” status of required but occasional and non-graded activities such as field trips and school events (see Cummings, 2003b). As mentioned earlier, the *Guidelines* prohibit the outright appropriation of integrated studies class hours for “special activities” or “school events,” but they do seem to allow, or even encourage, incorporation of such pre-existing activities into the new integrated studies curriculum (see MEXT, 1999).

During my fieldwork in Hatanaka, I found many examples of the hybridization of existing practices (such as the special activities, elective courses, and school events mentioned above) and those prescribed by the reform. The degree to which prescribed and existing practices differ—and by implication, the degree of difficulty in integrating them—is suggested by the responses of Hatanaka junior high school teachers to certain questions on a survey I conducted. Almost all of the 94 teachers who responded to my questionnaire indicated that teaching integrated studies lessons is “quite different” (56%) or “slightly different” (39%) from the teaching they do in other subject areas, and over

half (56%) of the respondents indicated that their teaching style had changed, either “quite a bit” (7%) or “somewhat” (49%), since they had begun teaching integrated studies.

In Chapter 1, I sketched an outline of the text-centered and transmission-oriented patterns of instruction prevalent at Hatanaka’s junior high schools prior to the reform. In Chapter 3, I described in general terms the more student-centered and experiential-learning-oriented instructional practices the reform requires teachers to learn to incorporate into their existing practice. Below, I shall explore four types of instructional strategies prescribed by the reform, and how they were hybridized with existing practices as teachers in Hatanaka collaborated to design and implement the integrated studies curriculum at their junior high schools.

Instructional Strategies for Integrated Studies: Innovative Scheduling & Grouping, Team-Teaching, Experiential Learning, and Qualitative Assessment

In a section called “Management of Integrated-Type Studies Time,” the *Course of Study Explanation and Guidelines* explicitly outlines strategies for the “organization and implementation of curriculum.” In Article 2 of this section, the primary strategies for “innovation in instructional systems” are delineated, in subsections about the “Required Number of Class Hours”; “Learning Activities for Integrated-Type Studies Time”; and “Assessment of Integrated-Type Studies Time” (MEXT, 1999, p. 52-62). For the purpose of examining what teachers must learn and are learning, and how they are drawing on established practices as they learn to implement the reform, I will focus on the four strategies that seem most significant in the policy and in my field observations:

1) innovative scheduling; 2) innovative grouping (of teachers and of students); 3) instructional methods that emphasize experiential learning; and 4) qualitative assessment of student performance. Below I shall describe, for each of these four strategies, the relevant policy provisions, along with illustrations of how each was put into practice during the process of curriculum implementation in Hatanaka's junior high schools. These illustrations include vignettes based on classroom observations, as well as data from interviews, survey responses, and school handbooks and other documents.

Innovative scheduling. In a departure from previous curriculum guidelines, the present *Course of Study* grants schools flexibility in the design of their annual instructional schedules in two ways. First, rather than specifying a total number of hours as is done for other subjects, the policy specifies an acceptable range of hours for each grade level for both integrated studies and "elective subjects," for a combined total of 100 to 235 of the overall minimum of 980 school hours for all subjects at each grade level. Choosing from within these ranges, schools are to coordinate the annual class hours for integrated studies in tandem with the class hours for elective subjects, as stated in the 1999 MEXT *Guidelines*, and shown in Table 3:

The required number of class hours for integrated-type studies time is specified in the School Education Law Implementation Regulations, Article 54, Table 2, with ranges of minimum to maximum hours per grade level: 70-100 credit hours for 7th grade, 70-105 credit hours for 8th grade, and 70-130 credit hours for 9th grade. Also indicated are the "class hours for elective subjects," with ranges of 0-30 credit hours for 7th grade, 50-85 credit hours for 8th grade, and 105-165 credit hours for 9th grade. Each school is to set the number of class hours for integrated-type studies time in coordination with these "class hours for elective subjects," keeping within the ranges given. (MEXT, 1999, p. 83)

Table 3

*MEXT-Specified Ranges for Annual Class Hours for
Integrated Studies and Elective Subjects for 2002-03 School Year*

Grade Level	Integrated Studies	Elective Subjects	Combined Total
7	70-100	0-30	100
8	70-105	50-85	155
9	70-130	105-165	235

The MEXT reform policy also offers three examples of how the ratio of integrated studies and elective subject class hours might be coordinated for 9th grade at three different schools: in ratio of 130:105 (130 hours of integrated studies to 105 hours of electives) at a school that emphasizes integrated studies; 70:165 at a school that emphasizes elective subjects; and 115:120 at a school where the emphasis on each is more equal (MEXT, 1999, p. 67).

In addition, rather than adhering to the conventional paradigm of a minimum number of class hours per week, schools are now allowed to concentrate class hours (in any subject area) on certain days, weeks, or even months, as appropriate for given activities. In designing their “annual instructional plans for this [integrated studies] time,” the *Guidelines* stipulate that:

[Schools] may arrange the specified hours as is most effective for the given features of educational activities and individual subject areas...This includes not only the allocation of class hours per week, but also such things as coordination with the instructional content of other subjects, using concentrated blocks of time for activities that are lengthy or most effectively carried out at a certain time of year, or other designs that distribute class time flexibly throughout the school year. (MEXT, 1999, p. 52)

The *Guidelines* go on to acknowledge that experiential learning activities (such as field trips, experiments, and so on) may not fit neatly into the conventional pattern of two to three 50-minute class periods per week (for 35 weeks per school year) used for most

junior high school courses, and therefore, innovative daily, weekly, and annual course scheduling may be used:

Since experiential learning activities such as field trips and investigations will increase, annual instructional schedules may be designed to facilitate those types of activities, for instance, by concentrating certain instructional activities in a two-hour block or a single day, depending on the nature of the activity. Each school can now determine the length of individual class periods for every subject according to the attributes of the subject area and learning activity, and the developmental level of the students (for example, allotting 75 minutes for science classes involving experiments or observations, daily 25-minute foreign language lessons, etc.), as long as specifications for [total] annual class hours...are observed. (MEXT, 1999, p. 71)

The prefectural guidelines are noticeably more prescriptive about how the scheduling of integrated studies classes should be handled. The prefectural policy explicitly instructs schools to schedule integrated studies courses in the afternoon, and on days when public institutions like libraries and museums are open. In a section called, “Points to Consider When Devising the Annual Instructional Schedule for Integrated-type Studies Time,” the prefectural guidelines offer the following instructions:

- a. Avoid scheduling courses for different grade levels on the same day of the week. Reserve rooms (computer lab, school library, audio-visual room, etc.) and confirm instructors (including community volunteers).
- b. Schedule courses in the afternoon. This way, it is easier to leave the school grounds for experiential learning and investigation activities, and easier to handle delays and things like investigation activities that run over the scheduled time.
- c. Schedule on days when public libraries, museums, and so on are open, so as to make use of local instructional resources and facilitate a wide range of activities.
- d. Use 2-hour blocks, but be sure they can be used flexibly. Lengthen class time when students are assembling or presenting what they’ve learned, and shorten the class time as demanded by the nature of the learning activities.
- e. Think about the relationship with class time for elective subjects. Devise a schedule that reflects the fact that class hours for integrated-type studies time occur in tandem with elective subjects

and the two must be balanced—an increase in the hours for one means a decrease in hours for the other.

- f. In cases where course time will be concentrated on certain days, build those days into the school's overall annual plan. (Yamato Prefectural Board of Education, 2000, p. 13)

In my experience teaching in Hatanaka's junior high schools from 1989-90 and in 1998, I had never witnessed the use of a two-hour block of instructional time, although half-days and full-days were used for special activities, such as class outings and school events. Daily class scheduling had seemed considerably more flexible than what I was accustomed to in the U.S., however, since each day had six class periods and students took a total of eight courses, so most courses had three to four lessons staggered throughout each week, and the weekly schedule was often revised to accommodate staff absences and the like. It was not unusual for Wednesday's third-period class, for instance, to be switched with Thursday's fifth-period class on a given week—and each day, one student from each homeroom would be assigned to confirm the daily class schedule posted on a designated chalkboard in or near the central staffroom and report back to his or her classmates.

In this sense, teachers in Hatanaka were used to the concept of flexible scheduling, but the regular use of two consecutive class periods on a given day for a required course like integrated studies—and adjusting the length of the class period according to the learning activities used—would be something new for them. For homeroom teachers, this means learning how to plan, organize, and lead lessons twice the length to which they are accustomed, and to maintain student interest and focus for that extended period of time. For other teachers and administrators, this means learning how

to fit a non-50-minute class period into the overall school schedule and rhythm of daily school life.

My fieldwork revealed some variation in how the national and prefectural guidelines above were translated into annual instructional schedules at each of the four junior high schools in Hatanaka. At every school, integrated studies was scheduled in the afternoon, usually 5th or 6th period of any day except Monday, when libraries and museums might be closed. However, the classes were scheduled in one-hour (not two-hour) blocks as a rule, and often with different grade levels scheduled on the same day, and even at the same time, contrary to the prefectural guidelines. Class scheduling remained flexible, however, with every school suspending or postponing integrated studies classes during midterm and final exam periods, and using concentrated blocks of between two hours and two or more days at certain points in the year for special integrated studies activities.

At each of the four schools, a combination of elective subjects and integrated studies class hours were used to make up the difference between the minimum overall annual school hours (980 at each grade level) and the total required hours for required subjects, ethics classes, and special activities (880 for 7th grade; 825 for 8th grade; and 745 for 9th grade), but with some differences in ratio and pattern. As shown in Table 4, for 7th grade, all four schools used the maximum number of integrated studies hours possible—with a ratio of 100:0 integrated studies to elective subjects class hours—but there was more divergence at the 8th and 9th grade levels. For 8th graders, three of the schools used ratios of 105:50 class hours, again opting for the maximum possible hours for integrated studies, while Minami JHS used a ratio of 85:70, offering its students more

time in elective subjects. Ninth graders at each school were scheduled to spend 235 hours per year in integrated studies and elective subjects combined—a much larger proportion (almost one-quarter) of their total annual instructional hours compared to either 7th or 8th grade. At two schools, 9th grade integrated studies and elective subjects class hours were scheduled in a ratio of 130:105 (the maximum and minimum of their respective ranges). At Kita JHS, the reported ratio was 135:100, slightly outside the specified ranges (and therefore technically out of compliance with the policy) but quite similar to the other two schools. Nishi JHS exhibited the only instance of class hours for elective subjects exceeding those for integrated studies (at any grade level at any school), with the ratio for 9th graders set at 105:130.

Table 4

*Annual Integrated Studies (IS) and Elective Subject (ES) Hours
by School and Grade Level for the 2002-03 School Year*

Grade Level	Higashi JHS	Kita JHS	Minami JHS	Nishi JHS	Combined Totals
7	IS: 100/year ES: 0/year	IS: 100/year ES: 0/year	IS: 100/year ES: 0/year	IS: 100/year ES: 0/year	100 hrs./year
8	IS: 105/year ES: 50/year	IS: 105/year ES: 50/year	IS: 85/year ES: 70/year	IS: 105/year ES: 50/year	155 hrs./year
9	IS: 130/year ES: 105/year	IS: 135/year ES: 100/year	IS: 130/year ES: 105/year	IS: 105/year ES: 130/year	235 hrs./year

Therefore, in virtually all cases (with the single exception of 9th graders at Nishi JHS), annual class hours for integrated studies were set at or above the maximum specified by the MEXT curriculum policy.

Overall, the implementation of the “innovative scheduling” strategy prescribed in the reform policy for integrated studies featured evidence of hybridization with existing practice in several ways. First, each of the junior high schools I studied in Hatanaka coordinated the total annual class hours for integrated studies with those for elective

subjects, in ratios that varied from school to school, but for the most part, entirely within the specified ranges. Each of the schools made use of concentrated blocks of class time for special integrated studies activities, as was previously done for such special activities as class field trips. Each school also suspended integrated studies classes during weeks on or near which midterm and final exams were held, preserving a conventional emphasis on intensive study of the core subjects included on entrance examinations.

While all schools incorporated the recommendation to schedule integrated studies classes on afternoons when museums and the like would be open, they retained the practice of using single 45- to 50-minute class periods as a rule, rather than the two-hour blocks recommended by the policy. Ironically, though the schools often scheduled integrated studies classes for different grade levels on the same day or class period, contrary to the prefectural guidelines, I did not find evidence that this was to facilitate the cross-grade-level interaction recommended elsewhere in the reform policy, so it is possible that this, too, was due to adherence to customary scheduling patterns, in which the scheduling of one grade level is independent from that of another grade level, except in subject areas requiring shared facilities, such as a gymnasium or art room. In accordance with McLaughlin's (1976) "mutual adaptation" model, there was variability in the way innovative scheduling was incorporated at each school.

One example of how the prescribed practice of innovative scheduling was hybridized with existing instructional practices appears below, in a vignette taken from a 7th-grade lesson I observed at Kita JHS, involving student presentations about an "off-campus learning" (*kougai gakushuu*) field trip similar to the "school excursions"

(Nemoto, 1999) that comprise a requisite, customary part of the junior high school co-curriculum in Japan.

On a Tuesday in late November 2003, toward the end of the second semester, all three of the 7th-grade homerooms (around 90 students total) and all seven of the 7th-grade teachers gathered during 5th and 6th period in a multi-purpose room on the first floor of Kita JHS. The students, in school uniforms (blue sailor suits for girls, black Prussian-military uniforms for boys) and stockinged feet, sat in rows on folding chairs in the carpeted room, grouped by homeroom and gender (two columns of boys next to two columns of girls for each homeroom)—as is customary for student assemblies—facing the podium and screen at the front of the room. At first, most of the teachers remained standing—and as the two-hour session progressed, eventually seated themselves—at the front, back, and right side of the room (there was no aisle space at the partition on the left), vigilantly monitoring student behavior.

For a few minutes after the 1:20 chime signaled the start of 5th period, four male and two female teachers moved around the room, encouraging students to find their seats (presumably in order by last name within each homeroom group) and asking them to sit down so the lesson could begin. The students were being noisy but not belligerent. I was seated in a row of chairs (for observers and parent visitors) at the back of the room, and soon a boy and a girl also planted themselves there and began chatting, clearly out of compliance with what the teachers were busily exhorting the students to do—sit in their proper places and be quiet.

At 1:29, a female student—perhaps a grade-level student leader, or simply a student appointed to serve on the “emcee committee”—spoke into the microphone at the podium, asking for quiet. When she began to announce the start of the presentation session, she was interrupted by the grade-level faculty leader, a burly 44-year-old art teacher named Mr. Motoyama. His call for silence was better heeded by the assembled students, and in the ensuing quiet, a homeroom teacher named Mr. Uchida came to the back and asked the two recalcitrant students near me to join their groups, which they grudgingly did.

After a renewed announcement by the student emcee, “The presentation session will begin,” Mr. Motoyama stood and addressed the now-silent assembly of students. With a serious expression and no-nonsense manner, he advised the students to listen to their classmates’ presentations as if they themselves were up front presenting, as they each would be, eventually. After Mr. Motoyama bowed and resumed his seat, the student emcee reclaimed the podium and asked Han (work-group) 1 from Homeroom A to come up and present, and Han 1 from Homeroom B to sit in the row of chairs in the “on deck” area to the right of the assembled students. Other student emcees dimmed the lights, and Group

1-A (two girls and a boy) began a PowerPoint presentation about their class trip to Kyoto.

In all, 18 groups (six mixed-gender *han* from each homeroom) gave five- to 10- minute presentations, in rotating order, with each group followed by a group from a different homeroom. Eight groups used Power Point, six used transparencies on the overhead projector and/or photographs on the Elmo “visual presenter” machine, and four used large handmade posters. The hand-lettering and illustrations on the posters and transparencies were generally clear and attractive, and exhibited a teenage penchant for bold and varied colors. The Power Point slide shows (with titles like, “7th Grade Kyoto Field Trip: Presentation About What We Learned”) were quite technologically sophisticated, featuring attractive photos, moving text and background graphics, various fonts, and even a few sound effects.

At 3:25, after the 18th group had just finished their presentation, two of the student emcees came to the microphone, asked for quiet, posed a rhetorical question about how the session had been, and thanked everyone for their participation. At 3:27, Mr. Motoyama stood and addressed the assembled 7th-graders, offering comments about the presentation session overall. The grade-level faculty leader emphasized what students had done well, mentioning that he had overheard certain boys telling their misbehaving classmates to shape up and pay attention. He also acknowledged how difficult it is to get up and speak in front of others, but then noted that nine of the 18 groups hadn’t performed as well as they might have. In closing, Mr. Motoyama reminded the students that today was not their last presentation, encouraged them to think about what they wanted to do and be as 9th-graders, and urged them to make up their minds to do even better in their future presentations. The students were dismissed to their homerooms around 3:30 (the official ending time for 6th period) and I stayed to help the non-homeroom teachers put away the dozens of folding chairs.

The lesson described above is an example of how innovative scheduling was used, in that the usual schedule was altered to provide double the usual class time for integrated studies on a particular day, allowing all students in one grade to gather for two consecutive class periods and share their presentations. It suggests that the use of such scheduling (and student grouping, as discussed in the next section) requires teachers to learn how to maintain student attention and discipline for a much longer period of time than the usual class periods to which they are accustomed, and in different ways than the

non-instructional grade-level and school assemblies that took place before the reform. During the two-hour session described above, the “audience” remained for the most part respectfully quiet and attentive, despite a certain redundancy in the topics presented (at least half the groups spoke about Kiyomizudera Temple, and another half the National Museum). This redundancy suggested to me that the groups, and the order of presentation, had not been determined by topic. More likely, students worked in their pre-existing homeroom *han* groups (each consisting of boys and girls, to encourage cross-gender interaction), collaboratively selecting two to three sites to visit from a given set of options determined by the grade-level faculty group. The order of presentation, continuously rotating between homerooms, was probably intended to preserve equity as well as audience focus, but it also afforded a certain degree of cross-homeroom interaction, as recommended by the reform.

Indeed, this lesson is also an example of other reform-prescribed practices (such as innovative student groupings, team-teaching, use of information technology, and student presentations about experiential learning activities) that teachers had to learn to hybridize with established practices (such as class field trips, the grouping of students by homeroom and *han* work groups, and shared responsibility for classroom management by student leaders and homeroom teachers). Not only is innovative scheduling used in conjunction with other practices prescribed by the reform, but it also seems to facilitate those practices. Two of those practices, cross-homeroom interaction and team-teaching, are examined in detail in the following section.

Team-teaching and innovative student groupings. Another innovation prescribed for integrated studies is the use of instructional groupings of students and teachers different from the conventional pattern of one teacher and around 30 (formerly 40 or more) students in a given class. The MEXT *Guidelines* recommends the use of various “learning configurations” of students and cooperative teaching involving multiple members of a school staff and/or members of the community:

In implementing learning activities for integrated-type studies time, consideration shall be given to...active use of instructional resources and learning environments in the community, and various instructional groupings and methods...Innovation regarding various learning configurations, such as learning in groups or multi-age groupings; leadership involving a unified teaching force and the cooperation of people in the community; and utilization of the instructional resources and learning environments in the community. (MEXT, 1999, p. 60)

Again, in my previous experience in Hatanaka schools, the emphasis on building community through homeroom groupings (*gakkyuu-zukuri*) and activities had been as evident at the junior high level as that described by Catherine Lewis (1995) and Nancy Sato (2004) at the elementary level. As a rule, homerooms stayed together throughout the day for academic instruction and even ate school lunch together with their homeroom teacher in their classroom. Students from different homerooms might mix during breaks between classes, grade-level activities (such as field trips), or after-school club activities, and students from different grade levels might be brought together for school assemblies, school events (such as sports field days), or other special activities, but even then, they would remain primarily in homeroom groupings.

In contrast to this pattern, the curriculum reform policy recommends cross-homeroom and cross-grade-level interaction during integrated studies classes:

In order to respond to the diverse interests and concerns of students and the demands of various learning activities, there is a need to actively employ a variety of innovative learning configurations, such as learning in groups or multi-age groupings. For instance, students may be grouped by interest or concern, mode of expression, research subject, and so on. There is a need to consider not only whole-grade activities involving cross-homeroom interaction, but multi-age groupings, in which students are linked with people of different ages and cultivate dispositions toward teaching and learning from each other. Utilization of cross-homeroom and cross-grade groups can enhance the diversity of students' interests, concerns, and learning experiences, and make better use of the talents of a variety of teachers. (MEXT, 1999, p. 60)

Like innovative scheduling, this prescription for innovative student groupings for instruction requires adjustment on the part of teachers and administrators (not to mention students), as they learn how to make instructional groupings work, in terms of logistics, pedagogy, classroom management, and student learning.

At all three of the junior high schools where I was able to conduct classroom observations, integrated studies courses made use of both individual homeroom lessons and mass lessons involving multiple homeroom classes. Integrated studies classes at all grade levels at each school were usually conducted in individual homerooms and led by the homeroom teacher. This is consistent with the manner in which “*doutoku no jikan*,” or ethics class, has traditionally been taught in Hatanaka’s junior high schools. (Like integrated studies, ethics is a required subject for which there is no official teacher specialization.)

However, integrated studies classes for all homerooms in a given grade level were often scheduled simultaneously on at least one day per week, and this facilitated the use of what I call “mass” lessons, in which all students in a given grade level assembled in a large multi-purpose room and instruction was led by one or more teachers from that grade level. These mass lessons usually occurred at the beginning or ending of a unit about a

given theme in the integrated studies curriculum for that grade level. While I believe that mass grade-level assemblies were indeed used prior to the advent of the integrated studies reform, for preparation and debriefing regarding grade-level activities—such as class trips and so on—their use for academic instruction *per se* was probably limited.

Therefore, integrated studies requires teachers to learn how to teach, as well as manage students, such large groups in one place at one time.

In addition to innovative student groupings, the reform policy also prescribes non-conventional teacher groupings for integrated studies. One such grouping involves collaboration by members of the school staff, and another involves collaboration between teachers and members of the community, as indicated by the *Guidelines*:

The instructors for this course will not be specialized teachers. Rather, it is absolutely necessary that the entire school staff, including principal, assistant principal, special education teachers, school nutritionists, and invited speakers, work as a unit to provide instruction...[O]nce the [curriculum content] has been decided, then the whole-school instructional plan can be decided, including appropriate learning activities, instructional methods, and a division of duties between teachers (from the perspective of tasks a teacher can perform individually versus more collaborative tasks). In this regard, there needs to be a major reform in the conventional subject-specific mindset of teachers at the junior high school level. Furthermore, instruction of integrated-type studies time should not be limited only to educators, but schools should obtain the cooperation of parents/guardians, local residents, resident experts, and so on, and use team teaching when appropriate, as innovation in instructional systems is desirable. (MEXT, 1999, p. 60-61)

When I interviewed the principal of Minami JHS, Mr. Kawaguchi, he described the benefits of such non-conventional teaching arrangements, which he saw as a major change in education since the time he was in junior high school, in this way:

Kawaguchi: One other difference is, up until now, the people who taught students were a fixed group. Now they are being taught by a variety of people, lots of different teachers—not just schoolteachers, but community teachers [guest speakers], and scholars, and people like you...So that

means the number of people who teach them has increased...[and] that enlarges [one's] outlook. It's not just schoolteachers from one sector [of society], so [one's] way of thinking gets broadened.

The practice of "team-teaching" is not unheard of in Japanese junior high schools. It has, in fact, become an expected—if contested—part of English education there since the inception, in the late 1980s, of the Japan Exchange in Teaching (JET) Program (see McConnell, 2000, 2002), the program through which I first worked in Hatanaka from 1989-90. Through the JET Program, MEXT hires thousands of native speakers of English annually to work as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in Japanese elementary and secondary schools on a temporary basis (usually one to three years). ALTs are usually college graduates who may or may not have teacher certification, teaching experience, or Japanese language proficiency. They are expected to team-teach with Japanese teachers of English, an arrangement which, particularly when first introduced, provoked both interest and resistance from classroom teachers in Japan, as explained in one anthropologist's study of the JET Program:

The Ministry of Education...was charged with providing guidance to offices of education and local schools regarding the team-teaching portion of the program...Seminars on "how to team-teach" spread like wildfire around the country; and virtually overnight, publication of step-by-step guidebooks on how to host an ALT became a cottage industry...My first introduction to the controversy over team teaching came when I attended a...meeting of...a national organization for Japanese teachers of English [JTLs]. According to its chair, the main purpose of the meeting was to help JTLs who were having trouble...with team teaching...While the Ministry of Education's main speaker at the JET Program orientation had glowingly reported that 75 percent of JTLs were very positive about team teaching, this session painted a much bleaker picture...On the one hand, the introduction of team teaching has led to great change in English education in Japan: one can go into any classroom and find the ALTs leading activities that never before seemed possible in the public school system. On the other hand, the degree to which Japanese teachers mark off these classes as distinct, both linguistically and conceptually, reveals that team teaching is best viewed as a type of situational accommodation

rather than as marking a wholesale change in attitude. (McConnell, 2000, p. 217)

Indeed, the now-ubiquitous presence of ALTs who team-teach with licensed teachers in junior high schools is one significant innovation Hatanaka educators mentioned when I asked them about generational changes in education in Japan. To the interview question, “How is the education that students at this school are currently receiving different from the education you received? Do you think those differences are good or bad, and why?,” the first response of two interviewees had to do with the presence of these non-conventional members of the teaching staff in schools. When a 45-year-old physical education teacher at Minami JHS made comparisons with his junior high school experience some 30 years earlier, he praised the results of the inclusion of ALTs in the education system, despite his admitted reservations about the introduction of foreign language education at earlier and earlier ages:

Wada: I think one clear difference is the ALTs in English education. There was no such thing back in my day...[T]hanks in great part to the ALTs, kids today have become able to speak [English] calmly, I guess you could say, without anxiety, compared to my generation. They just speak confidently using the English vocabulary they’ve got. But we didn’t have that kind of experience, so we get all flustered...freeze up and get all hesitant.

It is possible that my interviewees mentioned ALTs simply because of their exotic “foreign” status (and/or similarity to my own experience), but it may also stand out in their minds because of the novelty of its team-teaching component.

Instances in which Hatanaka’s junior high school teachers made use of team teaching in integrated studies included not only mass lessons, but also some individual homeroom lessons. I observed team-teaching being used with both types of student groupings, particularly when students were making presentations and/or working in

groups on projects or reports. In some cases, teachers with no homeroom classes would assist in individual homerooms, being able to work with a single group of students or answer individual questions while the homeroom teacher facilitated student presentations by the rest of the class. In other cases, all the teachers from a given grade-level group (both homeroom and non-homeroom teachers) would work together to facilitate a mass lesson—chaperoning an off-campus learning activity; overseeing a hands-on activity, such as paired practice using wheelchairs or keyboarding practice in a computer lab; assisting individual students, pairs, or groups with their separate activities; or simply helping with crowd control during a mass lesson, such as a two-hour student presentation session about a class trip.

In addition, team-teaching for integrated studies also had a less-visible aspect, which was described to me by Ms. Ito, an 8th-grade English teacher at Nishi JHS. She indicated that all the teachers in her grade group shared responsibility for setting up job shadowing, service learning visits, and so on for each homeroom class, as it was too big a job for individual homeroom teachers to do all by themselves. Other interviews and observations confirmed that this duty-sharing was also an aspect of team-teaching used by grade-level groups at the three other schools.

While team-teaching with a temporary, non-licensed teacher from another country may have become a familiar part of teaching practice for most English teachers in Hatanaka's junior high schools, team-teaching with colleagues and with members of the community is not a familiar part of the repertoire of most of the homeroom teachers of integrated studies. For them especially, this new practice will require learning how to organize the “division of duties between teachers” specified by the policy, as well as

inviting, planning with, and teaching with “non-school members of the community,” and publicizing their efforts in this regard, as stipulated in the MEXT *Guidelines*:

Since the learning activities in this course are likely to be linked to society and the community, there are numerous possible benefits of enlisting the cooperation of non-school members of the local community—first and foremost, parents/guardians. It is important to publicize widely outside the school the circumstances and results of activities, obtaining the responses and cooperation of various kinds from people in the community. In this way, students themselves can feel like a part of society, gain a sense of accomplishment of the learning activity—and truly acquire its benefits. Furthermore, this will deepen the appreciation of community members and local institutions for the school, and make garnering their cooperation even easier. (MEXT, 1999, p. 58; my translation)

In order to accomplish this, schools are advised to draw on existing connections with the community established through special activities (such as service learning or field trips), and to create “resource banks” or “lists...of human resources and facility resources...that could possibly be helpful for integrated-type studies time activities” (MEXT, 1999, p. 62; my translation).

When I asked educators in Hatanaka where teachers obtained the knowledge required to teach an inter-disciplinary course like integrated studies, five of my interviewees referred to the use of “local experts” or “guest speakers” to teach about topics outside the teachers’ areas of expertise, such as community history, local waste-recycling systems, or life in English-speaking countries and South America. At Kita JHS (which has about a dozen immigrant students from Brazil, and includes information about that country in units on international understanding), Mr. Rikuda, the curriculum coordinator, gave the following examples of team-teaching in integrated studies classes:

Rikuda: It varies from case to case. For instance, if it’s international understanding, we have volunteers from outside [the school] come in—for instance, for English, we might have an [ALT] come in, or for Portuguese,

some one else, and... teach a lesson, with the support of the homeroom teacher. That's what we did last year.

Unfortunately, I have no evidence about the types of "support" a homeroom teacher might provide a guest speaker, or the specific dynamics of such instruction, as I had no opportunity to observe (or act as) a guest speaker during any of my classroom observations. However, I found ample evidence that guest speakers—usually invited volunteers from the local community—help provide instruction in integrated studies classes at every junior high school in Hatanaka.

During my fieldwork, I did not observe any instances of "multi-age" or cross-grade-level student groupings, nor use of guest speakers *per se*, in Hatanaka's junior high schools (as I did at other schools in the prefecture), but I did observe several instances of team-teaching and cross-homeroom groupings. Together and separately, the use of innovative student groupings, as well as team-teaching collaborations between teacher colleagues and between teachers and community members, represent significant innovations to be incorporated into the teaching practice of Hatanaka junior high school teachers, though they are not entirely without precedent. As mentioned earlier, cross-homeroom groupings were previously used for non-instructional purposes, and team-teaching was usually limited to instances of one certified English teacher working with a non-certified assistant teacher from an English-speaking country.

For integrated studies, the incorporation of such practices involves extending the use of mass assemblies to include instructional activities, and expansion of team-teaching to include more teachers from more subject area specializations, as well as more non-certified "teachers" from the community. What this looks like in practice is illustrated by the following vignette, from a 7th-grade mass integrated studies lesson that I observed at

Nishi JHS. It involves the introduction of a unit related to the “hometown” theme included for the first time in the school’s 7th-grade integrated studies curriculum, to replace a previous theme that involved the cultivation of rice and vegetables in nearby fields, which had been scrapped due to scheduling conflicts and overlaps with the elementary school curriculum.

Instructional activities around the theme of “hometown” were designed to move in a past-present-future progression over the course of the three semesters of the school year. During the first semester of the year, 7th graders practiced basic keyboarding during integrated studies classes, and began studying the history of their hometown through a “Neighborhood Rediscovery” unit, in which they investigated their own neighborhoods (by means of tourist brochures and guest speakers), and made group presentations about a given festival or local historical site (such as the nearby birthplace of a famous samurai). During the second semester, 7th graders were to advance to using software programs and the internet, and to begin a new integrated studies unit called, “Hatanaka: Local Industries of the Past, Present, and Future,” in which they would be required to make after-school visits to places like city hall to gather pamphlets about living, working, and traveling in their town, and then to use their newly-gained computer skills to display the data they gathered in graphs and charts to use in summary presentations. During the third semester, the 7th graders were to focus on the future of Hatanaka, making pamphlets or directories about their town as they predict it will be in the future. The lesson described below, introducing students to the local industries unit during the second semester, was a mass lesson involving team-teaching by members of the 7th-grade faculty group.

The 7th-grade lesson on local industries took place on a Wednesday in mid-November 2003, around the midpoint of the second semester. All six

of the 7th-grade homerooms (around 200 students total) and all 11 of the 7th-grade teachers gathered during 5th period in a multi-purpose room on the third floor of Nishi JHS. The students, in stockinged feet, sat on the carpeted floor in rows by homeroom, gender, and last name, as is customary for school assemblies—a long row of boys from Homeroom 1 in order by family name, next to a row of girls from Homeroom 1 in order by family name, followed by a row of boys from Homeroom 2, and so on. Most of the teachers remained standing around the sides and back of the room, monitoring student behavior and disseminating handouts to students as needed.

Shortly after 1:35, the grade-level faculty leader, a thin tower of a man named Mr. Kodama, called the class to order. He gave a few curt reminders to the group about appropriate school attire, including the need to wear nametags properly and keep all buttons on their uniforms fastened. He then initiated the customary start-of-class protocol, including formal bows and greetings between students and teacher, and turned the microphone over to Mr. Murata, a 7th-grade homeroom teacher, social studies teacher, volleyball coach, and integrated studies chair for this grade level and the entire school.

The whole-class “orientation” to the local industries unit was led by Mr. Murata, a rather diminutive 43-year-old with large round spectacles and an engaging manner. He addressed the assembled 7th-graders for about a half-hour, introducing the rationale, goals, and expectations for the upcoming unit. To illustrate the usefulness of such study in real life, Mr. Murata spoke about his own travels, inside and outside of Japan, and the usefulness of being knowledgeable about one’s own place, as a student or an adult, offering examples of encounters with residents of other towns and members of volleyball teams from other cities. He praised the progress students had made during the last integrated studies unit, and alluded to their potential for further improvement (“I bet when you get to 9th grade, you’ll be able to do really awesome presentations”).

After 10 or 15 minutes of these introductory remarks, Mr. Murata asked the other teachers to help distribute a copy of a large (B5/ledger size) handout to each student. Entitled “7th Grade Integrated Studies - 2nd Semester - Investigation Activity - Local Industry and Tourism in Hatanaka,” it listed examples of local industries, and explained how groups of students would be assigned to each of 12 sites (nine local industries and three local tourist attractions). It also included a schedule of activities, a list of potential resources (such as brochures and the internet), and the types of information to be gleaned from such sources (such as population and production amounts). The lower right-hand quarter of the page was a tear-off section for students to return to their homeroom teacher after indicating on it their top three choices from the 12 possible site assignments.

As Mr. Murata explained the handout, section by section, he made a distinction between this investigation of the students' local community and the previous unit in which students investigated their neighborhoods. One difference he emphasized was the expectation in this unit that students would now be proficient enough at computer keyboarding to make use of their school's estimable technology resources to do research on the internet and create graphs to display their quantitative data.

Occasionally, Mr. Murata interrupted himself to ask a student or the whole assembly to "Quit talking," with homeroom teachers chiming in when the offender was a member of their particular class. At one point, Mr. Murata confronted one particularly disruptive boy (perhaps from his own homeroom?), bringing him to the front of the room, handing him the microphone, and saying, "If it's so important, share it with everyone." The patently embarrassed 7th grader remained mute, and after 30 or 60 seconds, Mr. Murata finally said, "Enough? Now listen to what I'm saying, from now on," and the boy resumed his seat.

Finally, after Mr. Murata explained the timeline of activities for the unit and asked students to return their topic selections to their homeroom teachers by the next class meeting, he led the customary end-of-class protocol (in which students rise to their feet, and the students and teacher bow to and thank each other). Then Mr. Kodama, the grade-level leader, took charge again and dismissed the students, homeroom by homeroom, around 2:15 (10 minutes earlier than the scheduled end of 5th period). Students and teachers filed out the two narrow doors on one side of the room, retrieving their school slippers in the hallway, and returning to their classrooms or the central staffroom on the first floor.

Clearly, this integrated studies lesson reflects a hybridization of the instructional strategies prescribed by the reform and practices consistent with more conventional pedagogical patterns. In terms of grouping, this was a mass lesson, involving non-traditional concurrent scheduling and grouping of all the homerooms in one grade level for instruction. However, traditional homeroom groupings were still maintained to a certain extent and used for classroom management (including student discipline and the distribution and collection of information during and after the assembly). In addition, none of the cross-homeroom or cross-grade student work groups recommended by the policy were used in this lesson, but students were told they would be allowed to choose their own research-site groups for the unit. This implied to me the potential for cross-

homeroom groupings, such as those I observed being used at Minami JHS for a 9th-grade service-learning activity.

In terms of instructors, this lesson featured no guest speakers (though they were scheduled for later in the unit, as indicated on the student handout), but it certainly included a form of team-teaching. While Mr. Murata led most of the instruction (and even some classroom management), all of his colleagues in the 7th-grade-level group were present and facilitated distribution of materials and discipline for the group of 200 students. While this may not conform exactly to intent of the policy's call for "leadership involving a unified teaching force" working "as a unit to provide instruction," it seems consistent with the policy clause stating that "it is also possible to have a teacher whose specialization is closest to a given integrated studies topic, from a conventional standpoint, lead instruction" (MEXT, 1999, p.60-61), since Mr. Murata was a social studies teacher with expertise and interest in local history. This lesson, an example of the hybridization of conventional and innovative instructional strategies during integrated studies reform implementation, illustrates one way in which teachers are learning to work together to manage innovative groupings of students and teachers. It also included an emphasis on experiential learning, the prescribed instructional strategy to which I shall turn next.

Experiential learning. The change in instructional approach noted most often by interviewees when asked to compare current junior high school education with their own is an increase in "experiential learning" (*taiken gakushuu*), something explicitly mandated by the integrated studies reform. Usually paired with "problem-solving"

(*mondai kaiketsu*) in reform policy documents, experiential learning includes a wide variety of educational experiences, according to the 1998 *Course of Study*:

During integrated-type studies time, each school shall implement educational activities that bring to life creativity and originality—such as cross-disciplinary, integrated-type studies and studies based on student interests and concerns—in accordance with the actual conditions of the students, school, and community...[and] active incorporation of problem-solving activities and experiential learning activities such as social experiences (like volunteering, experiences with nature, etc.), observations and experiments, field trips and investigations, presentations and debates, handicrafts and manufacturing. (MEXT, 1998, p. 3-4)

The rationale for this emphasis on experiential learning is given in the 1999

MEXT *Course of Study Explanation and Guidelines*:

Integrated-type studies time will involve the active incorporation of experiential-type learning and problem-solving-type learning, such as experiential learning with nature and with society ...It is believed—or at least expected—that all the knowledge, skills, qualities, and abilities acquired through study of the various subject areas will come together and function in a unified fashion within each student. However, in situations in which opportunities to realize and truly grasp the knowledge...acquired at school are limited due to the environment and life experiences of the student, there is a need to create such opportunities in a planned, deliberate manner...Through this type of activities, it is important to emphasize a comprehensive perspective on knowledge, particularly the relationship between knowledge gained at school and real life, and to make the knowledge and skills gained in each subject area work together in an integrated way in real life...In order for students to acquire such abilities, students must wrestle with problem-solving and actively engage in activities involving direct experience, rather than simply memorizing a given body of knowledge. Through concrete, direct experiences and interactions with physical objects, they can think about various things, and enhance their learning. By applying what they learn in these ways to various real-life problems, they can engage in self-cultivation and fashion better lives for themselves. This is the basis of “zest for living.” (MEXT, 1999, p. 55-59)

Data from interviews, classroom observations, and document review suggest that, to the educators implementing integrated studies in Hatanaka junior high schools, “experiential learning” includes a wide variety of experiences with nature and with

various members of the community and larger society. Interviewees used the term “*taiken*” to describe both teachers and students “actually doing things...looking and listening and feeling it with their own bodies;” “[going] outside of school and [visiting] places;” “[doing] something physical;” “what we have actually experienced, learned, and done for ourselves;” “learning through their five senses...seeing, hearing, writing;” “actually spending time going through it your own self...learning through one’s body...moving from passive [learning] to doing it on your own, thinking and studying for yourself;” and “seeing it with their own eyes, not just hearing about it, but making sure with their own eyes, and then, collecting written materials about it.” Those interviewed also gave examples of *taiken*, such as visits to social-welfare institutions (adult day care centers, etc.), public institutions (museums, city hall, etc.) or business workplaces; camping and field trips; service learning and job shadowing; making formal phone calls and writing thank you letters to guest speakers; interacting with nature (on school trips to outdoor nature centers) and the local community (during special events/festivals); group investigations; observations and interviews; creation of webpages, reports, and other products; and student presentations (computer-assisted and otherwise). They also used contrasting non-examples to indicate what *taiken* is *not*: “just reading a book...about [something]” and “[traditional] academic ability” as measured by entrance exams.

Many of the experiential learning activities used in integrated studies classes in Hatanaka’s junior high schools had had previous incarnations, often as “special activities,” “school events,” or “activities to promote originality” in the pre-reform curriculum. As mentioned earlier, the appropriation of pre-existing activities and their incorporation into the new integrated studies curriculum is more than simply a clever and

practical form of recycling that preserves traditions and saves both work and “face” for local educators. Instead, it is a deliberate strategy, explicitly encouraged by MEXT in the national curriculum guidelines, and a prime example of the principle of building upon existing technologies for continuous improvement. During my fieldwork, I found that at all four junior high schools in Hatanaka, hybridization involved the incorporation of existing special events and activities into the integrated studies curriculum. In effect, this incorporation resulted in the “transfer” of mandated non-academic school activities (e.g., “special activities” and “activities to promote originality”) into the mandated “academic” portion of the curriculum (the integrated studies course), as explained below.

By comparing school handbooks from the 1997-98 and 2002-03 school years, I was able to get an idea of how this transfer was reflected in the curricula at Hatanaka’s junior high schools. According to the 1997-98 school administrative handbooks (as described in Chapter 3), Hatanaka junior high schools allocated between 47 and 210 total annual school hours to something called “activities to promote originality,” (terminology that is echoed—not coincidentally—in the recommendations of the 1998 Curriculum Council). As you can see in the comparison chart in Table 5, this category of class hours had been eliminated by the 2002-03 school year, and its allotted hours more than taken up by the previously non-existent category of integrated studies. While I have very little data about the nature of “activities to promote originality” used at Hatanaka schools prior to the reform, they are cited as a model for integrated studies activities in the MEXT *Guidelines*, and are therefore likely represented in some way in the new integrated studies curriculum.

Table 5

Annual Class Hours by School and Grade Level
(from 1997-98 & 2002-03 handbooks from each school)

Subject	School Year	Higashi JHS			Kita JHS			Minami JHS			Nishi JHS		
		7 th	8 th	9 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	7 th	8 th	9 th
Basic Subjects	'97-98	980	945	945	980	945	945	980	945	945	980	945	945
	'02-03	810	755	675	810	755	675	810	755	675	810	755	675
Elective Subjects	'97-98	0	35	70	0	35	35	0	35	35	0	35	35
	'02-03	0	50	105	0	50	100	0	70	105	0	50	130
Ethics	'97-98	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
	'02-03	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
Special* Activities	'97-98	152	175	137	159	180	154	172	152	157	190	185	183
	'02-03	93	86	97	124	153	109	124	131	134	136	139	143
Activities to Promote Originality	'97-98	11	6	30	50	50	50	50	51	50	70	70	70
	'02-03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Integrtd. Studies	'97-98	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	'02-03	100	105	130	100	105	135	100	85	130	100	105	105
Total School Hours	'97-98	1167	1190	1152	1174	1195	1169	1187	1087	1086	1205	1200	1198
	'02-03	1038	1031	1042	1069	1098	1054	1069	1076	1079	1071	1084	1088

*includes: in 1997-98, homeroom activities, student council activities, school events, and after-school club activities; in 2002-03, homeroom activities, student council activities, and school events at all schools, plus grade-level activities (20 hours/year at each grade level) at Nishi JHS only

The curriculum reform's general reduction in required class hours for academic subjects also brought a concurrent reduction (by 50%) in time allocated for *tokubetsu katsudou*, or "special activities," such as homeroom and grade-level activities, student council activities, club activities, and school events. From 1980-1991, the national curriculum required 70 hours of special activities per year. This was reduced to a range of 35 to 70 hours per year for 1992-2001, and to just 35 hours per year beginning in 2002 (Ishizaka, 2001, p. 36). (See Cummings, 2003b, for a discussion of "co-curriculum" such as this in Japanese, Russian, and English schools.)

As shown in Table 6, some elements of the "special activities" curriculum were largely or completely unchanged by the curriculum reform, while others were modified or completely eliminated. The required class hours for homeroom activities remained at

35 per year for every grade level at every school. Technically, this is now the only type of special activity officially allocated time from the overall total of 980 annual class hours per grade level, and it is listed in that way in the 2002-03 school handbooks. However, the other subcategories that previously comprised special activities are now listed in a separate “special activities” category in the handbooks, and virtually all of them have been reduced in terms of annual hours.

Table 6

Breakdown of Annual Class Hours for Special Activities by School and Grade Level (from 1997-98 and 2002-03 handbooks from each school)

Subject	Year:	Higashi JHS			Kita JHS			Minami JHS			Nishi JHS		
		7 th	8 th	9 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	7 th	8 th	9 th
Homerm. Activities	1997-98	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
	2002-03	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
Grade Level Activities	1997-98	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2002-03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	20	20
Student Council Activities	1997-98	10	10	10	14	14	14	10	10	10	20	25	23
	2002-03	9	9	9	10	10	10	20	20	20	10	15	13
Club Activities	1997-98	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
	2002-03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
School Events	1997-98	72	95	57	75	96	70	92	72	77	100	90	90
	2002-03	49	42	53	79	108	64	69	76	79	71	69	75
Special Activities	1997-98	152	175	137	159	180	154	172	152	157	190	185	183
	2002-03	93	86	97	124	153	109	124	131	134	136	139	143

For example, the required hours for after-school club activities (including sports clubs, band, and other types of clubs) were reduced from 35 per year to zero five years later at all four schools. (This does not mean, however, that students and coaches no longer participate in after-school clubs, merely that participation is no longer required, but encouraged.) While the required hours for student council activities were doubled at Minami JHS during the five-year interval, they were reduced at the other three schools, by an average of 28%. “Grade-level activities” were not even counted in the special

activities category by any school in 1997-98, and only by one school (Nishi JHS) in 2002-03, which allotted 20 hours per year for each grade level. At every school, reductions in traditional special activities occurred in the number of hours allotted for *gakkou gyoudji*, or “school events,” such as school ceremonies, field trips, arts and cultural events, sporting events, and school cleanup activities, by an average of 19%.

Of the many special events and activities I observed being incorporated into the integrated studies curriculum in Hatanaka’s schools, perhaps the most obvious example is that of the “Nature’s Classroom” overnight camp undertaken by all 7th graders at all four schools. This had been a traditional part of the 7th-grade curriculum for years, and now formed a natural link with the “environment” theme for 7th graders at Minami JHS and Kita JHS, but was allocated integrated studies class hours even at schools without such themes. Mr. Kawaguchi, the principal at Minami JHS mentioned it to me as an example of an experiential learning activity that had been recycled, so to speak, into a part of the integrated studies curriculum:

Kawaguchi: In the past, we had various experiential learning activities that we are continuing to use now. For instance, in 7th grade, we have had “Nature’s Classroom”—centered on interacting with nature—from way back when until now.

Other examples of integrated studies experiential learning activities that had previous incarnations in the Hatanaka junior high school curricula include volunteering and service learning; field trips to the local Spring Festival, City Founding Festival, and so on; events involving the PTA and/or parent-child activities; and class field trips.

As shown in Table 7, the experiential learning activities used for integrated studies at Hatanaka’s four junior high schools include a broad range of topic areas. Several schools use similar instructional activities in their respective integrated studies

curricula (albeit at differing grade levels), including outdoor camping, job shadowing, service learning activities, “off-campus learning” field trips, and lessons involving wheelchair use, sign language, and/or simulations of visual-, hearing-, and age-related impairments. Many of these activities derive from pre-reform practices. In sum, the incorporation of existing practices, such as “activities to promote originality” and “special activities,” into the new integrated studies curriculum in Hatanaka junior high schools comprises a deliberate, premeditated, and gradual combination of such “extras” with the mainstream academic curriculum of required courses, simultaneously preserving school traditions and capitalizing on prior practice.

Table 7

Integrated Studies Experiential Learning Activities by School and Grade Level
(from official publications by each school, interviews, and observations)

Grade Level	Higashi JHS	Kita JHS	Minami JHS	Nishi JHS
7	“Nature’s Classroom” overnight camp; volunteering/ service learning (assisting elderly/disabled, wheelchair use); “Family Forum” planting flowers & volunteering; information technology	“Nature’s Classroom” overnight camp; Class trip to Kyoto; volunteering/ service learning/eye-mask blindness simulation; culture festival; information technology (15 hrs.)	“Nature’s Classroom” overnight camp; radio travelogue about city walk; gardening; out-of-school investigations of community; information technology (5 hrs.)	“Nature’s Classroom” overnight camp; field trip to watch local festival; “technology basics” (25 hrs.)
8	Class trip to Kyoto; job shadowing; “Family Forum” New Year’s celebration with elderly; information technology	Class trip to Osaka; wheelchair use; culture festival; job shadowing; information technology (15 hrs.)	Class trip to Nagoya; job shadowing; volunteering/ <i>machi-zukuri</i> at City Anniversary Festival	Class trip to Kyoto; job shadowing; volunteering/ service learning; field trip to watch local festival
9	Class trip to Tokyo; high school visits; “Family Forum” with sports/games & cooking; information technology	Class trip to Tokyo; hearing-impaired simulation; culture festival; information technology (15 hrs.)	Service learning/ volunteering (wheelchairs, sign language, assisting those w/ disabilities)	Class trip to Tokyo (including embassy visits); field trip to watch local festival

Even though many of the experiential learning activities described above build on existing traditions, seven of the educators I interviewed indicated that such activities were much less prevalent when they were junior high school students. In general, the interviewees viewed this as a positive development, as indicated by an 8th-grade art

teacher from Higashi JHS, who attended junior high school about 30 years ago, and who saw experiential learning as a means to broadening students' perspectives:

Iida: Compared to when I was in school, long ago [chuckles], the amount of experiential learning has increased...Experiential learning about social welfare and volunteer activities and then...job shadowing...Being able to have those kinds of experiences while in junior high school is a wonderful experience, I believe. The education we had was, well...going out and doing social welfare activities and...visiting old folks' homes and things—we never did those kinds of things...

AMH: Never?

Iida: Not at all. And then, we didn't do job shadowing or anything. So kids nowadays are able to do a lot more experiential learning, and are able to broaden their viewpoints [*shiya*], and I think that's a good thing.

The Minami JHS curriculum coordinator, age 50, also deemed the increase in experiential learning as a positive change, at least in terms of making learning more accessible to more students:

Taguchi: [When I was in junior high] there weren't any videos, either. Experiments, too, we hardly had any of those. Now they use a lot, but...

AMH: Oh, you didn't have very many? I wonder why not.

Taguchi: Well, it seemed to be "*oshiekomi*" back then—cramming you full of facts, and then seeing how many points you could get.

AMH: How many points--you mean, on a test?

Taguchi: Yes. Another reason for few experiments was probably the lack of equipment. There were also a lot of students [per class]. One class had about 50 students in it, so...when I started teaching, there were 45 students per class. Now it's down to 40 students...When I was in high school, we had 55 students in our [homeroom] class. So...with numbers like those, you can't really do experiments, right? And then...we didn't do much of outside-of-school learning [*soto ni manabi ni iku koto*], either.

AMH: Outside-of-school learning? Like your students going to [the recycling center]?

Taguchi: That's right. Going out of school and studying something...we didn't have that, either...Now there are personal computers, too—we didn't have those before, either. Kids these days are privileged, don't you think?

AMH: And do you think having [those kinds of things] now is a good change or not?

Taguchi: Probably a good change.

AMH: Why?

Taguchi: Now students can understand more easily, even if they don't have much ability. They can see the pictures even if they can't read/understand what's written there. I think that is a type of "experiential learning"—using one's vision.

The principal of Minami JHS cited one benefit of experiential learning as increasing student internalization of what they learn:

Kawaguchi: Experiential learning activities have increased, and this is a good change.

AMH: Why do you think it is good?

Kawaguchi: Because students actually see it for themselves—they can learn through their five senses and experiences—I mean, seeing, hearing, writing... Since they learn it through their own activity, it becomes their own thing, they internalize it. You could say, it becomes the basis for their zest for living, more than something they just heard.

However, even educators who praised the increase in experiential learning mentioned the potential drawbacks of such an increase, such as the perceived decrease in students' academic ability in basic subjects, for which the annual class hours have been reduced by an average of 30% through the current curriculum reform (see Azuma, 2002). The principals of Minami JHS and Kita JHS expressed concern that students were no longer gaining a thorough grounding in "basic" academic subjects, and the curriculum coordinator at Nishi JHS contrasted the benefits of experiential learning with the exposure to greater amounts of more challenging academic content in the past:

Tamura: The [academic] content itself was greater in quantity... than it is now—with the textbooks being thicker and the content including more difficult things, I believe. The good part about [education] now is the increase in experiential learning—moving from passive [learning] to doing it on your own, thinking and studying for yourself. That's a good thing, I believe, but it's just... well, something I'm a bit... worried about is... it's important to be able to think for yourself, and have practical abilities, but if they don't get a firm grasp on basic content... no matter how much you ask them to think on their own or do things on their own, they won't be able to do it—they don't have anything to use as a base. That's what we need to be sure to give them, but... I believe, well... there's a bit of a lack in that area.

AMH: In basic knowledge?

Tamura: Yes, that's right...

AMH: Has the idea come up to use more experiential learning, say, in a regular subject area course?

Tamura: [chuckles] Well...one thing is, in integrated studies, they use computers a lot...Some teachers are using computers [in their classes] more than they used to...even in regular subject areas. So that effect [of integrated studies] probably occurs. Even the textbooks are changing. Now they contain more experiments than before, and students no longer have to write the exact answer all the time—approximating is OK.

As indicated by many of the interviewees, certain types of instructional activities and technological tools (such as videos, computers, and so on) involved in experiential learning for integrated studies were not even available when they were students. Even as adults, some of the teachers had limited experience with such activities and tools, and therefore faced the prospect of having to teach students something with which they themselves were unfamiliar. A prime example of this is the presentations (particularly computer-assisted presentations) that students were expected to make about their investigations and other activities in integrated studies class. The Kita JHS curriculum coordinator (an English teacher by training) explained the rationale for the emphasis on such presentations, which constituted part of the integrated studies curriculum at all four junior high schools:

Rikuda: In the past, well, the memorization of facts/knowledge, and then, how much knowledge you can memorize...was how our education was...measured. Now it's not, just how much can you remember, but whether you can use it. For example...things like presenting your own thoughts, and investigating something...there are lots of different ways to investigate things, too, now that we aren't limited to just books, but have computers and media and lots of other tools...so, being able to use those tools, too. In presenting, too, it's not just how well you can talk, but there are lots of other things...

AMH: Like Power Point? I saw the 7th graders using Power Point in their presentations...

Tamura: Yes, that's right. So that's a big difference. And I think it's a good thing...because even if you have a lot of knowledge, but can't use it,

it means nothing...For instance, in English—we're told more and more that it's not just reading and writing [anymore], it's expressing yourself, [so] you have to be able to communicate [listen and speak] as well.

A 7th-grade English teacher spoke frankly about how she coped with her own lack of computer proficiency by learning “along with” her students:

Murano: Right now, we are teaching students how to make presentations. But I myself have never even made a presentation! That's no good. It's very difficult to teach students to do something that I haven't even done. I don't know from my experience what's difficult or what the problems are. The students just go ahead and try it, and then when they ask, “What do I do here?”, [I say] “Hm...what *do* you do?” [laughs] That's a little dicey... In the case of our school, the students end up moving ahead of the teachers...At other schools, they probably don't really do presentations—just write in marker on big sheets of paper...and [hold them up] in front of everyone and speak, but doing presentations using the computer...the teachers just... aren't used to it. We don't know what to tell the students [to guide them].

AMH: So in that case, what do you do? When you have the students use computers...?

Murano: Well, we just...learn along with them, as we do it—together.

As shown by this teacher's comments, the lack of expertise among teachers concerns not only content (such as environmental issues, international understanding, and so on) and tools (such as computers and presentation software) but also something that seems consistent with Shulman's (1987) “pedagogical content knowledge.” Lacking personal experience in learning how to do something, in this teacher's opinion, limited her ability to detect and address areas in which students might struggle during their own learning process. In this way, expanding on the traditional practice of experiential learning, to provide students with new and more numerous experiential learning opportunities in integrated studies, places multiple demands on teachers, including the need to learn how to make use of unfamiliar instructional content, activities, and technological tools, as well

as challenges these may pose for students, and how to help students handle those challenges.

Although various experiential-learning activities existed in Hatanaka's junior high schools prior to integrated studies, they were for the most part occasional and special activities, not regular components of a required weekly course. For the reasons outlined above, planning for and carrying out integrated studies lessons focused on experiential learning on a regular basis can be quite demanding of teachers' time, energy, and creativity, as they learn to hybridize familiar practices with content, groupings, collaborative partnerships, activities, equipment, technology, and lesson planning techniques that may be quite unfamiliar. (See Chapter 6 for a discussion of how integrated studies implementation has increased teachers' workloads.)

The following vignettes offer examples of how existing and new practices were hybridized for an experiential learning unit for integrated studies. They come from my observations of 8th-grade homeroom lessons at Minami JHS and Nishi JHS in which students made plans for a field trip to a nearby city. Both lessons occurred during second semester, when 8th graders at each school were scheduled to spend one day on a class trip to Nagoya (Minami JHS) and Kyoto (Nishi JHS) as part of an "off-campus learning" unit (similar to the class trip to Kyoto by Kita JHS 7th graders described in an earlier section of this chapter). The only class trips to large cities that I remembered from teaching in Hatanaka 14 years earlier were the graduation trips (*shuugaku ryokou*) made by 9th graders during their last semester in junior high school. Now, however, class trips were being undertaken by 8th graders at all four schools I visited, with at least part of the trip

(including preparation and/or debriefing activities) comprising an “off-campus learning” (*kougai gakushuu*) unit for integrated studies.

At Minami JHS, this second-semester unit took place after the job-shadowing activities and “community-building” (*machi-zukuri*) activities (involving participation in a local festival) of the 8th graders’ first semester of integrated studies, and before their studies of cultural topics planned for the third semester. No part of the trip was regarded as “school event” time on the annual schedule (as happened at the other three schools), but rather the planning, execution, and debriefing were all deemed part of regular instructional hours in the integrated studies curriculum. During the trip-preparation lesson, students were to finalize their plans regarding the themes they would investigate in groups during the trip they were to take the following week, as reflected in the following excerpt from my field notes.

The class-trip preparation lesson at Minami JHS occurred during 5th period (1:35-2:25pm) on a Wednesday in late October, a few days after second-semester midterm examinations had ended, and nine days prior to the scheduled trip to Nagoya. Before visiting the 8th-grade homerooms, I was escorted by Mr. Taguchi, the school’s curriculum coordinator, and Ms. Ise, the grade-level faculty leader, to an unused classroom on the 8th-grade hallway, where they gave me an overview of the 8th-grade integrated studies curriculum and this off-campus learning unit in particular. They explained that, during the previous semester, the 8th graders had begun researching careers and had interacted with different people in the community by taking part in the City Founding Anniversary Festival (during summer vacation!), building a mini-float from recycled plastic bottles, taking part in festival parades, and assisting with setup and cleanup. During third semester, students were to begin investigating cultural issues with an eye toward their 9th-grade graduation trip. Before that, however, the 8th graders were to engage in “off-campus learning” related to the current second-semester theme of “the environment around us.” Seventeen of the annual total of 100 class hours for 8th-grade integrated studies was devoted to this unit, centered around a class trip to Nagoya. The class trip had basically been arranged by Ms. Ise and Mr. Taguchi, they informed me, along with another 8th-grade teacher who had

traveled to Nagoya twice during summer break to gather maps and other information for use during this unit.

Ms. Ise and Mr. Taguchi informed me that, over the past decade or so, the traditional format of class trips, in which the whole group would travel from site to site en masse, escorted by a flag-carrying professional tour guide (*gaido-san*), had been abandoned in favor of students moving around independently in *han* work groups. The small-group format would also be used for this 8th-grade off-campus learning trip. Earlier this semester, each *han* (most consisting of three boys and three girls) had been supplied with a map of Nagoya and other information, and had drafted tentative plans for their group's visit to the city, including how much money to bring, whether to bring or buy lunch, and possible places to visit within the given time frame. Then, two travel agents had come to the school to listen to the students' tentative plans for making their way around the city and to offer them advice. Today, each of the *han* groups (five or six groups in each of the five homerooms) was to revise and begin finalizing those plans. The students had been given specific instructions about selecting a theme for their day-long trip and choosing no fewer than three places related to that theme to visit. In order to ensure that the students gained experience using mass transit (trains and subways), they were instructed to choose places located in disparate sections of the city. One of their destinations had to be chosen from a set of three key attractions—Nagoya Castle, Nagoya Zoo, and the Nagoya Harbor area (boasting an aquarium and science museum); another destination from a longer list of "recommended educational sites" such as museums and historical sites; and the third destination was left to the group's discretion, and could include shopping centers or other non-education-related sites.

Ms. Ise accompanied me as I visited three of the 8th-grade homerooms, where I found about 30 uniform-clad students per class working in mixed-gender groups of five or six. Each *han* had clustered its five or six desks together, and most appeared to be engaged in lively conversation about plans for their upcoming trip. The fact that student groups were more or less equally divided by gender suggested to me that they were organized not exclusively, or even primarily, by theme of study. The students were expected to plan their trip in minute detail, including train departure and arrival times, stops to check in with teachers at given checkpoints, admission fees for attractions, and so on. Finally, each group was also expected to devise a seating chart for the chartered train they would take to Nagoya and back. Ms. Ise told me that the 8th-grade teachers were keeping track of the students' deportment, and assigning demerits to students exhibiting inappropriate behavior, with possible trip-related consequences, such as not being able to bring extra spending money on the trip. When I asked what would happen if a student received more than one demerit during the trip unit, Ms. Ise told me that would call for a meeting with the group and/or the whole class, during which they would talk to the student in question about his/her behavior.

In every classroom we visited, Ms. Ise circulated among the student groups, offering assistance and asking questions, and soon I began following her lead and engaging students in conversations about their work. The students and their teachers seemed unfazed by our involvement in their lesson. I noticed that many students took notes on sheets of paper in addition to the single worksheet per group on which one member of the group recorded final decisions about themes, destinations, times, costs, and modes of transportation as they were made. Some groups had written down rather unimaginative themes like “getting to know Nagoya,” and I wondered whether or how they would be able to pursue “research” focused on what seemed more like the means than the aim of the unit. Not surprisingly, several groups chose themes like “environmental issues” or “living things,” in keeping with the current 8th-grade integrated studies theme of “the environment around us.” In some cases, however, the relationship between the selected theme and destinations seemed tenuous at best. When I asked one group how their visit to a famous shrine related to their theme of “environmental issues,” they had no ready answer (although, I later realized, they could supposedly have built an argument on Shinto’s animistic reverence for all of nature).

This trip-preparation lesson at Minami JHS is a good example of the grade-level teacher collaboration—particularly pre-trip collaboration—involved in incorporating existing school events, such as class trips, into experiential learning units in the integrated studies curriculum. A similar lesson I observed at Nishi JHS illustrates more innovative student groupings and even broader staff collaboration before, during, and after an 8th-grade class trip to Kyoto.

At Nishi JHS, the 8th graders had taken part in job-shadowing and service-learning activities, as well as a field trip to the local Spring Festival, during the first semester, and at the time of my observations were finishing summary reports about the job shadowing unit, before spending the latter half of the school year studying human rights and international understanding. Their class trip to Kyoto was counted as six hours of “school event” time on the annual schedule, but several hours of integrated studies class time were used for the preparation before and summary reports after the trip.

During the lesson, students were to assemble booklets that would serve as both guidebooks and journals for the trip they were to take the following Wednesday.

The 8th-grade class trip preparation lesson at Nishi JHS took place in individual homerooms during 6th period (2:15-3:00pm) on a Wednesday in early November 2003, around the middle of the second semester. In each of the seven 8th-grade homerooms I visited, I found the same general pattern. At first, the uniform-clad students (around 35 per class) were seated in rows, facing the teacher at the front of the room as s/he explained how to assemble the pre-printed pages of the booklet. Then, with much scraping of metal legs on the wooden floor, the students moved their desks and chairs into groups of five to six students each to complete the task and finalize decisions about information to be recorded in the booklets, including budgets, schedules, and seating assignments. These *han* work groups were mostly single-gender, and had been specially formed for the purposes of this off-campus learning unit, in which students were to study in topic-specific groups.

The students were expected to plan their trip to Kyoto in minute detail. Each homeroom used identical handouts to construct the pocket-sized trip booklet which, when finished, consisted of over 30 pages of maps, worksheets, and so on related to the students' investigations of selected sites in Kyoto. In Homeroom 2-5, Ms. Ito, a gamine 26-year-old English teacher, distributed blue and white half-sheets, making comments like, "There's a whole lot of these! Yes, there are gobs!...Does everyone have nine handouts?...OK, here comes the tough part." She then gave specific instructions about how to fold and assemble the handouts into a booklet, such as, "Fold it so page three and page four are inside," as she demonstrated with her own half-sheet at the front of the room. Several of the pages featured maps, and one page labeled "Money to Take Along" had space for students to record their budget for the trip. There were also pages on which students were to take notes on each "field trip site" visited and to record their impressions (*kansou*) about each site. The inclusion of one page per site for a souvenir photograph (*kinen shashin*) implied that these booklets were to become albums or keepsakes to which students would refer in the future, in addition to their immediate function of providing structure for a rather complex, collaborative learning activity.

In Homeroom 2-1, the ever-cheerful Ms. Oka became briefly crestfallen when she suddenly ran short of handouts when distributing them to her students. As she left the classroom to get extra copies from a colleague down the hall, her students remained seated and waited quietly. A few minutes later, Ms. Oka was back and giving instructions with her usual smile: "Once you've put the pages in order and stapled it together, fill in the page about what time you will get to which destination and so on...Make sure your group leader [*hanchou*] knows who is going to sit in which seat on the bus there and back...Once you've got everything filled

in, you're done." In two other classrooms, drawings on the chalkboard served as visual aids—in one, a sketch of how to assemble the booklet pages, and in the other, a seating chart for the bus, on which students were filling in names with chalk.

A week later, on the day of the trip, the principal's "Nishi JHS Daily Report (No. 119)," a half-sheet distributed to every teacher's desk, began with a paragraph about the 8th graders' trip to Kyoto. Above the customary lists of schedule changes and staff members on leave or business trips appeared the following:

**8th Grade Off-Campus Learning: Theme—
Let's Learn Together [About] Kyoto's Culture**

The day of the 8th-grade off-campus study trip has come, and this morning it seems we're blessed at long last with good weather. At this time of year, I believe we will be able to see the best Kyoto has to offer. I think the students will work hard in their theme-specific groups, doing investigations until their research produces results. I hope they also use this as a positive stepping stone toward next year's class trip.

Starting/Ending Points:

Higashi Honganji Temple, Heian Shrine, Kinkakuji Temple, Botanic Gardens

Checkpoints:

Nijo Castle, Sanjusangendou Temple, Ginkakuji Temple, Kiyomizudera Temple

Optional Sites to Visit: various

Here's to an orderly and fruitful trip to Kyoto—we'll be back!

And the day after the trip, the principal's "Nishi JHS Daily Report (No. 120)," began with the following:

Off-Campus Study Trip to Kyoto Completed Successfully

The 8th-grade off-campus study trip to Kyoto took place under blue skies, and all homerooms returned safely to school at 5:00pm, as scheduled, with no accidents or illness. I'm glad about this, since safety is our number one priority. The theme was "Let's Learn Together." The major goal was for students to move around and complete an activity in small groups. I was invited to go along with the group, and at the departure meeting, I told them, "Please be aware of the need to be on time." It seems that a number of groups were unable to stay on schedule, but I'm told this will be addressed at an assembly in the 3rd-floor all-purpose room after cleaning time [today]. Eighth-grade teachers, thank you for your cooperation in this. Coaches, please understand that this may delay the start of after-school practices.

While the trip-preparation lesson at Nishi JHS was quite similar to the one I observed at Minami JHS—particularly in terms of content—there were subtle differences in the ways that existing school events were hybridized into integrated studies experiential learning units at each school—particularly in terms of student groupings, staff collaboration, and allocation of class hours on the master schedule. At both schools, the lesson took place in individual homerooms and instruction was led by the homeroom teacher, but at Nishi JHS, student grouping within homerooms consisted of theme-specific, student-selected groups (as specified by the curriculum reform policy), in contrast to the groups at Minami JHS, which were organized in more conventional terms of gender equity and administrative convenience.

While both lessons involved the “less-visible aspect” of team-teaching described to me by Ms. Ito—the collaborative development of integrated studies curriculum and materials by members of grade-level faculty groups—this was perhaps more apparent in the lesson at Nishi JHS, during which students in all seven homerooms assembled identical guidebooks for their trip to Kyoto. Like the less-elaborate worksheets used at

Minami JHS, the numerous handouts for the Nishi JHS guidebooks had been developed by one or more members of the grade-level group for all 8th-grade homeroom teachers to share (making it easy for Ms. Oka to obtain extra handouts from her colleague when she suddenly ran short during class). In addition, at both schools, non-8th-grade teachers (such as the principal) accompanied the 8th graders on their trip, suggesting an element of broader staff collaboration in terms of chaperoning the trip, staffing the checkpoints, and so on (and at least at Nishi JHS, holding a debriefing assembly after the trip).

In the case of both schools, this 8th-grade class trip builds on not one, but two, school events (*gakkou gyouji*) that had been part of the curriculum at all the junior high schools in Hatanaka for years prior to the reform. On one hand, this class trip comprises an extension of the concept of the traditional 9th-grade graduation trip, providing the 8th-graders with a “trial run” experience in creating a plan and navigating a large, unfamiliar city in their *han* groups. On the other hand, the trip also represents an expansion of the traditional 8th-grade “class excursion” (*ensoku*), which usually involved a field trip within the students’ own prefecture or town, during which students were sometimes expected to work individually to produce sketches or other illustrations of scenes they encountered. Such “class excursions” or “off-campus learning” activities were listed as school events for 8th graders in the 1997-98 school handbooks for each of Hatanaka’s junior high schools. In the 2002-03 handbooks, the term “class excursion” had disappeared and been replaced by “off campus learning” (at Nishi JHS, Kita JHS, and Higashi JHS) or by nothing at all (at Minami JHS) in the school event listing. As noted earlier, the class hours involved in planning and taking this 8th-grade class trip were allocated completely to integrated studies instructional time at Minami JHS, but split between instructional

time and “school event” time at Nishi JHS. (Interestingly, at Minami JHS, while the 8th-grade class trip was not counted as a school event, the 7th-grade overnight camping trip was counted as 12 hours of school event time.)

Indeed, “off-campus learning” units involving class trips comprised part of the integrated studies curriculum at all four junior high schools in Hatanaka. While the relationship between such off-campus learning units and the 8th-grade integrated studies themes at each school (i.e., “career exploration,” “human rights,” “service learning,” “international understanding,” and “environmental issues”) seemed to me neither direct nor immediately apparent, they did seem consistent with the MEXT *Guidelines* recommendations about the use of experiential learning, including “field trips and investigations,” of varied student groupings, and of student-selected issues for investigation. At each of the four schools, 8th graders were expected to work in groups to investigate a chosen theme during their excursion, and to publicly present their findings upon their return, which seems consistent with the policy directive that students should learn to “gather and organize research data, and make presentations [and] reports” in integrated studies (MEXT, 1999, p. 54). In these ways, incorporation of traditional school events into the new integrated studies curriculum blended perhaps more smoothly with the reform’s prescribed instructional practices than with the suggested themes and topic areas from which schools had made selections.

Overall, the lessons I observed about planning class field trips to nearby cities illustrate how experiential learning was used in integrated studies classes in Hatanaka junior high schools. These examples feature instructional practices prescribed by the reform (such as “learning in groups,” “field trips and investigations,” and staff

collaboration) hybridized with established practices (such as homeroom groupings, instruction by a homeroom teacher, traditional class field trips, and reflection about experiential learning activities). This hybridization manifested differently at each school, as demonstrated by subtle differences between the two lessons described above—and among those lessons and the student-presentation lesson in the 7th-grade off-campus learning unit at Kita JHS described earlier in this chapter. (Note that the 7th-grade field trip to Kyoto was an exceptional addition to the traditional 7th-grade overnight camp, made only at Kita JHS, where the staff felt a need to provide their rural students with more opportunities to practice using urban transit systems.)

In all three cases, the integrated studies units built on the traditional practice of class field trips, but one made use of student-selected, theme-driven groups while other two used more conventional, teacher-manageable groups, and each school allocated the field-trip hours to different sections of the school curriculum. This variation in the way that new and established pedagogical practices were synthesized at different schools in the same municipal school district suggests a certain degree of school autonomy consistent with both the goals of the reform and the hybridization principle of continuous improvement. These examples illustrate how integrated studies requires that teachers learn how to capitalize on traditions that exist at their schools, in ways that make them compatible with the aims of the reform. The final instructional “innovation” that teachers must learn to implement is that of qualitative assessment for integrated studies, which I shall examine next.

Qualitative assessment. Finally, another aspect of integrated studies that some Hatanaka teachers saw as a significant change in education is an increased emphasis on qualitative assessment of student performance. While the *Course of Study* does not specifically address issues of assessment for integrated studies, the MEXT *Guidelines* advise schools to use qualitative rather than quantitative assessments, as recommended by the Curriculum Council:

In order to ensure the essential aims and purposes of this course, quantitative assessments such as exam grades in the subject areas, will not be used. Instead, appropriate assessments based on course studies and activities, student reports and products, presentations and debates, or other evidence of the condition and results of their studies, the students' strengths, progress, motivation, and attitude toward the course, may be made, by entering remarks rather than grades on report cards, for example...[U]sing test grades is not appropriate for integrated-type studies time. This should be obvious, given that the goal of integrated-types studies time is not to acquire some sort of knowledge about given individual issues. Methods of assessment may include, for example, evaluation of student products such as worksheets, notebooks, essays, pictures, reports, and the like; evaluation of student discussions or presentations; student self-evaluation or peer-evaluation; teacher observation of an activity and then evaluation of the students' strengths, motivation, attitudes, and progress. (MEXT, 1999, p. 62)

The prefectural guidelines essentially reiterate the national guidelines, but add a provision for use of portfolios as well:

Specifically, assessment may include evaluation of worksheets, notebooks, reports, student products or presentations and the like; evaluation of student discussions; student self-evaluation or peer-evaluation; and evaluation of the students' strengths, motivation, and attitudes. One appropriate method of evaluation is by portfolio (an individual file of student products, reports, reflection essays, etc. that document the student's learning activities and progress; it also serves as a reference for students and a source of assessment information for teacher/parent discussions). Since students choose their own issues and plans of study, student self-evaluation and peer-evaluation, as appropriate to the students' circumstances, should be considered. (Yamato Prefectural Board of Education, 2000, p. 13)

The use of qualitative assessment of student performance was seen by two administrators at Kita JHS as a significant shift from past emphasis on quantitative assessment, which they ascribed to the test-oriented “fact-cramming” education system established decades ago. The principal of that school, Mr. Hashimoto, asserted that education today is “extremely different” from when he was in junior high school, more than 40 years ago:

Hashimoto: It’s extremely different from the education we received as junior high school students, you know—extremely different!...How it was different is that we were drilled—that is to say, transmission of knowledge from the teacher—like, “Listen up and listen good!” But now, nationally, there’s the idea that that kind of education was mistaken—to put it in a negative way, that it was just “fact-cramming education” [*tsumekomu kyōiku*]... With that type of education, everything revolved around points on a test [*hensachi*]—like IQ tests and so on—a quantitative evaluation of just how many facts you had crammed in your head. But...the idea of reforming the education system [came about]... Integrated studies is one example of this. Don’t just drill the students with facts—let them learn on their own. That’s a trend even within each subject area. Instead of drilling, the students do the problem-solving, and the teacher facilitates. I think that’s a big change, isn’t it?

Mr. Rikuda, the 46-year-old curriculum coordinator at Kita JHS painted a similar picture of when he was a student, saying education was “measured” by “how much knowledge you can memorize,” regardless of whether or how the student could use that knowledge.

Further, he added that students today would have little patience with such a system:

Rikuda: In the past, it was drills and so on, and of course, the basics are important, but [now] it’s not limited to just that...For today’s students, if the classes aren’t interesting, they just don’t take part, [saying] “it’s boring”...That’s quite different from in the past, I personally believe.

One teacher at Minami JHS expressed reservations about the new assessment criteria and methods, particularly given the changing situation regarding university attendance and employment:

Wada: [I]n the previous editions of the *Course of Study*, it started, little by little, with a push to include standards for things like motivation, interest, and attitude in student assessment. For example, to put it another way, at a certain junior high school in Chiba...they had a problem, because before, no one wanted to run for student council president...until recently. But one year, more than 10...students suddenly volunteered to run. Why did it suddenly change from zero to more than 10 or 20? The reason was, actually [whispering conspiratorially], if they were student council president, they would get points...for interest and motivation... included in their evaluation for getting into high school. [I'm wondering] Is this what education is supposed to be about?...It's a characteristic [example], but if kids are getting that sensitive [about how they are evaluated]...

AMH: So when it was connected to school entrance [*shingaku*], they wanted to do it, but not until then?

Wada: Until then, it seemed like they didn't want to do it...Actually, putting it another way, it would even be more human [*ningen-rashii*] if they had expressed their own will, saying, "I don't want to do it."...[T]here are kids who are in trouble, because they don't understand what it means to learn—why they should study. Back in our days, at least—without saying whether this is right or not—Japan's growing economy meant that if you were a good kid and got into a good university, you could [get a job] at a good company. Nowadays...now that that [economic condition] has collapsed, even if you graduate from college you can't find a job...That's the kind of society it is turning into, and kids ask their teachers things like, "What's the point of studying?"

Although formal assessment of student performance was not yet required at the junior high level when I did my fieldwork in 2003, a system for qualitative assessment of student performance in integrated studies was being developed. The curriculum coordinator at Minami JHS spoke without enthusiasm about the need to develop formal system of assessment for the course:

Taguchi: At our school, the big [integrated studies] themes are how to live, how to learn...and that's what we'd like them to learn, but whether they really are learning these things or not, well, we haven't yet really started to evaluate them on this, as they do in the elementary schools. Here, we haven't quite yet constructed our evaluation system for integrated studies.

AMH: Is the plan to make such a system here?

Taguchi: Yes, we've been told repeatedly that we have to do that by the Board of Education, so...[laughs]

AMH: Oh, so it's something you must do, right?

Taguchi: Right.

As he mentioned, formal systems of qualitative assessment were already in place at the elementary level. At one elementary school in Hatanaka, a principal showed me his school's student report cards, the format of which had been revised to include space for homeroom "teacher comments" regarding each student's performance in integrated studies. Obviously, summarizing a student's performance in a set of evaluative comments involves a different set of teaching practices than the customary use of test scores at the junior high school level, but there is evidence that informal assessment strategies, predating the reform, were used in integrated studies classes at Hatanaka's junior high schools.

One of the established practices that I saw teachers use regularly at each of the junior high schools during implementation of the integrated studies curriculum was the writing or verbalizing of *kansou* ("impressions" or "reflections") about the students' learning experiences. The term *kansou* is composed of two ideographs, *kan* (感) meaning "feeling, sensation, sentiment", and *sou* (想) meaning "idea, conception, thought," so the word connotes both cognitive and affective aspects of "impressions," both the thoughts and feelings involved in "reflections." An authoritative online dictionary (<http://www2.alc.co.jp>) defines *kansou* as "impression, sentiment, or playback" and the word is used in expressions like, "post-game analysis", "feedback," "initial reaction," "remarks/commentary (after an event or experience)." In this last sense of post-experience reflection, *kansou* seems to comprise an important strategy for qualitative assessment of student performance in integrated studies classes at Hatanaka's junior high schools.

The use of reflection in integrated studies is mentioned only briefly in the reform policy guidelines about implementation of integrated studies, in sections on student performance assessment. In the MEXT *Guidelines*, the term “*kansou*” does not appear, but there is a recommendation that students engage in “reflection” (*furikaeri*) about their learning experiences, not only for the purposes of student performance evaluation, but also for the evaluation and further improvement (“*kaizen*”) of the course itself:

With this type of learning activities, students set up their own issues and plans of study, and reflect back on the course, evaluate it, and suggest improvements, thereby fulfilling a critically important role as well as the meeting the aims of the course. Whatever types of issues the students have addressed, it is important that they reflect on the specific learning activities they have taken part in—investigations they did, things they felt, and things they learned, and thinking about how they might handle a given issue next time—as well as the activities overall, and make evaluations in order to better explore ways of life. (MEXT, 1999, p. 63)

The Prefectural Guidelines suggest “reflection essays” (*kansoubun*) as one of several possible components of evaluation by portfolio:

One appropriate method of evaluation is by portfolio (an individual file of student products, reports, *reflection essays*, etc. that document the student’s learning activities and progress; it also serves as a reference for students and a source of assessment information for teacher/parent discussions. (Yamato Prefectural Board of Education, 2000, p.13, emphasis added)

While the use of *kansou* reflection activities is prescribed only in a rather indirect manner in the reform policy, data from observations and interviews provide ample evidence that it is a ubiquitous aspect of pre-reform teaching practice that is being incorporated into the new integrated studies curriculum in Hatanaka’s junior high schools.

When I first observed *kansou* in junior high school integrated studies classes, I immediately associated it with the *hansei* reflection activities I had witnessed at elementary schools in the same town years earlier (elementary-level *hansei* activities are

thoroughly documented and described in C. Lewis, 1995, and Sato, 2004). *Hansei* can also be defined as “reflection,” but more in the sense of “soul-searching,” “self-examination,” or “reflection on one’s past conduct” (see www2.alc.co.jp). Catherine Lewis (1995) found that *hansei* “pervaded daily activities” in the Japanese elementary schools she studied, with children engaging at least daily in individual or group reflection on their goals for self-improvement and in-school conduct as early as first grade. In her observations, Lewis found that *hansei* (which she calls “self-evaluation” and “self-criticism” in addition to “reflection”) was sometimes private and informal and sometimes public and formal, but always included students reflecting on their activities “of the past hour, day, week, and school term” and asking questions like, “Did I do anything kind for others? Anything naughty?” “What did I learn from doing this?” and “If I were doing this again, what would I do differently?” (p. 120)

In research focused more on upper-elementary students (in the fifth and sixth grades in Tokyo, Osaka, and rural Nagano), Nancy Sato (2004) also found *hansei* a ubiquitous and “powerful teaching and learning tool.” In her words, “Individual and group reflection times are the most interesting and most common forms of feedback and evaluation... As an individual process, students write a self-assessment and other reflections first, then the teacher reads and comments on the observations and assessment. As a group process, reflection is done orally in a small- or whole-group discussion mode” (p. 186). In these ways, *hansei* “plays a vital role in summarizing, incorporating, creating, assessing, and reassessing new and old knowledge for each individual in the learning process; it also serves as an invaluable self-evaluation mechanism for teaching-learning and for classroom management” (p. 170). Sato concludes that *hansei* is

“perhaps the most effective instructional mode, since it maintains a focus on the process as much as on the product and on one’s responsibilities and growth—a useful means of monitoring self and others” (p. 5).

Sato extends the concept of *hansei* to include self-reflection done in and beyond the classroom, by adults as well as children. She observes that “*hansei* is used in many forms throughout Japanese society” and that in their lifetimes, and “especially in their schooling, [Japanese] students have ample practice in the art of *hansei*” (p. 204). Sato briefly notes that educators and parents “do the same goal setting and reflection after events in their respective groupings (p. 204), and mentions the “self-evaluation” expected of a teacher who has just given a demonstration lesson observed by other teachers, which can serve as a springboard for group discussion during the post-lesson debriefing meeting (p. 61). In general, Sato notes, “Japanese teachers rely more heavily on reflection as a means of self-assessment and feedback...Interestingly, for teachers and students, reflection is conducted as a process of mutual construction of feedback assessment” (p. 186).

While Lewis and Sato both give significant attention to *hansei*, I found no mention of *kansou* in their work, though there are certain obvious parallels between the *hansei* reflection activities commonly used in elementary schools and the *kansou* reflection activities commonly used in the integrated studies activities I observed at junior high schools. However, when I began making this comparison between *kansou* and *hansei* in interviews and discussions with Japanese educators, they made clear distinctions between the two, as in the following excerpt from my interview of a 9th-grade English teacher at Nishi JHS:

AMH: I rarely see this kind of thing [*kansou*] in the U.S., so...I really wanted to learn about it...I've heard about *hansei* from the Japanese managers at the factories in my town...

Ishida: *Hansei* is more like reflecting on something bad that you did—bad behavior. Thinking about apologizing, or feeling badly [*wabi*] about it. It has that kind of image.

The same teacher made an implied distinction between *kansou* and *hansei* by using both terms in a single sentence to describe different activities—his own self-reflection

(“*hansei*”) about the appropriate use of the students’ written reflections (“*kansou*”):

Ishida: It’s feedback, right? But it’s no good if it’s just one-way. If we have them write them, and they write them, we need to read what they’ve written and return it to them. And we do that as much as possible, but still...We finally get their opinions, but...it’s still questionable whether we make adequate use of them. Are you familiar with ethics class [*doutoku no jikan*]?

AMH: Yes, I observed several ethics classes.

Ishida: We have students go through the trouble of writing their reflections in [those classes], too, but in my own self-reflection [*jiko-hansei*], I wish I did a better job of returning [their reflections] to the kids.

AMH: As a homeroom teacher, do you ever write responses to the reflection [*kansou*] papers you collect?

Ishida: Yes, I do. I circle [good parts and] stamp them with my *hanko* [name stamp] and write comments and give them back. I can’t do it every time for every one, but...

I finally concluded that the clearest distinction I can make between the two processes is that *kansou* tends to be public and may or may not contain an element of constructive criticism, while *hansei* tends to be more individual and private, and usually includes critical analysis aimed at constructive improvement in the future.

In any case, *kansou* seemed to function as an important means of evaluation or assessment for integrated studies activities, at least until formal assessment begins to be required by MEXT at the junior high level, as it currently is at the elementary level. I was struck by the frequency and regularity with which teachers of integrated studies asked students to write out their *kansou*, often at the end of an investigation or other

learning experience, so I began asking teachers about it. In an interview with the integrated studies coordinator and 9th-grade homeroom teacher at Minami JHS, the nuance of *kansou* as a “playback” of events seemed most salient:

AMH: Reflection [*kansou*] is extremely interesting to me, as an American. I’ve observed *kansou* in many different places/areas here—in ethics class, integrated studies class, and so on. Can you tell me more about *kansou*?

Kamata: Well...we teachers set up the experiential learning activities, but the students actually experience them. Once they’ve gone through them, we want to know how they felt about them—that’s one thing. So we have the students write down their reflections [*kansou*], and they have to write what they recall, so they have to go through it once more in their minds.

The reflective or self-evaluative aspects of *kansou* were emphasized by the 8th-grade-level faculty leader and integrated studies coordinator at Higashi JHS, who drew parallels between the *kansou* done in integrated studies and the reflection activities done as a homeroom prior to the reform:

Iida: At this school, we value [having students think about] how much they have changed from before a certain school event to afterwards—in what ways they have grown/matured...We count that kind of thing as integrated studies time. The day of the event [counts as] school event time, but the time spent [preparing for and reflecting on] it counts as integrated studies time.

AMH: ...Including *kansou*? Do you have students write about their *kansou*?

Iida: Yes, after the event is over—reflecting [*furikaeri*] on it. Reflecting on how much they have grown from it, and so on. When we didn’t have integrated studies, we were doing the same thing, really, [but it counted] as class activities or homeroom.

AMH: And where did that time come from?

Iida: It was counted as homeroom time.

Perhaps the fullest explanation of *kansou* came from a 9th-grade English and homeroom teacher at Nishi JHS, who described *kansou* as both a reflection and summary of activities by the students and a source of feedback for the teachers:

AMH: There's something I really want to ask. I observed at least one of your integrated studies classes...and in lots of other integrated studies classes I've observed, *kansou* was used. "OK, write down your reflections," or...at the end of presentations, students would usually include their reflections. I'd like to have you explain *kansou* to me. Where did it come from? How do teachers learn to use it? Do they use it in other subject areas as well?

Ishida: Well...how to say it?...I think it's not just for integrated studies, but...for the students, after they've done something or [have been] learning something...it's a kind of self-evaluation...writing one's own thoughts...For the kids, it might be like, "Oh, not again," but I think it's important to summarize things in one's own words. Then...if there was a presentation, or after they've done some experiential learning [*taiken gakushuu*], it's a chance to reflect...Of course, there's also reflection by us teachers as well, but I think it's very important for the kids to reflect on, consider, and summarize what they've just done. Then... the next problem is [deciding] how to use what they've written. Of course, we [teachers] read them and use them as something to refer to, but...well, this is probably halfway an excuse, but being so busy and everything, I believe we're not really making sufficient use of them right now. Of course, in the grade-level newsletter...to students and parents, for instance...we make use of them. It's feedback, right?

From teacher comments such as these, as well as examination of student-produced *kansoubun* (written descriptions of one's impressions) and observation of students' oral presentations, I learned that *kansou* has multiple aspects. These include replaying an experience in one's mind, summarizing it, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of one's own participation in it, and devising goals for future participation. In addition to giving students opportunities to exercise "higher-order" thinking skills, such as analysis and evaluation, *kansou* also provides teachers with timely feedback about instructional activities and student growth, so teachers can make evaluations and devise future goals and plans accordingly.

Kansoubun written by students about integrated studies activities were used not only in homeroom and grade-level newsletters (for students to share with their families), but were also assembled into booklets documenting one or more years' integrated studies

activities by a given grade group, and were included as evidence of student work and learning in case studies or other documentation of school activities. In some cases, student *kansoubun* were anonymous, as in the following reflection by 7th grader about a volunteering experience at a retirement home, which was included in the integrated studies section of a 2002-03 Higashi JHS comprehensive school research report:

The elderly people were all totally spry. They started conversations with us about a lot of different things. I thought volunteering must be great, [working] with that nice of people. I was very glad that they really paid attention while watching our presentation of the Souran Song. When we had to leave, I thought I would have liked to stay there a bit longer. From this point on, I want to try to be kinder to everyone, and I want to become the type of person who can start conversations with anybody.

Most of the *kansoubun* that I saw, however, included the name, grade level, and sometimes homeroom of the student author. This was the case even in the official (104-page, professionally-bound) “2002-03 Research Bulletin” focused on integrated studies activities at Kita JHS. On page 52 of this document, reflections on a job shadowing activity written by four members of the school’s three 8th-grade homerooms include the following:

Kanazawa Sushi
by Jun Kawase, homeroom 2-C

Today I went to Kanazawa Sushi for the first time. At first, I thought I’d just be cleaning the floors, but suddenly, they had me stuffing rice into *inari-zushi* tofu pouches—wow! When the workers there said they’d keep it down to just “practice pace,” I thought, “This is practice pace?!” It’s an important task, so I did it slowly and carefully from the start. If you wreck the tofu pouches, they can’t sell them, so I [stuffed them] slowly and carefully. The next task I did was washing and slicing green onions...[He goes on, describing washing dishes, wrapping ingredients, cooking rice, and greeting customers during his three days at the sushi restaurant]...I thought these three days would be long, but they went by fast. At first I thought, I don’t want to do this tiring [work], but now I’m glad I did. Just when I finally got to know the people at Kanazawa Sushi, I have to leave. I’m going to miss them. I’d like to “Come visit Kanazawa Sushi again” and eat there. Their sushi and eel were so tasty!

Even when students worked in groups to complete activities and write summary reports about them, *kansou* were usually done individually, with each student's name appearing next to his or her paragraph within the report. This was the case in a compiled "Project-Specific-Group Study Report" on job shadowing by 8th graders at Nishi JHS. The booklet contains 66 pages of handwritten and illustrated reports by student groups that had visited dozens of different work sites in Hatanaka, including the following *kansoubun* about job shadowing at a local department store:

I'm the type of person who loves to shop, so this work was really fun.
But, as expected, it made me tired. I feel like I finally realized how tough
[that kind of] work is. – [by] Tanaka.

I was nervous and it wore me out, but being able to talk to the workers and
stuff was fun. – [by] Kawashita.

I went [and worked at the store] for two days. I did different things on day
one and day two. It made me pretty tired. – [by] Maeda.

While some *kansoubun* were longer than others (I never found a minimum-length requirement in any *kansou* instructions I heard or read), most tended toward brevity—an almost haiku-like distillation of experience into a few key phrases describing what happened and how the writer felt about it. In one case, the required elements that the *kansoubun* must contain were listed in the front of a Minami JHS 8th-grade "Job Shadowing Compiled Reflections" booklet:

1. description of the job you shadowed
2. things that were fun/satisfying/pleasant about this job shadowing experience
3. things that felt unpleasant/challenging/difficult about this job shadowing experience
4. changes in your thinking about work/careers as a result of doing job shadowing, preparation for job shadowing, and career investigations (any such learning activities since 7th grade)

5. things you feel will come in handy when choosing your career pathway next year or when deciding where to work

The 200 written reflections in the booklet followed this model explicitly, numbering each section of each essay accordingly, as in the following example by an 8th-grade girl:

Southern Municipal Preschool

[by] Mariko Mori

1. I did lots of things at the preschool, like playing with the kids, eating school lunch with them, [going on] walks, cleaning, serving lunch, and cleaning up.
2. I was in the 2-year-olds' class for three days. There were lots of fun and pleasant things, but the one I'll remember [keep in my heart] the most is the children's smiling faces as we played together. Another nice thing was the way the kids came out of their classrooms and kept saying "bye-bye" as we left on the third day.
3. There weren't many unpleasant or difficult things, but I didn't know what to do when the kids got into fights or started crying. It was also hard when we had to say goodbye and leave them.
4. One of the things I thought about and came to understand through this job shadowing experience is a new appreciation for just how tough [this] work is. I'd thought being a preschool teacher meant just playing with kids and doing fun things all the time, but now that I've actually tried it, I understand how tough and challenging it can be. I chose this job shadow site because I want to be a preschool teacher in the future. The way the teachers interacted with the children was totally different from how I did it, so I guess they're really good at what they do. Watching the teachers, I really learned a lot.
5. What I learned through this experience is things like how to be considerate towards everyone ["*minna wo omoiyareru kokoro*"]. I learned a lot of things, like how to go up to kids who are not eating everything in the school lunch, and try to get them to eat it. For me, these three days are a significant memory I'll remember the rest of my life.

Virtually all of the *kansou* I observed adhered to this general pattern: a brief description of the activity in which the student engaged, followed by the positive and negative aspects of their experience, and some connection of knowledge gained to future activities or plans. Indeed, *kansou* itself usually comprised the final step in a seemingly ubiquitous pattern or "formula" for student presentations and reports about their activities, which

almost always proceeded in this sequence: 1) motivation for the research project (動機); 2) goals/objectives of the project (目標); 3) methods used (方法／調べ方); 4) results/findings (結果); 5) remaining issues/problems (課題); 6) summary/conclusion (まとめ); 7) reflection/impressions (感想). Interestingly, a similar pattern is found in the case studies about teaching practice that are used regularly for teacher professional development in Japan (see discussion of case studies in Chapter 6).

As mentioned briefly in the lesson vignettes earlier in this chapter, *kansou* activities were used in several of the lessons I observed at Hatanaka’s junior high schools. During the “off-campus learning” units at all three schools, for example, *kansou* occurred in a variety of forms—written and spoken, by students and by teachers, in more- and less-formal ways. When used by students as part of formal self-reflection regarding their learning activities, it took the form of a one-shot summative activity after the class field trip at Minami JHS (as a essay written by individual students) and Kita JHS (as a written and spoken group presentation), while at Nishi JHS, *kansou* was a frequent and explicit component of the student-made field trip guidebooks, in which students were to continually write reflections about their learning experiences as they moved from one site to another in Kyoto. When *kansou* was used by teachers for informal assessment of student performance, it usually took the form of verbal evaluative comments to an assembled group (as used by Mr. Motoyama at Kita JHS and Mr. Murata at Nishi JHS), but could also be seen in the written commentary by the principal of Nishi JHS, who reflected in his “Daily Report” to the staff about the pluses and minuses of the previous day’s field trip, along with countermeasures to prevent reoccurrence of certain incidents of misconduct.

Kansou also took the form of regular, written reflection about in-class learning activities, and I observed this strategy being used quite frequently in integrated studies classes. The following vignette illustrates this type of use of *kansou* for qualitative assessment in integrated studies classes. It is based on a 9th-grade homeroom lesson I observed at Kita JHS about international understanding. It took place on a Thursday in early December 2003, near the end of the second semester, during 6th period in Homeroom 3-A's classroom, and was taught by the homeroom teacher, Mr. Fujii, who happened to also be the integrated studies coordinator for this grade level (and the entire school).

In that capacity, Mr. Fujii had explained to me earlier that the Kita JHS integrated studies curriculum is essentially built around the “school education goals” of promoting awareness of human rights, the environment, and international understanding. While both the 8th- and 9th-grade integrated studies curricula include “human rights” as a major theme (the 7th-grade curriculum also includes at least five hours of activities focused on human rights per year), the emphasis in 8th grade is on the rights of those with disabilities and of others who might benefit from service learning (another major theme in both the 7th- and 8th-grade integrated studies curriculum). In 9th grade, the emphasis shifts to international understanding and the rights of non-Japanese citizens living in Japan (including 14 students from Brazil and Cambodia attending Kita JHS as of the 2002-03 school year).

In the Kita JHS School Handbook, the overall “school education goal” for integrated studies is listed as cultivation of students who have motivation, consideration, and discipline, and are “strong in mind and body, with high intellect and warm hearts,

[and] can function in a global society.” The overall goal for 9th-grade integrated studies is “self-expression” (*jiko hyougen*), using the twin themes of “human rights” and “technology/careers” so that students can “make presentations about their research investigations to community members and so on, solve problems with a consciousness of interdependence, and think about their own ways of life.” Listed subgoals for 9th grade include “oral communication” with the assistant language teacher (usually a native speaker teacher of English with limited proficiency in Japanese language), consideration of career pathways, and completion of a graduation thesis or personal history. Activities related to all three of these subgoals were staggered throughout the school year schedule, due to Kita JHS’s broad, multi-grade approach that incorporates schoolwide special events into integrated studies. (This contrasts with, for instance, the more sequential, grade-specific approach at Nishi JHS.) The lesson described below appeared to function as a broad overview and introduction to issues of international understanding, which could then be extended to more specific issues of co-existence and interaction with citizens of other countries.

The selection of Mr. Fujii’s homeroom for my observation was made by the principal, Mr. Hashimoto, who accompanied me to the second-floor classroom and remained there with me for the duration of the lesson. While my lesson observations in other schools had sometimes involved administrator escort/supervision, the process of selection of a homeroom to observe seemed singular enough to warrant description here.

Shortly before 6th period (scheduled for 2:15-3:00), the Kita JHS principal, Mr. Hashimoto, entered the staffroom, greeted me warmly, and escorted me toward the 9th-grade teachers’ cluster of desks. He then proceeded to ask which of the three homeroom teachers there was willing to let me observe their integrated studies class next period. Each of them declined, in turn—claiming their students were too rowdy, or they were planning to

use some class time to return exams, or the like—and exited the staffroom. Exhibiting no visible consternation at this uncooperative if not downright insubordinate response, Mr. Hashimoto turned calmly to me and asked, “Shall we go?” and then led me resolutely up the stairs to Mr. Fujii’s 2nd-floor classroom.

We arrived shortly after the chime had rung marking the beginning of 6th period, and therefore missed the opportunity to observe the customary start-of-class greeting between students and teacher. The 36 students (20 boys, 16 girls) in classroom 3-A sat in six rows of approximately six desks each, alternating by gender—a row of boys, then a row of girls—a customary arrangement that had been equally prevalent during my teaching stint in Hatanaka’s junior high schools 14 years earlier. All of them were wearing school uniforms, though some sported non-regulation sweaters, earrings, and dyed hair.

Standing before the chalkboard at the front of the room, Mr. Fujii—an energetic, boyish 41-year-old math teacher—was already addressing his class when Mr. Hashimoto and I entered through the sliding door at the rear of the room. The teacher paused to explain to the students the reason for our presence, admitting that he was nervous having observers. He then promptly resumed the lesson, briefly stating the topic of the new unit, human rights and international understanding, and then directing the students’ attention to the handout in front of each of them.

During that lesson in Homeroom 3-A, Mr. Fujii announced the topic of the current unit (human rights and international understanding) and then read aloud the title at the top of the student handout, “If the World Were a Village of 100 People.” On the large (B5 size) handout, an abridged version of this rather well-known list of world demographic statistics had been made into a cloze exercise, in which the students were to fill in characteristics described by the ratios given (e.g., “Of the 100 people...17 people would speak _____ language”...“six people would believe in _____ religion,” and so on).

Mr. Fujii spent most of the 45-minute class period leading the students through the worksheet, reading each line aloud and pausing at each cloze box so students could offer suggestions about what to write in the blank. Some raised their hands to be recognized before speaking, while others simply blurted out their answers. There was significant student participation, in terms of the number of volunteers and their enthusiasm. Mr. Fujii skillfully maintained student attention and interest by interspersing his reading of the text with comments that explained or extended the information on the worksheet. For instance, he explained that one reason the female population in the world exceeds the male population is that male infants—in various species, not just humans—tend to become fatally ill more easily than female infants. At another point, after reading a line about the world population being 6.3 billion, Mr. Fujii asked the class if they knew what the population of their own country is. When discussing the ratios of people living on each continent, Mr. Fujii

reminded the class that Iraq, site of a current war, is part of Asia, just as Japan is. This type of ad-libbing drew questions from students, which the teacher would either restate to the class for their consideration, or respond to directly, usually attempting to link the topic at hand to the students' own experiences.

When a student asked why the second most widely-spoken language in the world is English (a required and often unpopular subject in Japanese junior high schools), Mr. Fujii alluded to the fact that English is the language of many wealthy countries, so the rest of the world also learns to speak it. He reminded them, "You played that game the other day about who's rich and who's poor in the world, remember?" It wasn't clear to me whether that game was part of a lesson in integrated studies, or some other subject area, such as ethics or social studies (Mr. Fujii teaches this group of students math, ethics, and integrated studies).

After the listing of about 25 ratios (14 of which had blanks to be filled in) on the handout were a few lines of exhortative prose, which I translate as:

"There are lots of different people
In this village
Understanding people who are different from you
Accepting others as they are
And most of all being aware of these things
Is very important.
First please love yourself.
Yourself and the people living in this village.
Perhaps, if enough of us learn to love our village,
It may yet be possible to save it
From the diabolical forces that are tearing it apart."

When Mr. Fujii read this aloud to the class, one boy asked, "What does this have to do with human rights?" The teacher quickly replied, "Human rights begin from love and the valuing of self and others," adding that "valuing oneself" meant not just adopting an indifferent attitude and saying, "Whatever." Mr. Fujii reminded the students that "you can't love others if you can't love yourself," and expanded this analogy to the world scene, urging students to first love Japan, so then they could love other countries and their people.

For the last five minutes of class, Mr. Fujii asked the students to write their *kansou* reflections about what they had learned on the small (half sheets of A4/letter size paper) handouts prepared for this purpose. These handouts were titled, "Hatanaka Kita JHS Human Rights Studies Reflection Sheet," and included spaces for students to fill in their names, homeroom, and today's date. Under the instructions, "Write what you felt and thought and so on through doing these studies," was a series of 8 blank lines for students to write their answers on in prose. After giving his

students this assignment, Mr. Fujii excused himself to go look for a student who had failed to show up for class. Mr. Hashimoto and I took our leave shortly thereafter, rendering the students of 3-A completely responsible for completing and submitting their assignment without adult supervision.

I was aware that this homeroom included several students with reputations for being disruptive, and that these students might not take this new subject area very seriously because, as Mr. Fujii had earlier informed me, unlike the 7th graders, the 9th graders often failed to see the difference between “integrated studies” and “special activities” because of the elements from non-academic co-curriculum that had been incorporated into it. Therefore, I was pleasantly surprised to note the active participation of many students and an almost complete lack of inappropriate student behavior during this lesson. Of course, the circumstances were rather unusual—not only was an international researcher observing their class, but the principal remained standing in the back of the room throughout the observation, wearing a stern expression on his face—but the students in Homeroom 3-A did not seize this potential opportunity to make an outlandish bid for attention or try to embarrass their teacher or principal.

The mutual adaptation of established and prescribed teaching practices in this lesson includes the use of a traditional homeroom grouping of students and teacher, instruction about social-studies-type topics by a teacher with a specialization in math, and the incorporation of the well-established teaching practice of *kansou* reflection into an integrated studies unit focused on “issues of modern society” and increased “international understanding,” both explicit themes of the reform. The worksheets, on which students were asked to reflect about what they had learned and their feelings about it, were generic enough to suggest that they were also used in other lessons, and perhaps even other

courses and other grade levels. This use of *kansou* at the end of a lesson apparently devoid of easily-identifiable experiential learning activities suggests that *kansou* may be applied to a wider range of learning experiences beyond what is usually thought of as *taiken*, or experiential learning. Apparently, even more traditional, on-campus lessons (of less than an hour's duration) are expected to provide students with enough cognitive and affective stimulation to warrant written description of what they "felt and thought" during the lesson. Along with all of the lessons described earlier in this chapter, and many others I observed during my fieldwork, this integrated studies lesson made use of *kansou* for qualitative assessment of student learning experiences, illustrating just how commonly this strategy was used in integrated studies classes in Hatanaka's junior high schools. Again, this is the result of the deliberate hybridization of established and prescribed teaching practices in the implementation of integrated studies reform.

The examples in this chapter illustrate the ways in which key instructional strategies prescribed by the reform policy—innovative scheduling, innovative student and teacher groupings, experiential learning activities, and qualitative assessment strategies—were combined with existing practices in a process of hybridization or mutual adaptation. This process, explicitly encouraged in the reform policy, allows for "local variability" between implementation patterns at different schools, grade levels, and classrooms. In terms of teacher learning, an implementation approach that builds on existing technologies and practices seems most consistent with a constructivist model, in which teachers are allowed to build on what they already know and can do as they adapt the mandated innovations to fit their own situations.

Conclusion and Outline of Subsequent Chapters

In this chapter, I have presented various examples of an approach to implementation that involves building on existing practice and hybridizing it with prescribed innovations and which is characteristic of the integrated studies reform. Together, the examples related to the use of innovative scheduling, innovative student groupings and team-teaching, experiential learning activities, and qualitative assessment strategies, vividly illustrate the myriad ways in which established and prescribed practices are hybridized during the implementation of the integrated studies reform. In many cases, this involved extending or adapting a familiar practice (such as class field trips or grade-level faculty collaboration) or applying familiar practices to new topics or situations (such as using *kansou* reflections for a new subject area, or using one's classroom management skills for an assembly of 200 students). In each case, the "innovative" practices prescribed by the reform were somehow combined with existing practices, but never blended in a perfectly "smooth" fashion. There were always some "rough edges" showing—such as partial and/or modified adoption of recommended innovations.

In the case of innovative scheduling and grouping, the rough edges apparent in hybridization include simultaneous adherence to one reform recommendation and violation of another, such as when integrated studies classes were scheduled with more "flexibility" over the course of the year, but only occasionally in the longer two-hour blocks recommended by prefectural policy, and not to facilitate the cross-grade-level interaction encouraged by national policy. Similarly, selective implementation of an aspect of an innovation most similar to established practice is evident in the examples of

teacher collaboration (outside of class and during special events more than in-class team-teaching); incorporation of experiential learning activities (such as traditional class trips with limited connection to the official themes of study); and use of customary written reflections as qualitative assessments (before or without benefit of a more comprehensive evaluation system, including portfolios and the like, required by reform policies).

Moreover, the patterns of selective and modified adaptation were not uniform, but varied from school to school. Despite the potential for “standardization” of practice engendered by the gradualism and top-down/bottom-across approach of this reform’s implementation (see LeTendre, 2002), the data presented here related to building upon existing technologies provide evidence of significant inter-school variation, even within a single rural municipality like Hatanaka. It is possible that the principle of hybridization counteracts tendencies toward conformity that may be engendered by an incremental approach to change and the sharing of examples of practice across and between levels.

In the next chapter, I shall focus on the fourth principle of continuous improvement, that of information-sharing and collaboration at all levels, and its intersection with professional development related to implementation of the integrated studies reform. In the final chapter (Chapter 7), I will discuss the conclusions and implications of this study.

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TEACHER LEARNING FOR CURRICULAR AND INSTRUCTIONAL REFORM IN
JAPAN: A CASE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

VOLUME II

By

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CHAPTER 6: CROSS-LEVEL INFORMATION SHARING/COLLABORATION AND TEACHER LEARNING FOR THE REFORM IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

This fourth and final chapter about my interpretations of the data, while merging and building on the themes of the previous three chapters, focuses most directly on teacher learning for implementation of curriculum reform. While the previous chapters focused primarily on what teachers are to do, and must learn, in order to translate the reform into practice, this chapter will focus on how they learn to do it. The three principles of continuous improvement discussed in those chapters—incrementalism, a top-down/bottom-across approach, and building upon existing technologies—are all evident in the formal and informal mechanisms of teacher professional development being used to facilitate the teacher learning required by the new reform. In fact, the various continuous improvement principles at work here foster (and derive from) teacher learning that involves the creation, dissemination, and adaptation to local situations of examples of practice aligned with the overall goals of the reform. In this chapter, I shall focus on the professional development aspect of the reform, particularly as it intersects with the continuous improvement principle of information-sharing and collaboration across all levels.

Information-Sharing and Collaboration in Teacher Learning for Rainbow Plan Reform Implementation

In addition to incrementalism, a top-down/bottom-across approach, and the strategy of building upon existing technologies, a fourth principle of continuous improvement is collaboration and the sharing of information across all levels of an

organization or system. In private enterprise, Imai (1986) contends that one way in which “Western-style” innovation and Japanese-style continuous improvement differ is in the way information is handled. He argues that, in Western innovation, information is “closed” and “proprietary,” whereas information is “open” and “shared” in organizations built on principles of continuous improvement (p. 32).

In such organizations, Suzaki (1987) emphasizes the “information sharing” that occurs “across all levels.” He argues that the emphasis on “specialists” that is evident in “Taylorist” Western organizations creates a “lack of communication and coordination at the organizational boundaries”—such as job descriptions, departments, units, and so on—while the emphasis on “generalists” often found in Japanese organizations imbues individual members of the organization with increased “ownership” of, and therefore more reason to care about, the “total process” of the organization’s work. For this reason, there is “considerable potential to be gained through this type of openness in information sharing” by individuals at all levels of an organization or system (p. 222-229).

This emphasis on cross-level sharing of information is consistent with the philosophy of U.S. statistician W. Edwards Deming, who (along with statistics and engineering expert Joseph Juran) is widely credited with fathering the “quality movement” in Japan after WWII. Deming’s “Fourteen Points” for improvement through Total Quality Management include admonitions such as “break down barriers among personnel” and “the transformation is everybody’s job” (Gooden & Carlson, 1997, p. 198-199). As stated in an earlier section about the top-down/bottom-across approach to change, continuous improvement involves the flow of information, ideas, suggestions,

and recommendations across various units and levels (see Gooden & Carlson, 1997; Imai, 1986; Schmidt & Finnigan, 1992; Suzaki, 1987).

Furthermore, the various individuals, units, and levels in an organization must work together successfully to effect continuous improvement (see Demoulin, 1997; Imai, 1986; Schmidt & Finnigan, 1992; Suzaki, 1987). Imai (1986) contrasts the emphasis on “rugged individualism [and] individual ideas and efforts” of Western innovation approaches with the emphasis on “collectivism, group efforts, [and] systems approach” of Japanese-style *kaizen* (p. 24). The latter approach stresses “collaboration” (Schmidt & Finnigan, 1992), expanding and utilizing more fully the “collective skills and experience” of all members of an organization (Suzaki, 1987, p. 53). For these reasons, continuous improvement—particularly in large and complex organizations—requires both teamwork and information-sharing by members of various units and levels throughout the organization.

As stated in Chapter 2, in educational organizations, continuous improvement has been described in terms of “sustained improvement” involving “interactive professionalism” on the part of educators (Fullan, 1992, p. 120). Furthermore, it ideally involves “empowerment [and] synergy” in “an environment where everyone, students, faculty, staff, parents, [and] community... participate in the...process” and “work together to ensure that quality improvement takes place” (Richardson & Lane, 1997, p. 58). Rather than “contrived collegiality” imposed on teachers from above, successful reform requires a genuine “team approach to change” that involves both teachers and administrators becoming “engaged in...the practicalities of curriculum planning and change” together (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001, p. 192-193).

This type of cross-level collaboration and information-sharing is quite evident in the various structures and mechanisms related to teacher learning for implementation of the ongoing curriculum reform in Japan. Specifically, this fourth principle of continuous improvement manifests in both formal and informal mechanisms of teacher professional development, in at least two ways: 1) the sharing of information about actual teaching practice, including examples of such practice (such as public demonstration lessons, case studies, and anecdotes of teachers' experiences); and 2) the emphasis on collaboration by practitioners (from different subject areas, grades, schools, and geographic areas) all of whom are collectively responsible for their own and their colleagues' professional development. Here I shall present data from the reform policy, as well as from survey questionnaires, interviews, and observations from my fieldwork in Hatanaka that illustrate the information-sharing and collaboration involved in teacher learning for implementation of the integrated studies reform. Specifically, I shall first describe and provide examples of formal mechanisms of *kenshuu*, or "professional development activities" (such as formal meetings and seminars at the school- through national-levels, as well as school-based research activities), and then describe various informal (or less-formal) mechanisms for teacher learning (such as internet and print resources, and "information exchange" with colleagues) being used for the implementation of this reform.

Formal Professional Development Activities at Various Levels

Although the 1999 *Course of Study* does not provide much detail about how teachers are to go about learning how to implement the integrated studies curriculum

reform, it does include explicit prescriptions for collaboration and sharing of information between educators at differing levels. First, as stated in the previous chapter, the policy calls for “leadership involving a unified teaching force” (MEXT, 1999, p. 60), and for decentralized, school-specific curriculum design, effectively requiring members of school staffs to collaborate in order to develop and implement the curriculum. Next, when designing each school’s “overall annual instructional plan” for integrated studies, the policy advises junior high school educators to utilize information about “how experiential learning activities have been used in integrated-type studies time at the elementary school level” (MEXT, 1999, p. 57), through such mechanisms as “public lesson” observations at MEXT-designated “research and development schools” (as described in Chapter 4) and other schools that piloted the integrated studies curriculum, during and after the specified three-year “transition period” (as described in Chapter 3).

During my fieldwork in Hatanaka, through interviews and surveys of school staff members, as well as observations of classroom practice and teacher professional development activities, I found a wide variety of methods of teacher learning for the implementation of integrated studies, all of which involved some degree of collaboration and/or information-sharing. Data from staff surveys and classroom observations emphasized informal resources—such as “information exchange” (*jouhou koukan*) with school colleagues—as key sources of teacher learning, while interview data pointed to more formal mechanisms—such as prefectural, municipal, and school-level professional development activities (*kenshuu*)—more strongly. Both the formal and informal teacher professional development activities and resources to which Hatanaka educators ascribed

their learning share was a strong emphasis on the collaboration of classroom practitioners and the sharing of information about classroom practice.

To my interview questions about what teachers needed to learn in order to implement integrated studies, where they might acquire that knowledge, and which resources were most useful to them for that implementation, “*kenshuu*,” or teacher professional development activities, was often the first response. It was certainly the most frequent response, being mentioned by seven of the eight administrators and two of the six teachers I interviewed. According to anthropologist N. K. Shimahara (2002), *kenshuu* is central to “teacher development and...the enhancement of teaching as craft” and is a vital part of the “culture of teaching” in Japan. He states that *kenshuu* (which may also be called “*genshoku kyouiku*,” or “in-service education”) became “the common vehicle for teachers to promote teaching” in postwar Japan. It is rarely connected with universities, which are primarily regarded as sites of preservice education for teachers (p. 25-26).

Shimahara (2002) specifies four types of *kenshuu*: 1) “top-down,” government-sponsored *kenshuu* at national and prefectural centers, including mandatory internships for beginning teachers; 2) “bottom-across,” school-based *kenshuu*, based on peer collaboration, including research lessons and subject-area associations; 3) teacher-initiated voluntary national teacher networks; and 4) long-term training at graduate schools, with costs borne by prefectural boards of education (p. 63-73). Hatanaka teachers made no mention of graduate school training for integrated studies implementation, but they did describe formal *kenshuu* activities of the first two types (see Chapter 4 for discussion of the combined top-down/bottom-across approach to this

reform), as well as informal activities similar to Shimahara's second and third types of *kenshuu*. The educators applied the term "*kenshuu*" most often to formal seminars and workshops, sponsored by municipal, prefectural, and national government agencies, but also to such things as a schoolwide information technology education seminar held during summer vacation at Higashi JHS; in-school collaboration and development of a documented case study at Kita JHS; chances (for teachers at Nishi JHS) "to go to other schools and see how they're handling [integrated studies];" and experiential learning opportunities like "visiting old folks' homes, visiting businesses, [and doing] cleanup [projects]" as part of formal professional development activities. Mr. Kawaguchi, the principal of Minami JHS, even equated the school observation visits I was conducting during my fieldwork in Japan with *kenshuu*:

Kawaguchi: There are also school visits—kind of like what you are doing now—in which teachers go around to different schools and observe how things are done there. For instance, in other prefectures, and in other parts of the country. You're doing professional development [*kenshuu*] outside of your country right now, but I'm talking about within the country. That's the kind of system we have.

In fact, Japanese educators do take part in *kenshuu* that involves travel abroad. At one point, over 5000 Japanese teachers each year were sent on "overseas training trips" of two to eight weeks in length (Kinney, 1997; see also Schoppa, 1991). A number of Hatanaka teachers and administrators shared with me their *kenshuu* experiences in my home country, including visits to schools in Alabama, Maryland, Michigan, and Texas.

I found it significant that, even during initial introductions and first meetings, several educators made sure to tell me about at least one of their *kenshuu* experiences—particularly study trips abroad or sponsored graduate study—regardless of its connection to integrated studies. While this might simply reflect a desire to establish "common

ground” with a visiting foreigner, the length and detail of these accounts suggest to me that *kenshuu* activities can, and for some educators do, constitute very significant points in teachers’ careers, as well as in the evolution of curricular and instructional patterns at their schools. For instance, when I asked the teacher of an information-technology integrated studies course why his school was the only junior high school in town with superior technology hardware (in terms of quantity and quality), he told me that a member of their staff had undergone some special computer-related *kenshuu* from MEXT and the school subsequently received a lot of donations from the community for technology purchases. When I asked another teacher how he had come to be in charge of integrated studies at his school, he told me that one year he had taken part in a schoolwide research project (*kounai kenkyuu*) about integrated studies, including research lessons (*kenkyuu jugyou*).

Undeniably, research (*kenkyuu*) figures prominently in teacher professional development in Japan. The term *kenshuu* itself shares one ideograph with the term for research—*ken* (研) meaning to “burnish” or “sharpen.” In combination with the second ideograph, *shuu* (修) meaning to “study,” “cultivate,” or “master,” the resulting term, *kenshuu*, suggests a continual sharpening of skills, aimed at mastery. According to an authoritative online dictionary (www2.alc.co.jp), *kenshuu* means “training,” including such concepts as “induction course” and “on-the-job training.” In the case of public school teachers in Japan, on-the-job training is inseparably intertwined with research, both of which are seen as obligatory elements of their jobs (see OERI, 1998).

One example of this came up in a conversation I had with a member of the prefectural board of education with jurisdiction over my field site. Mr. Iguchi informed

me that certain schools are “designated” (*shiteikou*) each year by the national or prefectural government to conduct research into various educational topics of interest. He told me teachers at those schools do not receive any special overtime pay for this tremendous work, since it is assumed that, as public servants, all public school teachers are required to participate in research as part of their job. Such educational research may take the form of “research lessons”(also known as “lesson study”; see Takahashi & Yoshida, 2004) and/or development of a case study or report to present to fellow staff members or colleagues at the municipal, prefectural, or other levels. Almost always, the results of such research are officially documented, and sometimes published. In fact, classroom teachers in Japan publish more than educational researchers affiliated with universities (Takahashi & Yoshida, 2004). Educational research is so highly valued and tightly linked with professional development that even Hatanaka, a town of 55,000 inhabitants, boasts a Municipal Education Research Center (staffed by two city employees with teaching backgrounds) which provides materials and assistance to local schools regarding both professional development and integrated studies.

Participation in research and other professional development activities is expected of every teacher in Japan, and it is done in many ways. The wide variety of *kenshuu* activities I have learned about in my observations of Japanese elementary and middle schools include the following:

- formal lectures given by university professors, prefectural administrators, or classroom teachers, and attended by large numbers of teachers from a given district, prefecture, or region;
- workshops on selected topics, led by prefectural administrators, school principals, and/or teachers, and attended by smaller groups of teachers from a given school, district, or prefecture;

- participation in school observation visits, as teachers either conducting or observing *koukai jugyou*, (“public lessons” open to parents and community members as well as educators) or *kenkyuu jugyou*, (“research lessons” that are usually restricted to educators only), which are often documented in case study “*jissen jirei*” booklets (the writing and reading of which also counts as *kenshuu*) and usually followed by an educators-only debriefing (*kenkyuu kyougikai*);
- experiential learning activities, sponsored by municipal and prefectural boards of education, and including field trips (domestic and, in some cases, overseas) and simulations of learning activities in which students would engage.

Over half of the teachers and administrators I interviewed (eight of 14 respondents) mentioned *taiken* (“direct experience” or “experiential learning”) in response to a question intended to address teacher knowledge for integrated studies. The question for teachers was, “How is your previous experience (*keiken*, 経験) and expertise (*jisseki*, 実績) reflected in your teaching of integrated studies?” and for administrators, “Where do teachers at this school get their knowledge (*chishiki*, 知識) and know-how about (the various subject areas in integrated studies)?” *Taiken* also came up in teacher and administrator responses to later questions about how today’s education differs from their own (by 7 respondents), and what teachers need to learn in order to implement integrated studies (4 respondents), and an earlier question about how their school’s integrated studies themes had been decided (4 respondents).

The term *taiken* is composed of two ideographs, *tai* (体) meaning “(physical) body” (human or otherwise), and *ken* (験) meaning “testing.” An authoritative online dictionary (www2.alc.co.jp) defines *taiken* as “experience” or “living experience,” in contrast to the more common word for “experience,” *keiken* (経験), which is used to express such things as “years of experience” by a person, company, or nation, and forms the root of words like “empiricism.” *Taiken*, on the other hand, is used in expressions

like “bonding experience”, “aha experience,” “stories of one’s past,” and “ordeal.” This is the same term used in “*taiken gakushuu*,” or “experiential learning” prescribed for students repeatedly in the 1999 *Course of Study* (see Chapter 5), and therefore I will usually render the term “*taiken*” here as “experiential learning.”

While *taiken* was mentioned most often, and at greatest length, in terms of activities for students (by all 6 teachers and all 8 administrators), the experience and experiential learning of teachers was also mentioned at least once by all 14 interviewees, and sometimes the two were linked explicitly. Several interviewees observed that teachers’ actual experience is necessary or at least “awfully useful” in facilitating students’ experiential learning. Mr. Kawaguchi, the Minami JHS principal, asserted that: “Teachers must have it first, must learn it first [before they can teach it to students].” Information gained in less direct ways was seen as being insufficient for the task, as evidenced by these quotes by a teacher: “Just reading a book or something about it doesn’t work,” and by two curriculum coordinators: “If they just read books [about it] or something, or try it with just [book] knowledge, it has no meaning,” and “Seeing it with their own eyes, not just hearing about it, but making sure with their own eyes, and then, collecting written materials about [the place students will visit] is necessary.”

Two teachers and two administrators I interviewed openly subscribed to the notion that teachers have limited experience of the real world (see Asahi Shimbun Weekly, 2004). This notion—reflected in the Japanese proverb, “*Kyoushi wa seken shirazu*” (“Teachers are ignorant of the real world”)—is stated in the public media and implied in the reform policy, which urges teachers to “learn and think along with the students” during experiential learning activities (MEXT, 1999, p. 84). Six administrators

at four different schools mentioned teachers' lack of specialized knowledge and four teachers from four schools mentioned limitations to the application of their own experiences to teaching integrated studies, due to their lack of experience with the "new" and unfamiliar subject area, themes of study, and experiential learning activities such as student presentations. (There was one teacher at Nishi JHS—the youngest and least experienced of all those interviewed—who expressed more confidence about her level of experience.) This lack of specialized knowledge and world experience was seen as requiring remediation through *kenshuu*. Three teachers and six administrators linked *taiken* and *kenshuu* explicitly. In addition to the recent general increase in required *kenshuu* for teachers (see below), several teachers reported a perceived increase in experiential-learning components within *kenshuu* activities, including such activities as "field trips/observation visits" (*kengaku*), and "a museum visit, senior center—things we could choose—even camping."

When I spoke to Mr. Iguchi, the prefectural official in charge of integrated studies implementation, he confirmed that requirements for teacher participation in *kenshuu* have gotten more stringent recently, with a mandatory mentor-intern arrangement set up for beginning teachers (starting in 1989; see Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999) and mandatory *kenshuu* at a greater number of points in a teacher's career (now at the 1st, 5th, 10th, and 15th years of service; see OERI, 1998 to contrast with earlier requirements). Two 10-year-veteran teachers I met at different prefectural *kenshuu* seminars told me that, due to increased requirements, they expected to undergo 20-22 days each of professional development that year. When I interviewed Mr. Kamata, a Minami JHS teacher with 16 years' experience, he indicated that, even before the requirements were increased, he took

part in “about 40 days” of *kenshuu* during his first year of teaching (recent studies mention one-day-per-week training for first-year teachers [OERI, 1998; Shimahara, 2002]). Principals and other administrators also undergo *kenshuu* (see Kinney, 1997; OERI, 1998; Shimahara, 2002), particularly in their first year, as explained to me by the Kita JHS principal, who had to be away for three days of *kenshuu* activities during one week of my visit to his school.

I learned from Mr. Iguchi how *kenshuu* regarding the implementation of integrated studies in Yamato Prefecture public schools had taken place over a series of years, beginning during the transition period and continuing after the official implementation date (in a pattern consistent with a gradual, top-down/bottom-up approach). First, during the 1998-99 school year, representatives from prefectural boards of education around the nation met at MEXT in Tokyo for two days to learn about the planned changes in the *Course of Study* to take effect in 2002. Then, in December 2000, Mr. Iguchi (along with prefectural officials assigned to other subject areas) produced two teacher’s manuals (*tebiki*) for distribution to all teachers in Yamato Prefecture’s elementary and junior high schools, which included several pages on each subject area, based on the information they had gained at MEXT. (There were three pages for integrated studies in the junior high manual and six pages in the elementary school one.)

During the transition period (1999-2002), Mr. Iguchi explained, schools were encouraged but not required to experiment with and try out (“*tameshite mite*”) the new integrated studies curriculum, and the Prefectural Board of Education designated a few schools (*shiteikou*) to start piloting the program and to give demonstration lessons and presentations for teachers from other schools. Also during this time, the prefectural

board held periodic orientation meetings (*setsumeikai*) by subject area, for all the teachers in Yamato Prefecture. Since integrated studies was to be taught by homeroom teachers regardless of their subject area specialization, the morning of every orientation session was dedicated to the integrated studies portion of the *Course of Study*, and the afternoon to the other subject areas.

When the new curriculum officially took effect in April 2002, Mr. Iguchi told me, schools were required to submit (to municipal and prefectural boards of education) both their plans for implementation and reports about implementation once it had occurred. At least on the elementary school level, the Yamato Prefectural Board of Education recommended the use of certain themes (such as growing rice and manufacturing rapeseed oil from start to finish) and tied certain budgets to these themes, thus strongly encouraging schools to use them, but leaving up to the schools decisions about how to address these specified themes. For five years after the 2002 implementation date, the prefecture plans to hold conferences (*kyougikai*) every year, so that every teacher in the prefecture can attend at least once. At these *kenshuu* meetings, actual cases of integrated studies implementation at different schools will be discussed.

Shimahara (2002) notes that *kenshuu* emphasis has recently shifted from the “teaching of traditional subjects to moral education and...*sougougakushuu* [integrated studies], at the elementary and middle school levels” (p. 62). During my fieldwork, I attended as many professional development activities as were available to teachers in the Hatanaka area on the topic of integrated studies, plus any that happened to coincide with my school visits. In all, I was able to attend a dozen regional, prefectural, municipal, and school-level *kenshuu* activities over the course of just 10 weeks, and six of these training

sessions (50%) had to do with integrated studies themes and/or implementation. This seems consistent with the incremental approach discussed in Chapter 3, in that opportunities for in-service training are available well after the official start of implementation, and teacher learning is expected to be ongoing.

According to data from interviews and documents, much of the school-level professional development specific to integrated studies implementation occurred during the transition period (1999-2002) and included extended in-school research projects (culminating in documented case studies at Kita JHS and Higashi JHS) as well as staff seminars featuring reports by teachers about prefectural and municipal *kenshuu* activities they had attended. However, even after the official implementation date, professional development about integrated studies continued to occur, as evidenced by this excerpt from an interview with the principal of Higashi JHS:

Kurano: Well, of course, every teacher has their own individual abilities...and skills. But...in general, there are various...teacher professional development [*kenshuu*] opportunities/activities [for teachers]. For instance, we had a schoolwide information education seminar [this past] August for the whole staff. [Teachers] do things like *kenshuu*, and then...at the city and prefectural levels, too, there are computer courses, so individuals can take those and develop their abilities. And the people who gained those abilities teach the rest [of the staff].

AMH: So, a teacher who goes to, say, the prefectural computer course, comes back and shares what s/he learned with everyone?

Kurano: Yes, so this year, the information education “leader” [instructor of these courses] is a teacher from this school...A teacher teaches the teachers.

Between the transition period and the period of implementation during which my fieldwork occurred, however, it appears that the nature of the *kenshuu* related to integrated studies underwent a change. At Nishi JHS, the curriculum coordinator indicated that the focus had devolved to the level of the grade-level faculty group:

AMH: Is there any *kenshuu* for integrated studies?

Wada: Well...when this [integrated studies] started, we had professional development meetings here at the school...Three, four, and five years ago, in a progression like that. Now that each grade level group has decided their themes, there's one teacher in each grade group who shows the themes and the year's plans to the group—we do *kenshuu* like that.

The principal of Kita JHS suggested that the focus had shifted from formal professional development seminars to more informal exchange of information among schools and teachers:

Hashimoto: They don't have a [teaching] license in those things, but they have to teach lessons about them, right? One thing [used to address this challenge] is teacher professional development [*kenshuu*]. These are sponsored by the prefectural board of education. And then...another one is the *kenshuu* sponsored by MEXT...There are prefectural [and] national teacher professional development [activities] that...teachers go to and then come back and share with everyone what they learned there...And then, nowadays, there's the internet, so they [the teachers] use that as a reference, and can find out how schools around the country are dealing with integrated studies.

AMH: Did that *kenshuu* take place during the transition period?

Hashimoto: Of course. Since that time, it has been central [to our implementation of integrated studies] over several years.

AMH: Are you doing *kenshuu* now, too?

Hashimoto: Even now, for certain things, yes. But now...every school has started to really implement [integrated studies], right? So now, they share what they've done—"at our school, we've done this," "at our school, we've done that"—and...bring those ideas back...to use next year.

This shift may reflect the fact that integrated studies by its nature demands more intensive school-level and grade-group-level collaboration by teacher colleagues when compared to other subject areas, and in a top-down/bottom-across model, such collaboration about a new subject area begins in earnest after the dissemination of goals and directives from the top.

The principal of Minami JHS made a distinction between two types of school-level teacher professional development that helps illuminate to some extent the different

emphases in *kenshuu* that involves research lessons and *kenshuu* that does not. Mr.

Kawaguchi told me that “in-school research” (*kounai kenkyuu*) involves students as well

as staff, while “staff development” (*shokuin kenshuu*) involves only staff members:

AMH: When you mentioned a course [for teachers] by the board of education, did you mean the municipal board, or...?

Kawaguchi: There are courses at the city level, and prefectural level.

AMH: Oh, there’s both?

Kawaguchi: Yes.

AMH: How about within your school? It seemed like they had something like that at [the municipal research presentation meeting]...

Kawaguchi: We have something like that—a research presentation meeting [*kenkyuu happyoukai*]. Last year, [Kita JHS] had one on integrated studies. With the theme of integrated studies, it was a school-wide event...Maybe this kind of thing doesn’t exist in the U.S....but it’s called in-school research. In Japan, there are two things—in-school research and staff development. The one, in-school research, is study that has to do with the students.

AMH: That’s in-school research?

Kawaguchi: Yes, yes, like the one you just went to at [the research presentation meeting] on human rights. That’s in-school research. The other, called “staff development,” is study intended to increase the staff’s ability to do their jobs. That’s where...well, it’s hard to distinguish the two, but...the one we do with the students is in-school research, and the one done with just the staff is staff development. That’s where we learn about integrated studies. With in-school research, there is grappling with integrated studies, and with staff development, just the staff learns about what’s out there, and takes part in the course—those things are also available.

AMH: And the meeting I attended yesterday?

Kawaguchi: That was the student-guidance block meeting, so it would be staff development.

AMH: Oh, it’s not in-school research, then.

Kawaguchi: It’s staff development.

While the two types of professional development Mr. Kawaguchi described (and admitted were “difficult to distinguish”) were clearly both considered to be *kenshuu* by the educators with whom I spoke, they seemed to differ primarily in their emphasis on “top-down” versus “bottom-across” approaches to teacher professional development (see Chapter 4). While both “in-school research” and “staff development” appear to require

some degree of information-sharing, active collaboration among educator colleagues seems more necessary for in-school research activities, particularly those involving public demonstration lessons (see C. Lewis, 2000).

In addition to school-level professional development activities, such as “in-school-research” and “staff development” seminars and workshops, educators in Hatanaka linked a variety of *kenshuu* activities—including municipal and prefectural seminars and workshops, observation visits to other schools, and off-campus experiential learning activities—to teacher learning for implementation of integrated studies. In recent years, formal professional development requirements for teachers have become more stringent overall, and the focus of professional development activities has apparently gained an increased emphasis on the implementation of integrated studies, and on experiential learning for both students and teachers. As illustrated by the following examples, each of these various types of *kenshuu* involved information-sharing and collaboration among educators across various levels of the education system, and centered on classroom practitioners and examples of practice.

Examples of Cross-Level Information Sharing and Collaboration in Formal Professional Development Activities

While the 12 *kenshuu* sessions I attended varied in content and format, they had in common a central focus on teaching practice and practitioners. The sessions were led almost exclusively by current and former precollegiate teachers and were focused primarily on actual teaching practice—either observed directly by attendees or described by the practitioners themselves in verbal and written form, and then discussed by the

other educators in attendance. Only two of the 12 *kenshuu* events I attended (both schoolwide staff training meetings) were devoid of first- or second-hand examples of teaching practice, and consisted primarily of transmission of policy statements and their supporting rationales by one educator to the assembled group. In nine of the 12 sessions, however, most of the time was devoted to observations or narratives of teaching practice followed by semi-structured discussions in small groups. (As a rule, parents and community members are able to attend public lesson observations, but not the subsequent educators-only discussion meetings.)

This emphasis on practitioners sharing with their colleagues information about their experiences for professional development purposes seems consistent with a view of teachers as true professionals, and perhaps as “artisans” (Huberman, 1995) learning the “craft” of teaching (Shimahara, 2002)—in contrast to the “teacher as technician” model criticized by Sato, Akita, & Iwakawa (1993). Huberman (1995) observes that, for professional development, teachers as artisans are typically “more interested in fellow artisans who are slightly farther along than they or who have fashioned a new procedure” (p. 196). This is consistent with Lave & Wenger’s (1991) notion of learning as “legitimate peripheral participation” in a “community of practice” whose more experienced members teach those with less experience. Significantly, however, the teachers selected to be presenters at the professional development sessions I attended were not the most senior or most experienced, but merely those selected by their principals to represent their school, which had in turn been selected by the (municipal or prefectural) board of education to provide a presenter for a given session. With the exception of government officials and invited lecturers from universities and so on,

presenters at professional development activities were regarded less as “experts” than as colleagues sharing their experiences with their peers.

The perceived importance of information-sharing across various levels of the education system in Japan is illustrated by its prevalence in formal professional development sessions. In many of the *kenshuu* activities I attended during my fieldwork, I found that educators from a variety of different “communities of practice” (different subject areas, grade levels, schools, geographic areas, etc.) were provided with substantial time (from 25% to virtually 100% of each session) and opportunity to share information about teaching practice. This information-sharing often occurred in formal presentations by classroom practitioners to an audience of fellow practitioners, or in *han*-like discussion groups, with one member being designated facilitator and given an open-ended question to have each member of the group answer in turn.

One example of *kenshuu* involving both types of information-sharing by educators at various levels in the education system is a prefectural professional development session I attended on a Tuesday afternoon in late October 2003. It took place at the Prefectural Education Center, in a rural area about 45 minutes by train and bus from Hatanaka. Entitled, “Educational Activities to Foster Proactive Learning,” the session was, according to the agenda, intended to “explore effective ways of developing and implementing a curriculum of activities that promote each school’s distinctiveness, centered around ‘integrated-type studies time’ instructional practice.” The seminar, scheduled for 1:30-4:30pm, was open to teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as schools for students with disabilities. In addition to the four presenters and one facilitator, a total of 15 educators were in attendance.

Virtually all of the three-hour session was focused on examples of teaching practice in integrated studies classes at the various school/grade levels. The first two hours were devoted to presentations by four educators about the integrated studies programs at their schools, and the last hour consisted of small-group discussions about the programs presented and those at the participants' own schools, followed by reports about those discussions to the whole group. The four presenters included one representative each from an elementary school, middle school, high school, and school for students with disabilities, in disparate locations around Yamato Prefecture. A vignette of the session follows:

First, the elementary school teacher gave a Power Point presentation—complete with full-color handouts of his slides and outlines of his school's integrated studies curriculum and goals—about his school's "River Watch" activities. In order to increase student awareness of their community, his school focused their integrated studies themes and activities on the river that flowed through their town, and demarcated six segments of a 58-kilometer route near the river—one segment for each grade level. For the 1st- and 2nd-grade daily living courses, students did "orienteering" and other exploration activities in connection with a theme of "Let's Become Friends With the River." The 3rd- and 4th-grade theme for integrated studies was "Let's Learn How People Downriver Live," and students made visits to the river and a harbor to observe fishermen and others dependent on the river for their livelihood. The theme for 5th- and 6th-graders was "Let's Study the Upriver Area," and students in those grades went hiking in the mountains near a dam and the river's source. The presenter showed video clips of students on walks near the river, and explained that students were encouraged to take photographs of "things they wanted to remember" from those walks and use them in individual portfolios documenting their integrated studies experiences, including interviews and yearly presentations. He emphasized that experiential learning enabled students to move "from impressions to questions"—from reactions to what they had experienced to things they wondered about and wanted to investigate—and the school staff was still working on how to change their program to better meet this goal.

Next, a junior high school teacher made a less high-tech presentation (using handouts with color photograph illustrations, but no Power Point) about how his rural school had chosen to focus their integrated studies activities on the local tradition of growing and

harvesting *shiitake* mushrooms. In order to foster students' "appreciation for nature and the value of life" as well as "the joy of hard work and importance of group effort," the students in all grades cooperate to grow, harvest, and sell the mushrooms. The 8th-graders collect hundreds of logs in which the 7th-graders drill holes and "plant" mushroom spores, while the 9th-grades later harvest thousands of mushrooms, which they sell to the community, donate to the local school lunch center, and use to prepare various dishes themselves in the school's home economics kitchen. In addition to the shiitake mushroom activities, he noted that students at his school also did job shadowing, investigated their community, took field trips to major cities, and learned how to do interviews, use wheelchairs, and make Power Point presentations, during integrated studies. Like the previous speaker, this presenter ended his presentation with a recap of the successes (*seika*) and unresolved issues (*kadai*) of his school's integrated studies curriculum.

The third presenter was from a school for students with disabilities in the northern part of the prefecture. In another low-tech lecture, she explained the school's curriculum and activities for students of junior high school age, noting that the school had traditionally made use of experiential learning activities (such as cooking, shopping, and camping) and cross-grade-level groupings, since students were often grouped by ability. When grade-level groupings were used, the 7th-graders studied about historical figures from the local area, the 8th-graders continued this study and went on an overnight camp, and the 9th-graders studied the environment and took a class trip to sites of significant environmental problems. In other cases, day-long school events (such as a cultural festival, or *bunkasai*) focused on the school's integrated studies themes involved students from every grade level. All students took part in some form of *happyou*, or presentations, about what they learned.

The last presenter of the day was the principal of a high school in a mountain town just east of Hatanaka. Using a Power Point slide show and a single-page handout, he explained that his town was one of two designated by the Prefectural Board of Education to do research on the theme of developing citizens with "rich hearts" (*yutaka na kokoro*), so they focused the high school's integrated studies curriculum on service learning. Beginning in 2002, they incorporated volunteer activities into the 10th-grade curriculum, and then into the 11th-grade curriculum in 2003, with plans to integrate them into the 12th-grade curriculum the following year. The 10th-graders took part in a "service learning walk" in which they hiked 20 kilometers, picking up roadside litter and obtaining refreshments from PTA members stationed along the way. The 11th-graders beautified the small forest area in a public park next to their school, planting trees and conducting fundraisers, as well as taking a class trip to Hokkaido (a northern island with vast national parks). Students were also allowed to work individually or in groups to clean the school's sports facilities, assist at local festivals and hiking events, lead sports

activities at a nearby elementary school, and volunteer at homes for the elderly. Afterwards, they were expected to present “experiential learning reports.” In closing, the principal noted that his school was still developing their integrated studies curriculum, particularly for the 12th grade, and trying to devise classroom activities to support the various service learning themes.

At 3:15, the facilitator—a Prefectural Education Center staff member—announced a short break, and the breakout discussion session began by 3:30. The attendees and presenters were clustered into three groups—high school (eight people), middle school (five people, including me), and elementary school (six people)—with a discussion leader and a recorder assigned within each group. The junior high school teachers in our group discussed issues of student grouping and assessment, sharing strategies being tried at their schools. After about a half-hour of discussion, the facilitator asked the recorders to share the major points of each group’s discussion to the whole group. They did, standing in turn and reading from their notes about how much they had learned in this session, how difficult qualitative evaluation of student performance was proving to be, and how student internships at local industries might be useful for developing particular skills. Finally, the facilitator asked me to stand and share my impressions (*kansou*) as an international visitor to this professional development seminar, and I commented briefly about the surprising degree of variation between integrated studies curricula at various schools.

The seminar described above is but one of many teacher professional development sessions offered by Yamato Prefecture every year. Like the joint regional-prefectural conference described in earlier chapters, the seminar made teaching practice—and the practitioners who engaged in and reported about it—its central focus. Compared to the joint conference, the emphasis on cases of actual practice was perhaps less direct, in that the seminar involved no public lessons, but it was also more pronounced, in that there were no “outside” presenters (except my few minutes of comments). Two hours of the three-hour seminar were devoted to “case study presentations” (so noted on the agenda) by four educators, with the remaining hour almost entirely dedicated to discussion of the cases presented and of programs at the attendees’ own schools (including elementary through high school levels). In addition to

the cross-level information sharing evident throughout the seminar, I noted that the elementary school teacher mentioned that his school had been implementing integrated studies activities for about six years, while the high school representative indicated that their program was only a year old, so the inclusion of various school levels at this seminar seemed consistent with MEXT's staggered implementation schedule, its top-down/bottom-across approach to implementation, and its recommendation to look to schools with longer experience for ideas upon which to build when implementing integrated studies. (I later learned that inclusion of teachers from various levels and grades is a common occurrence at professional development sessions about such topics as human rights education and integrated studies, but less common at sessions about subject-area-specific topics.)

Another example of a professional development activity at which information-sharing occurred across even more disparate levels took place at a level somewhere between school- and municipal-level. It was open to educators from neither all the schools in town nor just a single school, but instead, from a "northern block" of schools in a certain municipal ward encompassing Minami JHS and all its feeder schools—including even preschools and kindergartens, which are not technically part of public, compulsory education. (I learned that in other "blocks" in town, even prefecturally-governed high schools were included in such meetings.) The "Second Annual Northern Block Pre-K Through Ninth Grade Cooperation Exchange Meeting" was held at Minami JHS on a Thursday at the end of October 2003. Like many other professional development activities, the block meeting began with public lessons, and ended with an educators-only discussion session. It was scheduled for 1:35-4:20pm, and centered on

two themes described in the agenda as follows: 1) “Establishing Warm Human Relationships—Boosting Students’ Ability to Communicate,” and 2) “Increasing Respect for Rules—Boosting Students’ Self-Control.” The meeting’s focus was not directly on integrated studies *per se*, but about issues that the curriculum reform was intended to address, including one skill (self-expression) that was plainly emphasized in activities, such as student presentations, used in all junior high school integrated studies courses in Hatanaka. I learned that these block meetings occur three times per year, with teachers required to attend at least one of the debriefing sessions annually, so the professional development activity described in the vignette below is certainly an example of regular, mandatory *kenshuu* undergone by the junior high school teachers of integrated studies in Hatanaka.

At the northern block meeting, public lessons were held during 5th period (1:35-2:25) in all 18 homerooms at Minami JHS—five homerooms from each grade level plus three homerooms for special needs students. Virtually every subject area was represented, from math and social studies to art and physical education. The lessons were open for observation by educators from feeder schools in the same block as Minami JHS, as well as parents and community members, but the number of observers was noticeably lower than at the elementary school public lessons described earlier. Visitors were provided with a two-sided handout including a map of the school and a list of the homeroom class, subject area, and location of each lesson.

I visited a “reduced class size” 8th-grade English lesson being team-taught by a non-native speaker certified teacher from Japan and a native speaker assistant language teacher (ALT) from the U.S. In the classroom, there were only 16 students (nine boys and seven girls) seated in desks facing the chalkboard, above which hung the requisite placard stating some of the many school goals: “The type of students we strive for: Students who

move forward in their learning; students who have consideration for others; students with self-motivation.” Aside from the small class size, the lesson was unremarkable, in terms of both instruction and classroom management, particularly in comparison to the well-rehearsed, “special” research lessons I had observed at the regional conference. By the same token, however, the English lesson at Minami JHS seemed more representative of a “typical” lesson. The Japanese English teacher spent the first 30 minutes of class returning midterm exams to students and discussing them, and then used the last 20 minutes of class to introduce vocabulary with the help of the native speaker teacher. The two teachers did most of the speaking in class, used more English than the students did, and tried to squelch occasional chatting at inappropriate times by some of the students. While I stayed for the duration of the lesson, four other observers shuttled in and out of the classroom.

I found the “exchange meeting” (*kouryuukai*) session held afterwards, from 2:45-4:20, far more interesting than the public lesson had been. By 2:45, 26 teachers from Minami JHS and its feeder schools had gathered in pre-assigned groups of three to six people around six tables in the multipurpose room on the second floor of Minami JHS. At the front of the room, the student guidance director of Minami JHS acted as facilitator, opening the meeting and introducing Mr. Kawaguchi, the Minami JHS principal, who made introductory remarks. Mr. Kawaguchi welcomed the participants to the block meeting, noting that ideas from the corporate world suggest that schools are well-integrated horizontally (cooperation between two junior high schools in the same area, for instance) but not vertically (preschool through kindergarten, elementary, and junior high in the same area), so the day’s event was a unique opportunity to consider common challenges and the longitudinal development of students living in this part of the city. After the principal left, the student guidance director rearranged the participants from six groups into five, so there would be 5-6 people per table, and appointed the most senior member of each group to act as that group’s leader. He instructed the groups to discuss the two themes of the meeting (self-expression and self-control), and to report out to the whole group during the final half-hour of the session.

I had been assigned to a group of five, of which Mr. Segawa, the gruff-looking but soft-spoken assistant principal of Minami JHS was, at age 50, the most senior member and therefore group leader. He first invited us to share our impressions of the public lessons we had observed, beginning with teachers from schools other than Minami JHS, stating, “In about 10 years, your students will be like this.” An older woman who taught fourth grade at Hatanaka Elementary #1 said she had been pleased that all the students she had encountered as she walked approached the gymnasium had greeted her politely. A younger woman, a teacher at a nearby kindergarten, made comparisons with her previous observations at Minami JHS, noting that the school had become more “beautiful” since her visit four years earlier, and not just in physical terms. When she had

observed cleaning time (*souji*) at Minami JHS previously, it had been primarily the teachers doing all the work, but this time, students were properly engaged in their cleaning tasks, and the hallways appeared very tidy. In the public lesson she had observed that afternoon, there was none of the misbehavior she had witnessed four years ago, such as students wandering out of class into the hallway and so on. When I was asked to make comparisons between the Minami JHS of 14 years ago and the present, I commented that the students seemed much less inhibited about approaching a foreigner like me and speaking to me in English, and this probably had to do with the increased emphasis on English at earlier grade levels, and the greater numbers of foreigners living in Hatanaka than before.

Next, the only other Minami JHS teacher in our group, Mr. Wada, began to offer what turned out to be a series of thoughtful and well-reasoned comments based on both personal observations and research. Mr. Wada, a rugged 45-year-old with unusual reddish hair, had been a physical education and health teacher for 22 years, and had worked at Minami JHS for the past three years. He noted that the Minami JHS students seemed much calmer and more well-behaved than three years earlier. Nevertheless, he admitted, in recent years he had come to rethink “what education should be” and has concluded that there is a need for more research and emphasis on the developmental needs of adolescents in junior high school education.

What should a 15-year-old, Mr. Wada asked, be able to do, say, and think about, and what kinds of experiences (*taiken*) does s/he need? Use of this type of developmental focus is well-established at the kindergarten level, he argued, but is lost as students move up through the grade levels. As teenagers, junior high school students are very concerned about what others think of them, and some of them seem just plain lonely (*samishii*), while others (especially boys) lack certain communication skills and end up resorting to physical violence when they cannot get their point across. Mr. Wada reported to us the results of a survey he had conducted among his students every year for the past five years. When asked, “When are you most relaxed/calm?” about 80% responded that it is when they are lying on their bed and resting; the next most popular answer was when talking with their mother. The fact that most students had not mentioned interacting with friends suggested to Mr. Wada a departure from the customary peer-orientation of adolescents. However, when the same students were asked whether they would let their own children learn solely by computer/internet at home or send them to school, 99% said they would send them to school, which Mr. Wada saw as a sign that the students value and desire interaction with other people, but are perhaps unable to achieve it.

Both the elementary and kindergarten teachers lamented that they can no longer assume their students come to them with certain skills, as they used to be able to. They reported that their students are now

spending more time studying English, either during school or in after-school *juku* (cram schools), but are losing familiarity with certain Japanese words and concepts, such as the names of certain trees, or even the word for “cash” (*genkin*, a term with which one 4th-grader apparently seemed utterly unfamiliar). Mr. Wada voiced the opinion that “our culture seems to be changing”—and some parents are treating their children as if they were pets. Mr. Segawa added that the speed of change in the culture has also increased. He said he had spent 25 of his 28 years as a teacher at the junior high school level, and every year, saw the same kind of students come in as 7th-graders. For the past few years, however, every 7th grade class had been different, and this presents a real challenge for teachers and administrators. Mr. Wada agreed that the students are quite a different breed lately, and offered the example that the other day, five boys who were unable to complete some task in physical education class had been crying openly, and some girls had comforted them, “like grade schoolers.”

All of the educators in my group indicated that they have become aware of situations in which students state that they are going to “play together” (*issho ni asobu*) with other children, and instead end up doing individual activities (like reading a book or playing a computer game) while sitting in the same room (or house) as the others. Mr. Wada, father of two, asked incredulously, “They really believe that’s ‘playing together’?” Mr. Segawa stated that there is no need to glorify the past or think it was perfect, but while politicians attack the “postwar education system,” it is also important for parents to raise their children well. He stated that there are different kinds of education, and that “school education” (*gakkou kyouiku*) and “family education” (*katei kyouiku*) share the same goal—to create people who can stand on their own two feet, and function on their own.

At 3:50, just as our group was launching into a discussion of values (*kachikan*) in relationship to the cultural changes mentioned, the student guidance director announced that it was time for each group to share a synopsis of their discussion. Representing our group, “Group F,” Mr. Segawa reported our conclusion that Minami JHS students have improved their behavior in recent years, but they also seem to have weaker communication skills and less self-direction, always relying on the teacher for help. In an increasingly materialistic society, he added, we must redefine what “richness” really means, and made an allusion to the “richness of spirit” mentioned in the curriculum reform policy (*kokoro no yutakasa*). Group E felt that students now were less likely to offer each other support (during play or learning activities) than in previous years. Group C reported a perceived decrease in students’ communication skills and self-control, with more and more students unable to make friends, or requesting/refusing particular work partners, and with boys and girls having more difficulty working together after the 4th-grade level. Group B lamented the growing number of students (from preschool through junior high) who have poor interpersonal skills (*ningen kankei*), are unable to

truly relax (*ochitsukeru*) at home, and have low task-persistence (*gaman*). Two possible solutions, they proposed, might be to give students more problem-solving activities and to give students more “opportunities to fail,” by allowing them to have experiences in which not everything goes as they had expected or hoped. Finally, Group A offered up similar observations about today’s students, and suggested further countermeasures, including letting parents know that “discipline begins at age zero,” and recognizing that while students may need some experience with hardships, they also need praise for what they do right. One member of that group added that task-persistence (*gaman*) has perhaps not been extinguished, but simply redirected; now children are persistent about things—especially things they want—instead of toward situations of human interaction.

In this *kenshuu* event, information-sharing took the form of small-group discussion, prefaced not by second-hand descriptions of practice by individual teachers, but by firsthand observations of actual classroom practice in a set of public lessons. I found many aspects of this discussion meeting very intriguing. First was the level of frankness with which participants from various schools were able to discuss their own and each other’s students. Second was the high degree of consensus they were able to reach within and among groups, particularly in light of the participants’ frankness and their differing work situations and teaching experience. Finally, the participants not only made consistent use of examples from their own classrooms and observations to illustrate certain principles or make claims about certain trends, but in the case of at least two of the five groups, they offered concrete countermeasures that could be taken to rectify current problems. In these ways, teacher learning involved not only the sharing of information about teachers’ own experiences and observations, but also collaboration in problem-solving.

Overall, the educators’ discussion at the end of the block meeting left me with the impression that the teacher participants had a view of education that was “systemic” or

“systems-level” to a great degree—identifying less with a particular school or grade level than with a set of students from a certain geographic area entrusted to their care over a series of years—that seems consistent with the “systems approach” Imai (1986) describes as characteristic of a continuous improvement orientation. It also appeared that the participants took very seriously both the societal problems on which the curriculum reform is premised and the strategies (such as problem-solving experiences) recommended by the policy as remedies for such societal problems. As a whole, this municipal-ward-level *kenshuu* session illustrates the variety of levels (vertically across schools and grade levels as well as horizontally across schools and geographic areas) across which educators are expected to collaborate and share information as part of formal professional development activities.

Like the prefectural seminar described earlier, and most of 12 professional development activities I observed, the content of this formal *kenshuu* session centered on concrete examples of teaching practice, and the primary “actors” or facilitators were the teacher-participants themselves. Rather than allusions to education research by distant “experts,” the frank sharing of the participants’ own, more immediate experiences as educators seemed both the legitimate and predominant substance of conversation. This type of collaboration and information-sharing also occurs as part of less formal professional development activities, as detailed below.

Informal Professional Development Activities and Other Resources

While formal teacher professional development activities were frequently mentioned by interviewees as sources of teacher learning for implementation of the new integrated studies curriculum, respondents to the staff questionnaires I circulated at each

of Hatanaka’s junior high schools gave much more emphasis to informal sources of teacher learning, such as interaction with colleagues, and written (online and print) resources. In response to the question, “To implement integrated studies, what kinds of resources (materials, books, knowledge, advice from colleagues, etc.) are most useful?” only a fraction of the 98 respondents cited resources that could be construed as related to *kenshuu*, such as “[observations of] practice at other schools” (2%) and “teachers at other schools” (11%). In contrast, the most common response to this question was by far (62%) “colleagues in my school or grade-group” (see Table 8). (See Appendix D for detailed survey results for all questions for each school.)

Table 8

*Staff Questionnaire Responses About Resources
for Implementation of Integrated Studies*

Q: To implement integrated studies, what kinds of resources (materials, books, knowledge, advice from colleagues, etc.) are most useful?	Higashi JHS (22 total)	Kita JHS (21 total)	Minami JHS (25 total)	Nishi JHS (30 total)	Total: 98 responses
a) colleagues in my school/grade group	13 (59%)	16 (76%)	15 (60%)	17 (57%)	61 (62%)
b) teachers at other schools	2 (9%)	2 (10%)	3 (12%)	4 (13%)	11 (11%)
c) teacher’s manuals	4 (18%)	0	3 (12%)	5 (17%)	12 (12%)
d) other:	3 (14%)	3 (14%)	4 (16%)	5 (17%)	15 (16%)

Between one-half and three-fourths (57%-76% at each school) of the respondents felt that the colleagues they worked with every day were the most useful resource they had for implementing integrated studies. “Teacher’s manuals” were seen as most useful by a total of 12% of the respondents (0-18% at each school), and “teachers at other schools” by 11% (9-13% at each school). Fifteen respondents (16%) chose the “other” category, writing in a variety of resources, including “the internet” (4%), “books/research

books” (3%), “teaching practice at other schools/research and development schools” (2%), and “the municipal education research center” (1%). Overall, formal mechanisms for teacher learning, such as teacher’s manuals, were cited by only a few of the educators surveyed, while the majority of them deemed informal mechanisms, such as communication with colleagues in their own school, “most useful” in learning to implement integrated studies.

As evidenced by the survey results, educators in Hatanaka did not rely solely on formal professional development activities, but made use of a variety of resources in learning how to implement integrated studies. Below I shall describe a variety of sources of teacher professional development—other than formal *kenshuu* activities—that are available to teachers implementing integrated studies, and analyze the extent to which they adhere to a pattern of information-sharing about teaching practice and collaboration by teacher practitioners. These resources include informal “information exchange” between teacher colleagues, internet resources (such as listservs and online case studies), and print resources (such as commercially-produced guidebooks, government-produced teacher’s manuals, and teacher-authored case studies).

Interpersonal resources—information exchange between teacher colleagues. In my interviews of teachers and administrators, seven educators mentioned the importance of teachers engaging in “*jouhou koukan*,” or “information exchange,” and sharing ideas and materials with each other. The principal of Nishi JHS talked about the need for teachers to “share their knowledge with each other” particularly within grade-level groups, while the curriculum coordinator at that school spoke of teachers getting “advice from other teachers” about how to implement integrated studies. The curriculum

coordinator at Higashi JHS also emphasized the need for grade-group discussion, and a homeroom teacher from Nishi JHS described her reliance on materials prepared by the “teacher in charge of integrated studies” for her grade level. In the interview, that teacher offered the following rationales for this reliance and for grade-group discussions:

Ito: Since it isn’t standardized [*tou-itsu sarete inai*]...the teachers in a grade-level group have meetings and things, and then...with a goal [in mind], decide as a group...exactly how to move toward that goal. The teacher in charge of integrated studies also prepares a lot of [materials] for us, and things like that. If each individual [uses their own] knowledge, the ways of teaching and communicating [it] would end up all disconnected, so...we try to use a base that has been standardized to some extent.

AMH: By the members of a grade-level group?

Ito: Yes. That’s how it is...

AMH: I see...In implementing integrated studies, what resources do you draw on—for instance, things like books, periodicals, teaching manuals, the internet, your own knowledge or that of your colleagues? What kinds of resources do you use?

Ito: Well, actually...I can’t, I don’t really look things up on my own—because I have no time. So I end up reading the materials that the teacher in charge of integrated studies prepares for us...That’s the reality.

This system of designating one teacher the “integrated studies chair” for each grade level was in use at each of the four schools I visited. Evidence from my classroom observations indicates a significant degree of materials-sharing between the members of each grade-level faculty group; the curriculum tends to be planned and carried out collaboratively, rather than each homeroom teacher striking out on his or her own. Logically, such collaboration requires at least some level of information exchange and collaboration between teachers of the same grade-level group, and implies teacher learning at that level also.

While it might be logical to assume that increased collaboration would result in a decreased workload for each member of the group, it seems noteworthy that several of the educators I interviewed indicated that the implementation of integrated studies has

actually resulted in an increased workload for teachers. This increase was one of the major changes cited by educators in Hatanaka when I asked them to compare their current students' education with their own. The perceived increase is notable, given the fact that the overall Rainbow Plan reform has shortened the school week from five and a half days to five, class sizes are at their lowest point in decades, and school facilities and equipment are much more modern and convenient than they once were. For example, one of the principals I interviewed told me that when he had attended junior high school about 40 years earlier, they had had charcoal stoves instead of central heat, homemade boxed lunches (*bentou*) of rice and pickles instead of the hot meals delivered to the schools today, and black-and-white "film slides" (*gentou*) instead of videotapes and the internet. Several interviewees in their 40s and 50s recalled being in homerooms with 40 to 50 or more students per teacher. Others recalled having a total of 1300 annual class hours when they were in junior high, compared to the 980 required of students by the current national curriculum.

In other words, despite the fact that teachers in Japan today generally have fewer students and fewer courses to teach, using more sophisticated instructional equipment in more comfortable facilities than in the past, there is a feeling that they are now working harder than ever, partly due to the demands of implementing integrated studies, and the collaboration that requires. As noted in Chapter 5, all members of a grade-level faculty group—both homeroom teachers and non-homeroom teachers—are expected to work together on curriculum design, materials development, and in some cases (such as mass lessons and fieldtrips), instruction and classroom management as well, for integrated studies. This distribution of responsibility for an ongoing course (as opposed to a special

or occasional event) like integrated studies is one reason why collaboration may connote an increased workload, particularly for less-experienced teachers and those not used to the “extra” duties shouldered by homeroom teachers.

Ms. Ito, a relatively young 8th-grade homeroom teacher at Nishi JHS, who had graduated from junior high school herself only about 10 years earlier, described the increased workload for teachers primarily in terms of “lesson preparation” for experiential learning activities that was time-consuming even though done collaboratively by all the members of her grade-group:

Ito: [Comparing] the education students are getting today and the education people in my day underwent...Until now, teachers did hardly any [lesson] preparation.

AMH: In the past?

Ito: In the past...To try to state it specifically...integrated studies didn't exist [then], right? The experiential learning [associated with integrated studies] didn't exist, either—there was hardly any experiential learning.

AMH: So what's the connection between there being little experiential learning and teachers not doing much preparation?

Ito: Now, with the experiential learning in integrated studies, teachers have a lot of preparation to do. Teachers already have a lot to do, but they must also prepare everything for the experiential learning activities in integrated studies. Students do only what the teacher tells them to—they don't take the initiative...

AMH: And those are differences from the past that are not so good?

Ito: Yes...I think that teachers are paving the way [for the students], after all...For instance...third semester, the 8th graders will do eye mask [simulated blindness] experiential learning and...wheelchair experiential learning, but for that, the teacher does everything—making phone calls [to presenters], “Would you please come [to our school]? Would you please come?” [Telling them] how many students in which class period, inviting [the presenters], having them having come [to school], having [students] do the experiential learning activity, and then when they have time, doing reflection [*kansou*] about it, and writing [thank-you] letters, and sending them off. The teacher does everything—all the preparation! That's also learning, but if the students could do it, it would be even better, I think. I wonder if that isn't true experiential learning, you know?

AMH: But right now, for 8th grade, the teacher is usually doing it all?

Ito: For all grades—seventh through ninth.

AMH: For workplace experiential learning, too?

Ito: Everything...First [the teachers] phone the companies beforehand, saying, “[My] junior high school students will phone you afterwards”—things like that. They call and ask, “Could you please have my students visit?” before [the placements are set up].

AMH: Is that the responsibility of the homeroom teachers?

Ito: No, of all the teachers in that grade level.

AMH: Because there are a lot of companies to call?

Ito: Right.

While collaboration and information-sharing by colleagues at the same school seemed fundamental to integrated studies implementation in Hatanaka, several of the educators I interviewed emphasized information exchange that extended beyond the school level. The principal of Higashi JHS described how teacher interaction at the municipal, prefectural, and national levels affected information exchange among teachers at his school:

Kurano: [In] developing integrated studies...there are “advanced schools” [*senshingakkou*]...to which teachers go and observe lessons. There they study how to grapple with integrated studies. There are things like that [available].

AMH: Was that during the “transition period”?

Kurano: During that time, and now, too...Most of it takes place during the transition period...The Ministry of Education...designates certain schools around the country to pilot [programs]...and those [schools] take it on with gusto...and those are the kinds of places that [teachers] visit for *kenshuu*, and observe.

AMH: And teachers from your school visited those kinds of places?

Kurano: Yes, that’s right. [For] integrated studies, there are professional development meetings sponsored by the city and prefectural boards of education. We have a Municipal Education Research Center, right? At that research center, they also do research about how to deal with integrated studies—they did research about how to implement it. There are also subcommittees made up of our city’s elementary and junior high school teachers...where they do information exchange about integrated studies. For instance, “What are they doing at Minami JHS?” “What are they doing at Hatanaka Elementary #1?” “Well, we’re doing it like this...” Then...teachers do move around, after all...

AMH: Oh...Through job transfer [school assignment]?

Kurano: Yes, through transfer. So, they can [share] how things were done at their previous schools. Therefore, [our school’s] teachers can take that

kind of information, too, and think about how to do integrated studies here. So, there are a lot of different ways of doing things.

A homeroom teacher at Minami JHS described similar types of information exchange activities, which he felt constituted a type of *kenshuu*:

Kamata: Well...when they first said that integrated studies would be starting, there were some selected schools—research and development schools—that piloted it, so we used things from those schools as reference [materials]. Now that integrated studies has begun, schools are making various revisions as they go along—“This year, let’s try this,” “For next year... let’s try changing this part”...that’s how we’re [implementing] it, so...I think our school’s program of integrated studies for 7th through 9th grade is shaping up as we go along and revise it. Until we reach that point, we ask how other schools are doing things and engage in information exchange.

AMH: How does this “information exchange” occur?

Kamata: There’s always something called “designated research schools” [*kenkyuu shiteikou*] and they give presentations [about their work]. We ask [teachers] who have gone to those presentations [for information], or have them make copies of materials for us—that kind of thing.

AMH: Would that also be professional development [*kenshuu*]?

Kamata: That’s right—it’s professional development.

Information exchange among teachers within a single school or at different schools is facilitated by the formal national and prefectural designation of pilot schools that customarily hold public lessons and disseminate case studies about their work (see later discussion of case studies in the section on “print resources”). It is also facilitated by the common practices of: 1) periodic involuntary transfers of teaching staff to different schools within the same prefecture (see discussion of “job rotation” in Kinney, 1997, and OERI, 1998); 2) assignment of teachers to a different grade level every year (ideally advancing one grade level per year along with the students; see discussion of “looping” in Sato, 2004); and 3) concentrating all teachers’ work stations in a single, common staffroom (*shokuinshitsu*) in each school, providing teachers with easy access to their colleagues as they prepare lessons and do other work (see Rohlen, 1983; Shimahara

& Sakai, 1995; Shimahara, 2002). The deliberate and regular shake-up of school personnel—in the form of involuntary transfers each spring—is seen by educators as “important for both the development of individual teachers and the morale of the school” (OERI, 1998, p. 210), and may be seen as a contributing factor in the “general willingness” among teachers “to reflect on one’s own weaknesses, to seek advice, and to share good ideas” (Kinney, 1997, p. 22). By exchanging information with teacher colleagues in the same school or region, teachers have ample opportunity to share examples of teaching practice from a practitioner’s point of view, as well as actual instructional materials and ideas gleaned from their own or others’ practice.

In addition to the overall challenge of teaching a new subject area, teachers in Hatanaka also face specific challenges in dealing with themes and topics outside their areas of specialization. When I asked educators in Hatanaka where teachers obtained the knowledge required to teach an inter-disciplinary course like integrated studies, at least two indicated that teachers would consult a colleague whose area of specialization was closer to the topic in question—for instance, asking a social studies teacher about a community history project, or a science teacher about an environmental issues unit. In addition, five of my interviewees referred to the use of “local experts” or “guest speakers” to teach about topics outside the teachers’ areas of expertise, such as wheelchair use, local waste-recycling systems, or life in English-speaking countries and South America. In some cases, the guest speakers addressed teachers directly, through presentations at professional development activities, as indicated by Mr. Kawaguchi, principal of Minami JHS:

AMH: Well, in integrated studies, there are lots of different subjects, right? For instance, English, and the environment, and community history

and so on...I wonder where the teachers at this school get their know-how about these things?

Kawaguchi: Well...this know-how, you see...there are people in the community who know a lot about community activities. For instance, the director of the Spring Festival Museum, the Hatanaka Castle Historical Museum, and the Civic Center, places like that—especially their staff members who are specialists—we do things like inviting them in as “guest teachers” for our staff development activities [*kenshuu*]. To go further, we have members of our neighborhood—neighbors, citizens—come in, like the...director of Hatanaka Glass Factory.

AMH: Invite them to the school?

Kawaguchi: To the school. And then we can find out what is going on in the community.

In other cases, guest speakers made their presentations as part of integrated studies classes or field trips, and the teachers were expected to “learn along with the students.” The curriculum coordinator of Kita JHS gave the following examples when I asked him how teachers learned about the various topics included in the school’s integrated studies curriculum:

Rikuda: Well, it varies from case to case. For instance, if [the theme] is international understanding, we have volunteers from outside [the school] come in—for instance, for English, we might have an ALT come in, or for Portuguese, some one else, and... teach a lesson, with the support of the homeroom teacher. That’s what we did last year.

At Minami JHS, the curriculum coordinator indicated that the system was still a work in progress, but community experts and resource sites could provide teachers with the information and experiences they might need:

Taguchi: Well...if the teachers have expertise in it, that’s good—it’s actually better—and if they don’t, that’s OK, too. [We say that] they can learn along with the students. For the [knowledge] that teachers lack, we tell them to make use of resource people in the community. [We still need to work on] those methods and techniques, I believe, but...Teachers aren’t experts in everything...but they need some minimum knowledge...With things like environmental problems, for instance, the non-science and non-social-studies teachers don’t have that knowledge. But...the issue becomes where to have them learn about those kinds of things. For instance, the recycling center, where the 8th graders go.

In sum, interpersonal resources fill at least two types of learning needs for Hatanaka teachers. To provide teachers and students with content knowledge about specific topics included in their integrated studies curricula, schools in Hatanaka sometimes turn to community resources and local experts. For specific instructional techniques and materials, on the other hand, teachers regularly engage in information exchange with colleagues within and beyond their grade-level faculty group and school staffroom. In recent years, the potential geographical scope of such exchange has been greatly extended by the use of electronic resources, such as the internet, as discussed in the next section.

Internet resources—listservs and school/corporate websites. Only four of the 98 respondents to my questionnaire indicated that the internet was the most useful resource in their implementation of integrated studies, but interview data suggest that online resources are important to many teachers in Hatanaka as they learn to implement integrated studies. The curriculum coordinator at Higashi JHS indicated that, in addition to drawing on their grade group colleagues, “individually, I think it’s very important for teachers to use the internet and collect written materials” to help them with integrated studies. When asked about the “most useful” resource for teachers implementing the new course, two interviewees immediately mentioned the internet. One was a 9th-grade homeroom teacher from Nishi JHS who quickly responded, “Well, first of all, the internet, for sure—because it’s very useful,” and the other was the Nishi JHS principal, who made the following comparison between electronic and print resources:

Mizuguchi: After all, [the most useful resource] is the computer, isn't it? That has the newest information, right away. In that way, it can really make what the children are studying in school come alive...I think that's very good. But...what we [older educators] think is that, getting fresh information and lots of different materials from computers and everything is important, but the accumulated wisdom of the ages is also important... Computers can certainly give us the freshest information, but...one good point of books is they let us think carefully, not in a hurried way. I think there's both...we have to [use] both...for quick, new information, yes, the computer is best...but...we have to discriminate between the two.

Another principal, Mr. Hashimoto of Kita JHS, suggested that the types of online resources teachers use include information about other schools' integrated studies programs:

Hashimoto: Nowadays, there's the internet, so they [the teachers] use that as a reference, and can find out how schools around the country are dealing with integrated studies.

When I recently performed online searches (in Japanese), the search engine found over 200,000 websites for "integrated studies" (*sougouteki na gakushuu*), and over 30,000 for "integrated studies" plus "cases" (*jirei*). Not only have teachers and schools made their curricula and lesson plans for integrated studies available via the web, corporations such as Panasonic, Tokyo Gas, and Calbee Snack Foods now have websites featuring download-able worksheets and suggested activities for certain integrated studies themes (see Asahi Shimbun Weekly, 2004).

Thousands and thousands of online resources for integrated studies exist, and teachers in Hatanaka appear to have ample access to them. Every junior high school I visited had internet access, in both computer labs and the central staffroom. In addition, according to the educators I interviewed, the vast majority of teachers own personal computers. One curriculum coordinator estimated that "most all" of the teachers on his staff had a "personal computer at home," and a teacher at another school indicated that all

of the other teachers in her school owned computers and knew how to use them, chuckling, “All except me.” Mr. Hashimoto estimated that 80% of the teachers at Kita JHS used the internet for integrated studies and other subject areas:

AMH: You said the internet is also useful. How many teachers are making use of that [for integrated studies]?

Hashimoto: Almost all...well, I'd say about 8 out of 10...for various things, not just integrated studies.

AMH: Not everyone, right? In the U.S., too, we often have situations where the students are further ahead in technology than the teachers are...

Hashimoto: At this school, the teachers are still ahead [of the students], because this is still sort of a rural area out here...

AMH: Do most students have a computer at home?

Hashimoto: Probably almost all of them. But whether they're actually using it or not...

AMH: How about the teachers?

Hashimoto: There's probably not one of our teachers that doesn't have one.

Mr. Fujii, the integrated studies committee chair at Kita JHS, introduced me to the existence of computer listservs dedicated to online discussion and exchange of ideas about integrated studies. When I asked him how he learned to teach integrated studies, Mr. Fujii told me he primarily used the internet, including a listserv about integrated studies maintained by Toshie Suzuki, a lecturer at Chiba University, through which he was able to ask questions of teachers and professors around the country in “real time.” He said the listserv also provided him access to more “global” information, which is not limited to just one town or area. Books and booklets were not as helpful in that way, he argued, since they mainly consisted of the results of activities, and did not show the sweat and tears that went into them, nor list step-by-step the process of how to get those results.

I began subscribing to the same listserv (www.suzukitoshie.net/miraiinfo.html), and learned that Suzuki, who calls herself a “Designer of Future Education,” is involved in several MEXT-related projects. She promotes “education engineering” through such

instructional strategies as “project studies” (*purojekuto gakushuu*), “self-discovery” portfolios, and clear goal-setting by students. Her listserv contains information about how to use projects and portfolios in courses like integrated studies, and publicizes her *kenshuu* lecture circuit and recorded presentations about these topics.

Suzuki’s is but one of many listservs concerned with integrated studies (an online search for “integrated studies” plus “listserv” yielded almost 12,000 websites). In addition to listservs, there are thousands and thousands of other online resources, including school, corporate, and personal websites containing ideas and materials for integrated studies curriculum, lessons, and activities. Interview data suggest that teachers in Hatanaka are making use of these resources, which tend to be firmly focused on instructional practice, replete with concrete examples, and created or contributed to by practicing teachers. This emphasis on collaborative information exchange is also evident in the print resources teachers use, as discussed in the next section.

Print resources—commercial books, teacher’s manuals, and case studies. Only three of the 98 questionnaire respondents cited books as the most useful resource in the implementation of integrated studies, but again, interview and other data suggest that print resources are important tools being used by many teachers of integrated studies in Hatanaka junior high schools. Eleven of the fourteen educators I interviewed mentioned books and other printed materials as resources used by teachers implementing integrated studies, and six of them deemed books quite “important,” “good,” or “useful” resources for teachers. The types of print materials mentioned include government publications, commercially-produced books and magazines, and case studies of teaching practice

produced by various schools. Case studies were mentioned most often (by six interviewees), with MEXT publications and teaching manuals next most frequently mentioned (by two people each), while others simply referred to “books,” “teachers’ books,” or “reference books.” In some cases, teachers use books about specific topics or activities within the integrated studies curriculum. For instance, when I asked one teacher how she and her colleagues handled having to teach about things (such as computer presentations) with which they had little experience, she immediately replied, “Well...we go to the bookstore and find a book [about it].”

The teaching of integrated studies itself is a topic about which there is no shortage of publications in Japan. During a visit to a Tokyo bookstore in 2001, educational researcher Peter Cave reports finding over 160 books on the topic (Cave, 2003, p. 96). Even in rural Hatanaka, three of the bookstores I visited in the fall of 2003 carried between a dozen and three dozen books each about integrated studies, primarily “how-to” manuals for elementary and junior high school teachers, with titles such as, *Creating Year-Long Curriculum for Integrated Studies*, *Junior High School Integrated Studies: Basic Teaching Practice Unit Plans*, and *Integrated Studies for Everyone: 100 Teaching Practice Tips* (my translation; see bibliography for their titles in Japanese). Dozens of such guidebooks, along with non-commercially-produced government publications and collections of case studies, also occupied the shelves at the Hatanaka Municipal Education Research Center, and some educators mentioned to me the availability of reference books about integrated studies at the public library. In general, however, schools and school libraries were not seen as significant sources of such print materials, as suggested by this excerpt from an interview with the principal of Nishi JHS:

Mizuguchi: In the case of Japan...instructional materials for teachers' professional development...[such] books [*tosho*] are generally scarce in school, but individuals may buy their own. Generally, it's good if schools purchase and keep such reference materials on hand, so teachers can work with them...but that's usually not the case, so teachers [are expected to] buy them on their own. So it's more common for teachers to just buy them with their own funds. Recently, a lot of people have come to have their own computer, so they can use them to get information to work with, to a certain point. But even so, that's not enough. There's still a need for libraries and so on to have a collection of...you could say, teachers' books...

AMH: Do you mean the public library?

Mizuguchi: No, the school library, but in cooperation with local libraries, like the municipal one and other branch libraries...maybe sharing the materials in rotation.

Administrators at the other three junior high schools also indicated that teachers usually buy reference materials with their own funds, though some referred to small collections of books purchased by the school for teachers' use. When I asked Mr. Kawaguchi, the principal of Minami JHS, about useful resources for teachers, he mentioned both books purchased by the school and by individual teachers:

Kawaguchi: Oh, there are plenty of those that have come out now—magazines and books, and books published by university professors, and manuals on teaching practice, and so on. A whole bunch have come out.

AMH: Is that something teachers would buy on their own?

Kawaguchi: Some we buy for the staff library [book collection] and some they purchase on their own. There's both.

The curriculum coordinator at Higashi JHS also spoke of two types of book purchases, but implied that the books purchased by the school were either required or recommended reading for staff members:

AMH: Let's say a teacher at this school wanted to buy a book [about integrated studies]. Would they have to pay for it themselves, or would the school pay for it?

Shimizu: I buy them for myself.

AMH: What about homeroom teachers?

Shimizu: Those kinds of books...here at school, we have a few books about integrated studies we'd like everyone to read...but they also buy

their own. If they want to read books with different content...about different things, they would need to buy them on their own.

In contrast, the principal of Kita JHS denied having any particular school-recommended books for teachers about integrated studies, stating only that teachers were free to purchase such materials on their own and share them with other staff members:

AMH: [F]rom the teachers' point of view...Are they using any resources to help them teach integrated studies—such as books, manuals, periodicals, and so on?

Hashimoto: They're not using anything in particular, but of course, teachers may [obtain and] study certain reference materials on their own. But as a school, we don't say, "Rely on this book," or, "Use this magazine." ...[The teachers] buy materials on their own. And then, they share what they've read or learned from those materials with others on the staff.

One particular type of reference book referred to by educators I interviewed and surveyed was "teaching manuals" (*tebiki*), about whose existence there seemed to be some controversy. For instance, 12% of those who responded to the questionnaire indicated that teacher's manuals (*tebiki*) were the most helpful resource to them, but next to the choice of "teacher's manual," one person wrote in, "There's no such thing." This variation in interpretation of the term "teaching manual" probably results from the fact that there are no textbooks for integrated studies as there are for other subject areas, and therefore, no textbook-aligned teacher's manuals of the conventional type (as described by Lee & Zusho, 2002), but there are certain publications intended to help guide teachers' implementation efforts. Certainly the three pages dedicated to integrated studies in what a prefectural official described to me as a "teaching manual" distributed by Yamato Prefecture pales in size and detail compared to traditional textbook-aligned manuals. In addition, some of the commercially-produced books on integrated studies include the

word “teaching manual” in their titles. Unfortunately, I have no way of knowing to which teaching manuals the questionnaire respondents were referring.

Interestingly, there were some educators who expressed reservations about the usefulness of print materials in learning how to teach integrated studies. Mr. Fujii, the Kita JHS teacher who joined an integrated studies listserv, found electronic resources superior to print resources, saying that the listserv gave him access to more “global” information, which is not limited to just one town or area, and that written booklets and books are not as helpful in that way, since they mainly consist of the results of activities, and don’t show the sweat and tears that go into them, nor list step-by-step the process of how to get those results. This is reminiscent of the ways interviewees disparaged the strategy of “just reading a book” mentioned earlier in this chapter.

However, even these educators acknowledged the usefulness of a particular type of print material—actual case studies from other schools. For the teacher from Higashi JHS, brevity and specificity were key ingredients of a useful book:

AMH: As you said, reading a book may not be sufficient, but in teaching integrated studies for the first time, are there resources that are useful, such as books, periodicals...?

Iida: Of course we use them.

AMH: ...Manuals?

Iida: What’s that?

AMH: Teaching manuals [*tebiki*]?

Iida: Teaching manuals?...The Ministry of Education puts out some...examples and samples...and the Prefectural Board of Education [does too]. A lot of those are case studies of actual practice at schools...case studies [*jissen jirei*]...that they introduce us to.

AMH: Of those resources...which do you think is the most valuable?

Iida: Well...[laughs]...That’s a tough question...I guess, after all, case studies are the most useful.

AMH: And why is that?

Iida: Well, if you’re introduced to how they actually did it and what the students learned from it [at another school], you can imagine how it might

overlap with our school goals and how it might work at this school. If it's too...difficult or superficial, well, it's no good.

AMH: It's not useful?

Iida: That's right. The shorter the better.

The curriculum coordinator shared a similar opinion, stressing the “concreteness” of the examples given in documented case studies:

Rikuda: The most useful...well, for me, I think that written materials, like this [points to case study booklet] are the most useful. First of all, this forms the base—what kind of things are [teachers] doing? After that, advice from [other] teachers who have actually done it...

AMH: Teachers who have experienced it?

Rikuda: Yes, that's right. I think those things are useful. Case studies are more useful than general books.

AMH: Because they tell what to do in more concrete terms?

Rikuda: Yes, yes.

The case study booklet to which the coordinator referred was the documentation of a year-long “in-school research” (*kounai kenkyuu*) project on integrated studies which Kita JHS teachers conducted during the 2002-03 school year. Its 104 pages include explanations of the overall goals and themes of their integrated studies curriculum, details about strategies for assessment of student performance, and numerous examples of student work from, and reflections about, integrated studies classes at the 7th- through 9th-grade levels. Higashi JHS had produced a similar booklet (51 pages long) that year, but it included other aspects of school-improvement initiatives, so its integrated studies section was briefer and contained fewer examples of student products and reflections. It seemed significant to me that both of these case studies included sections about “achievements and remaining issues” (*seika to kadai*), in which the positive results and the challenges or unfulfilled goals of a given project or activity were described, in a manner reminiscent of the structure of formal *kansou* reflections (see Chapter 5), which almost invariably include discussion of positive and negative aspects of a learning experience.

I later found that discussion of “achievements” and “remaining issues” is a *de rigueur* element in the usual format of case studies, including the case studies compiled in books published by MEXT in 1999 for reference by teachers of integrated studies at the elementary and secondary school levels. The 200-page volume for secondary schools, entitled, *Collected Case Studies for the Advancement of Distinctive Educational Activities: Integrated-Type Studies Time Learning Activities*, includes 23 cases from junior high schools. Ten of the 23 are designated “research and development schools,” and seven are laboratory schools affiliated with university departments of education. Notably, all of these case studies follow a standard format, including eight sections, in the following sequence: 1) description of the school where the case study took place; 2) goals of the activities in question; 3) description of the activities; 4) instructional strategies used; 5) instructional materials used; 6) other points to remember; 7) evaluation techniques used; and 8) achievements and remaining issues. Like the standard format for *kansou* reflections, this case-study format seems quite consistent with a “continuous improvement” orientation.

I noticed that the 1999 MEXT case-study volume includes a case from the junior high school affiliated with Yamato Prefectural University. I had visited the nationally-governed school during my fieldwork, and learned about its long-standing integrated studies program, which emphasizes cross-grade-level activities focused on investigations of community and environmental issues, interpersonal interaction (including career pathways, human rights, and service learning), and information technology (including instructional technology such as overhead projectors in addition to computers and so on). The assistant principal at Yamato Prefectural University Junior High School told me that

the school had piloted innovative programs for MEXT since the early 1980s. A teacher there indicated that integrated-studies-type activities had been in use at the school since he had first joined the staff in 1987, and they had officially started piloting an integrated studies curriculum in 1996. He added that the increased emphasis on experiential learning activities renders the teacher more of a “tour conductor” or facilitator than some fount of knowledge, and it actually makes evaluation more difficult, since teachers now have to write individual comments in qualitative evaluations for each of the 30 students in their homeroom.

At one point, I wondered whether the case study of Yamato Prefectural University Junior High School’s program might have served as a model for integrated studies programs in Hatanaka, given its geographic proximity. However, when I asked the assistant principal of Kita JHS about it, he informed me that the Yamato Prefectural University school’s program was considered too “high level,” at least for his school, which had comparably high levels of student behavior problems, and low levels of college-bound students. Instead (as noted in Chapter 4), Hatanaka junior high schools had chosen to model their integrated studies programs on those of laboratory schools affiliated with universities in Fukuoka and Osaka, using both formal *kenshuu* visits to those schools as well as formal and informal exchange of information (including case studies) about them. This is one example of the emphasis placed on exchange of ideas between different levels and locations in the implementation of integrated studies.

I found it significant that 10 of the educators I interviewed (seven of the eight administrators and three of the six teachers) mentioned “examples from other schools” as a resource—the “most useful” resource, according to six of them—for teachers learning

to implement integrated studies. According to the Kita JHS curriculum coordinator, this usefulness stems from the concrete quality of “advice from teachers who have actually done [integrated studies implementation].” To the principal of Minami JHS, the value of case studies derives from their practical application of ideas:

AMH: Which [resources] do you think are the most useful?

Kawaguchi: [quickly] After all, the manuals on teaching practice—practical case studies done in schools. There are also some theoretical books [being published]—however, those are written by some university professors, and it’s all theory, so whether it can work in actual application requires “experimentation” in schools.

The ease with which the examples of student activities and products contained in case studies could be understood and imitated was the primary appeal for another teacher I interviewed:

AMH: What resources do you draw on to learn about and implement the reform? Which of these are most...valuable, and why?

Murano: The most useful [resource] is, after all, the real experience of teachers who have actually done it themselves.

AMH: And do you hear about it, read about it...?

Murano: Both, both. “This is what we did, and at the end, this is what [students] made.” If you see the final book made by students, you know what to do—it’s the easiest to understand...[We] have other schools show us [what they’ve done]—“You can do it this way.”

AMH: How? Printed materials the school has made? Case studies?

Murano: Yes, and also, asking directly, by phone, “What do you do?” “What kind of things can we do?”

The advantages identified above—the accessibility, practicality, and concreteness of examples from practice—are consistent with the advantages of using “cases” for teacher learning identified by Shulman (1992). In contrast to “paradigmatic ways of knowing” which tend to be abstract and decontextualized, “narrative ways of knowing” (such as cases) tend to be specific and contextualized. Since cognitive psychology has shown that “learning is much more situation-specific than heretofore imagined, as is its

transfer to new settings,” particularly in “ill-structured domains” (as identified by Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich, & Anderson, 1988) such as teaching, narrative cases are well-suited to teacher learning for practical application (Shulman, 1992, p. 22-24). Cases of teaching practice may be instructive for teachers facing “situated problems of practice,” particularly in instances when theories are “silent, multivocal, or ambiguous” (Sykes & Bird, 1992, p. 466-469). The implementation of the new integrated studies curriculum certainly seems to constitute such an instance.

When speaking of examples of teaching practice, some of the interviewees mentioned simply the *kenshuu* practice of making observations at other schools, while others (including two of the questionnaire respondents) specifically mentioned “case studies” (*jissen jirei*). The Japanese term for case studies of teaching practice is a combination of the word *jissen* (実践) or “actual practice”—a term used in expressions such as “practitioner,” “practical,” “hands-on,” and “tried and tested technology”—and the word *jirei* (事例) or “case, example, instance”—used in such expressions as “case history,” “noteworthy case,” “first reported instance,” and “anecdotal evidence” (see www2.alc.co.jp). Two of the educators I interviewed made distinctions between these two terms, implying that *jissen* is actual teaching practice and *jirei* are case examples, so the combination of these terms may be understood as “case examples of actual teaching practice.” For example, the Kita JHS curriculum coordinator indicated that, in integrated studies, there was not yet a large body of teaching practice to be documented in case studies:

Rikuda: Integrated studies really started just last year, so teaching practice [*jissen*] in that [subject] isn’t built up [yet]. So...there aren’t very many case studies [*jirei*] yet of things that worked well and didn’t work. So [teachers] just try things out, and they can learn that way.

An online search (in Japanese) for “integrated studies” plus “*jissen*” yielded a list of over 78,000 websites, while a search for “integrated studies” plus “*jirei*” produced only around 30,000, so it follows that the terms are not interchangeable, and that not all teaching practice is or has been documented in case studies. While Sato, Akita, & Iwakawa (1993) associate “case methods” with the “voluntary study groups” to which over half of Japan’s teachers belonged according to a 1981 survey, I found no evidence of such study groups being used in connection with integrated studies in Hatanaka, so educators there are likely using case studies individually and/or in collaboration with their grade-level and school colleagues.

Even with references to imitation or incorporation of examples from teaching practice at other schools, I found it significant that five of the educators I interviewed spoke about adapting ideas to fit their own schools. The Minami JHS integrated studies committee chair described a “usual pattern” in which ideas from other schools’ practice were adapted to the characteristics of his current school and the surrounding community:

Kamata: Ultimately...I think when we think about [what to do at] our own school, looking into [*shiraberu koto*] what they’re doing at other schools is important to do, first thing. From that, we can get various hints and ideas about things we could do...The Ministry of Education hasn’t given us any set themes...for integrated studies, so...they aren’t telling us. So, some schools act as research schools [*kenkyuukou*] and do [integrated studies] first. Using those [examples]...we then determine how to use our own community’s and school’s characteristics...I think that’s the usual pattern.

AMH: So, even if you got a given idea or concept from another school, you have to make it fit your own school?

Kamata: That’s right, yes.

AMH: When you talk about “other schools,” do you mean designated schools during the transition period, or just other schools that are doing it now?

Kamata: Well...when they first said that integrated studies would be starting, there were some selected schools—research schools—that piloted

it, so we used things from those schools as reference [materials]. Now that integrated studies has begun, schools are making various revisions as they go along—"This year, let's try this," "For next year... let's try changing this part"...that's how we're [implementing] it, so...I think our school's program of integrated studies for 7th through 9th grade is shaping up as we go along and revise it. Until we reach that point, we ask how other schools are doing things and engage in information exchange.

The principal at Higashi JHS echoed a similar orientation, arguing that certain things may work at certain schools but not at others:

Kurano: With integrated studies, you know, you have to match it with the students and community of a given school, or it doesn't work. There may be lots of different ideas and ways of doing [integrated studies], but you have to think about what you actually have in terms of students and community—your environment, you could say—if you don't know it, you can't implement integrated studies. Other ideas and ways of thinking are useful things to study, but ultimately, you have to create something for your own school. Therefore, all of those resources are useful...[We] just have to take them all and then create something that matches our students in our school, and our community...What we came up with is these [refers to case study book] three things that are unique to our school... [T]hey work here, but maybe they wouldn't work at other schools. They wouldn't work.

The Higashi JHS integrated studies committee chair spoke about fitting ideas from case studies to his school's goals and situation:

Iida: If you're introduced to how they actually did it and what the students learned from it [at another school], you can imagine how it might overlap with our school goals and how it might work at this school.

The principal of Kita JHS mentioned even broader goals and educational traditions of his school as primary considerations in designing an integrated studies curriculum:

Hashimoto: First of all, in order to decide how to use integrated studies time, we have to decide what kind of students we'd like to produce as graduates of this school. How we would like to mold [*sodateru*] the kids who come in as 7th graders and will graduate in three years' time—that's the first big issue. Without this kind of vision, integrated studies can't be effective. So, first we discuss that, and then, in order to achieve that, what should we have the 7th graders do? The 8th graders? The 9th graders? That's how we make our decisions. The most difficult thing is the

arguments about what kind of kids we want to bring up, what kind of kids we want to graduate [from our school]—that’s the most important thing, I think. In order to achieve that...the tradition of education at this school goes way, way back, for years and years...I don’t think [students] have to learn all completely new things, but just some. Even without seeking new things from outside [there is plenty to learn].

Only one of the interviewees explicitly linked this concern about customizing each school’s integrated studies curriculum to the reform mandate to create “distinctive” schools. The curriculum coordinator at Higashi JHS—a comparatively rural school where “about 40%” of the students attend cram school, in his estimation—stated that his school would be “ruined” if they did not take into consideration community and parental input and would “fall behind” other schools if they failed to emphasize the school’s distinctive characteristics:

Shimizu: When we made our school’s plan...we also had to think about this...If we don’t think about what kinds of things the parents and community will accept, Higashi JHS will be ruined...We have to do things that highlight the unique characteristics of our school...Now, we’re told [by the Ministry of Education] to bring out the unique characteristics of our school, too...But that will, after all, require taking in the teachers’ various opinions—everybody’s opinions—and creating a unique Higashi JHS education...I don’t believe every place is the same. “Because this is Higashi JHS”—that’s the kind of thing we need to emphasize, in our school goals and so on...If we don’t, we’ll fall behind. Higashi JHS is a good school, and we want people to think well of it...We need to aim for unique characteristics that will have people everywhere saying, “Higashi JHS is that kind of a school.”

Overall, there appears to be broad consensus that case studies of teaching practice in other schools is a useful, and perhaps the most useful, resource for teachers learning to implement integrated studies in Hatanaka junior high schools. However, there is also evidence that educators do more than simply mimic or make exact reproductions of the examples in a given case or set of cases. As mentioned in Chapter 4, educators in Hatanaka drew on not one, but two, major case studies in the MEXT collection. As they

combined and incorporated various aspects of these two cases, they also adapted them to fit the distinctive situations of each of the town's four junior high schools. This may be one reason why many more questionnaire respondents deemed colleagues at their own school a useful resource compared to teachers at other schools.

In sum, print resources—including case studies, teaching manuals, and commercially-produced books about integrated studies and related topics—appear to be significant resources for teachers learning to implement integrated studies in Hatanaka's junior high schools. Some of these resources, such as policy documents, teaching manuals, and case studies from designated research schools, are supplied by boards of education or purchased with school funds for staff reference. More often, teachers purchase reference materials, such as books and magazines, with their own funds, or acquire case studies through school-sponsored *kenshuu* activities in which they or their colleagues (from across the staffroom or across Japan) participate.

In addition to formal professional development activities (at prefectural, municipal, school, and other levels), more informal means—such as the print resources described above, along with interpersonal resources (e.g., information exchange among colleagues), and electronic resources (e.g., listservs and school, corporate, and personal websites)—are also important resources for teacher learning about integrated studies. Significantly, all of these formal and informal mechanisms for teacher learning have a focus on the sharing of examples of teaching practice by teacher colleagues near and far. To a great extent, this sharing of teaching practice involves the sharing of information created and disseminated through collaboration by and for practitioners at various levels

in Japan's education system, in a vivid illustration of the fourth principle of continuous improvement.

In terms of teacher learning, the emphasis on collaboration and information-sharing by teacher colleagues at various levels and schools is particularly useful for integrated studies, since no individual teacher can be expected to have sufficient knowledge—from either pre-service subject-area preparation or in-service teaching experience—to implement this new subject area on his or her own successfully at a particular school and grade level. This collaborative approach acknowledges the social nature of learning, and the need for members of a community of practice to take responsibility for each other's learning. By sharing concrete examples of what is possible, teachers capitalize on the strengths of “case methods” but, through collaboration with colleagues at their own schools, are able to adapt those examples to fit their own situations and students.

Conclusion and Outline of Subsequent Chapter

In this chapter, I have presented examples of the collaborative, information-sharing approach to professional development that characterizes the teacher learning aspect of the integrated studies reform. Not only does the reform's thrust toward decentralization impel school staffs and grade-level faculty groups to collaborate and exchange information within schools, but existing structures and traditions of professional development also facilitate communication and cooperation between educators posted at different schools and grade levels, in different towns, cities, and prefectures, as well. The combination of existing professional development structures

with newer technological innovations further enhances educators' ability to share case studies and other examples of teaching practice (despite geographic distance or other obstacles) through, for instance, widespread ease of access to the internet. One drawback of existing *kenshuu* practices is their tendency to focus on aspects of teaching, rather than on how students learn (see Shimahara, 2002), which could be limiting or problematic in the case of integrated studies, given its emphasis on student-centered learning activities. Another problem with the collaborative, practice-focused approach to professional development is the heavy workload it places on teachers in Japan, who according to a national survey, already work an average of 10-11 hours per school day (Shimahara, 2002).

Formal professional development activities in Japan are inseparably linked with research, which is regarded as an inherent element of every teacher's job. In many cases, such "*kenshuu*" activities are designed to cut across school levels and geographic distances (as in the prefectural and municipal-block sessions described above). *Kenshuu* specifically focused on integrated studies tends to emphasize "*taiken*," or experiential learning, by both teachers and students. Opportunities for experiential learning are sometimes built into formal *kenshuu* activities, but they are even more intrinsic to informal means of teacher learning. These informal means include: "information exchange" between colleagues (within and among schools), which is facilitated by communal staff work space and mandatory job transfers; online resources, such as listservs and personal, school, and corporate websites; and printed materials, including case studies and other books and magazines about integrated studies.

The creation and dissemination of such “records of practice” (see Ball & Cohen, 1999; Bass, Usiskin, & Burrill, 2002) involves collaboration by teacher colleagues at the grade level, school level, and even higher levels. Cross-level collaboration and information-sharing is compatible with the incremental, top-down/bottom-across approach to implementation described in earlier chapters, since it takes time to design, document, and disseminate examples of teaching practice that may be useful to educators with a variety of local and individual concerns in addressing the common challenge of a nationwide reform. Collaboration and information-sharing is also compatible with the principle of adaptation of existing technologies to meet new challenges, since a variety of concrete examples of what has been achieved elsewhere are circulated, not for strict imitation, but for adaptation to local contexts and needs. Furthermore, it is consistent with various principles of “effective professional development”—such as “multiple sources of information,” “teacher involvement,” and “collaborative problem solving” (Hawley & Valli, 1999)—recommended by many education researchers. In the next chapter, I will continue to examine how the four principles of continuous improvement featured in Chapters 3 through 6 are linked in the implementation of integrated studies, and what this may imply about teacher learning and the “cultures of teaching” in Hatanaka, in Japan, and more generally.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to a discussion of the conclusions and implications of this study. First, I will summarize key points concerning the four principles of continuous improvement featured in Chapters 3 through 6, and illustrate how each is manifest throughout the policy development, implementation, and professional development aspects of the integrated studies reform. Then, returning to the originating research questions outlined in Chapter 2, I will examine what this study suggests about teacher learning for reform implementation, with particular emphasis on the relationship between such learning and the cultural models associated with multiple “cultures of teaching”—those to which teachers in Hatanaka, Japan, belong and more generally. Finally, I will discuss the implications of this study for efforts toward continuous improvement in education, in this case and beyond, including teacher education and professional development, and education research and policy.

Summary and Synthesis: Four Principles of Continuous Improvement Throughout the Reform

In the previous four chapters, each of four principles of continuous improvement—incrementalism, a combined top-down/bottom-across approach, hybridization and building on existing technologies, and information-sharing and collaboration across all levels—was discussed in terms of its relationship to one aspect of the integrated studies reform, but all of these principles actually occur across the various aspects of policy, implementation, and professional development related to the reform.

This suggests that the overarching theme of continuous improvement permeates the reform effort, though it is not limited to this reform or even to education, given its occurrence in other aspects of Japanese culture, such as business management. Here, I shall briefly summarize key points of each of the previous chapters, and present examples of how each principle is also manifest in other aspects of the reform.

Incrementalism, or a gradual approach to change, is manifest not only in the development and content of the policy regarding the integrated studies reform, but also in the ways educators approached implementation and the ways they were expected to engage in learning for that purpose. In a gradual process, which Hood (2001, 2003) likens to a tsunami, gaining momentum almost imperceptibly until it finally hits the shore, the integrated studies policy developed over a period of about 30 years prior to its enactment, and explicitly includes multiple goals and a deliberate, staggered approach to implementation—proceeding from elementary through high school levels, and involving a three-year “transition period,” pilot programs at research and development schools, and delayed assessment requirements. Incrementalism is also evident in the ways that schools in my study openly continued, even after the transition period had officially ended, to tweak their curricula in response to various circumstances and the outcomes of previous efforts. In addition, current overlaps between elementary and middle school integrated studies curricula suggest a need for further revisions in the future. Similarly, an expectation that teacher learning will be ongoing well into the future is reflected both in formal professional development mechanisms—through which information and ideas are to gradually spread across levels and geographic areas before, during, and even after

the transition period—and in the attitude that teachers unfamiliar with integrated studies content are to “learn along with the students.”

At least in the case of integrated studies, educators are not expected to perfect a workable curriculum and be perfectly prepared to teach it even after a three-year transition period. In fact, the expectation that curriculum development and professional development require time and experimentation seems to extend beyond the case of integrated studies, when one considers certain characteristics of education policy development and the teaching profession in Japan. In terms of policy, the convention in (post-WWII) Japan is to revise the national curriculum every ten years, irrespective of changes in prime minister or the central government administration, and to pilot new programs in research and development schools before promulgating them. In terms of the teaching profession, the widespread practices of limited (4 to 6 weeks total) student-teaching experience (see Shimahara & Sakai, 1995) and grade-level “looping” (in which a teacher follows students through various grade levels, rather than specializing in one; see Sato, 2004) reflect an incremental approach to induction into the teaching profession, and to ongoing learning about the craft of teaching. In these ways, incrementalism is apparent not only in various aspects of the integrated studies reform, but also in cultural models of teaching and learning, as will be discussed later.

A combined top-down/bottom-across approach to change is manifest not only in local variation in patterns of implementation of the nationally-mandated integrated studies reform, but also in the ways that teacher input across and among various levels is encouraged in the policy and by formal and informal mechanisms of professional development. As educators in local schools implemented reform policy from the national

and prefectural levels, they asserted their own agency through selective incorporation, modification, and non-implementation of prescribed strategies for curriculum design and instruction, and by adapting two different models from research and development schools to fit their own individual schools. While the national and prefectural reform policies may certainly be seen as centralized, top-down mandates, they are also, paradoxically, mandates for increased decentralization, and therefore quintessentially representative of the combined top-down/bottom-across approach.

As such, the policies feature simultaneous multiple goals for the reform—with differing degrees of relevance at different levels—ranging from increased autonomy for local schools to increased international competitiveness for Japan as a nation. Not only does the reform policy adhere to the convention of piloting new programs through research and development schools and nationally-controlled elementary, middle, and high schools before widespread implementation, but it also explicitly encourages schools at higher grade levels to look to schools at lower grade levels for examples and ideas about how to implement integrated studies. Similarly, professional development related to integrated studies includes both formal mechanisms involving sessions sponsored by agencies at various levels (national, regional, prefectural, local) and informal mechanisms involving the exchange of ideas nationally (via the internet, published case studies, etc.) and locally (in the staffroom, through staff transfers between schools in a given prefecture, etc.). This combined top-down/bottom-across approach to reform implementation comports with the overall structure of the education system in Japan, which LeTendre (2002) describes as centralized but having “loose vertical linkages with strong lateral connections” (p. 23), including “bottom-across...collaborative networking”

by teachers which Shimahara (2002) deems the “most extensively developed form” of teacher professional development in Japan (p. 62). It is compatible with teacher learning that involves both central guidance regarding goals and objectives as well as school autonomy and individual agency regarding implementation. While the combined top-down/bottom-across approach characterizes various aspects of the integrated studies reform, it is not limited to that reform in particular, nor only to education reform in general.

The hybridization of innovative and existing technologies (such as methods, practices, and activities) for the implementation of integrated studies is evident not only in the ways that teachers incorporated prescribed innovations regarding instruction and curriculum design into their existing teaching practice, but also in the way that policy and professional development related to integrated studies encouraged educators to make use of established mechanisms in order to achieve the goals of the new reform. In the schools I studied, the incorporation of prescribed innovative strategies (such as scheduling and grouping, team-teaching, experiential learning, and qualitative assessment) involved the modification, extension, and/or expansion of strategies that had existed prior to the reform.

In many cases, the more familiar aspects of a given strategy were incorporated more readily than less familiar ones. For example, cross-homeroom groupings (which had been used occasionally for special events such as class trips prior to the reform) were more prevalent than the less-familiar cross-grade-level groupings also prescribed by the reform. Similarly, the long-institutionalized practice of staff collaboration by grade-level groupings played a larger role in curriculum development and instruction than, for

instance, the “team-teaching” approach involving pairs of native and non-native speaker teachers that was introduced into English classes only 20 years ago. Experiential learning through long-established special events such as class trips and outings was made part of the integrated studies curriculum at every school, sometimes regardless of its relevance to the integrated studies themes for a given grade level (for example, the inclusion of the traditional 7th-grade camping trip as part of the 7th-grade integrated studies curriculum at all four schools, even though only two schools had at that grade level an “environmental” or other theme closely associated with camping). Finally, the use of kansou reflection activities to assess student learning, particularly after an experiential learning activity, were much more prevalent than, for instance, the less-familiar method of assessment by portfolio prescribed in the policy.

In addition to prescribing less-familiar “innovative” strategies, the national reform policy explicitly prescribes the use of existing strategies such as those mentioned above and recommends that schools build upon existing resources in their communities and within their staffs (asking each school staff, including teachers and administrators, to work as a team, for example, to implement integrated studies), thereby officially endorsing the hybridization of more-familiar and less-familiar technologies. Such adaptation is evident in the way that Hatanaka educators blended two different models from research and development schools and adapted them to fit their individual schools’ traditions and needs. It is also evident in the widespread use of conventional structures of the teaching profession (such as grade-level faculty collaboration, teacher involvement in administrative tasks as part of the “cooperative management of schools,” and the assignment of homeroom teachers to teach ethics courses, regardless of their individual

areas of specialization) for the purposes of integrated studies. Similarly, educators are also expected to build upon established mechanisms of professional development (such as cross-grade-level and cross-school-level activities, and research lessons involving intra-school staff collaboration and inter-school observation by educators and community members) in order to implement integrated studies.

While I witnessed a variety of established and prescribed practices being hybridized in myriad ways for the reform, they rarely, if ever, blended together without some discrepancies or “rough edges” (such as incomplete, partial, or modified use of innovations) showing. Moreover, the resulting expansion of teachers’ existing duties ultimately led to an increased workload for teachers, despite the reduction of class hours by the reform. Nevertheless, hybridization or “mutual adaptation” (McLaughlin, 1976, p. 169) of old and new allows for teacher learning in which teachers can capitalize on their own—and their schools’—existing strengths as they construct understandings about implementing innovations compatible with the goals of the reform. This remains a significant strategy found throughout various aspects of the integrated studies reform, and indeed, in many instances of reform and change throughout Japan’s modern history (see Hall, 1970).

Finally, information-sharing and collaboration across all levels of the education system are evident not only in the formal and informal mechanisms of professional development used for teacher learning regarding the integrated studies reform, but also in the communication and collaboration on which the reform’s policy and implementation are predicated. Both “information exchange” and collaboration among colleagues at various levels are expectations that appear to be “built in” to the teaching profession in

Japan—occurring, for example, within grade-level faculty groups for occasional grade-level activities (but now also for regular curriculum development and instruction) and across schools for research lessons and in-school research (but now also for curriculum development and alignment). For integrated studies as well as other subject areas and topics, such communication and collaboration regularly occurs between different schools and geographic regions during formal professional development seminars and conferences, and more informally through staff interaction in school staffrooms and through various media (including printed case studies, how-to books, websites, and listservs).

MEXT policy on integrated studies capitalizes on these conventional practices, advising schools to look to other schools' examples (made readily available through MEXT-subsidized publication of policy documents and case studies). The policy goes one step further and prescribes collaboration, recommending that school staffs work as a “unified teaching force” in order to implement integrated studies. Information-sharing and collaboration are also apparent in patterns of implementation at the schools I studied, every one of which had more than one person “in charge” of integrated studies—usually a school-level administrator and grade-level coordinators—implying a need for collaboration between staff members of the same school. The actual occurrence of such collaboration is suggested by the fact that, at every school, integrated studies themes had apparently been determined by teachers rather than administrators, and were aligned, rather than redundant, for the most part, among different grade levels.

Information-sharing among staff members from different schools is suggested by the fact that all four junior high schools in Hatanaka cooperated in basing their integrated

studies curricula on a common set of two models from research development schools in Osaka and Fukuoka, using selected themes from the list circulated by the prefectural board of education. Information-sharing at even broader levels is suggested by the formal documentation and publication of information regarding integrated studies curriculum implementation by at least two of the four Hatanaka junior high schools. In these ways, information-sharing and collaboration by educator colleagues characterizes the integrated studies reform at a variety of levels, from grade-level faculty groups and schoolwide staffs to prefectural, regional, and national networks, or the multiple “communities of practice” of which the teachers in question are members simultaneously. In these ways, teacher learning within those communities involves both concrete examples of classroom practice and the flexibility for individual teachers to assert their agency and adapt one or more examples to fit their own situations.

To summarize, this case offers numerous examples of how four principles of continuous improvement—incrementalism, a combined top-down/bottom-across approach, hybridization and building on existing technologies, and information-sharing and collaboration across all levels—occur across the policy, implementation, and professional development aspects of the integrated studies reform, and at a variety of intra- and inter-school levels. The prevalence of this common theme makes this case of teacher learning for reform implementation also a case of continuous improvement. But what does that signify? To answer that question, I shall examine below what this case has to teach us about teacher learning, continuous improvement, and the relationship between the two.

*Summary and Synthesis: Continuous Improvement, Teacher Learning, and
Cultural Models*

It is important to note that this study did not begin as an investigation of continuous improvement, nor as an attempt to document an example of such an approach to change. Rather, this study began as an attempt to understand how teachers learn to teach in ways that their prior experiences as teachers and students render quite unfamiliar. The key research questions undergirding this study, outlined in Chapter 2, include the following:

What is the new thing that teachers must learn to do?

What do teachers need to learn in order to do this new thing?

How do teachers learn it?

Here, I shall summarize what this case of teacher learning for integrated studies reform in Hatanaka junior high schools suggests in response to each of these three questions, and then discuss implications that extend beyond this case.

Essentially, the new thing that teachers in Hatanaka are expected to do, as part of the integrated studies reform, is to transform their teaching practice to include new curriculum-design responsibilities and “innovative” instructional practices. Two aspects of the reform that make it quite unfamiliar are the decentralization of a traditionally centrally-determined curriculum, and the transformation of traditionally exam-centered, didactic instructional patterns to include an increased emphasis on more student-centered, experiential learning. In short, teachers are now expected to help design curriculum for a new subject area, and to teach it in new and different ways.

In order to do this, teachers must learn to alter several interrelated aspects of their teaching practice, such as curriculum design, instructional strategies, and assessment

practices. First, the decentralization prescribed by the reform means that teachers must help design and use a school-specific rather than a common, nationally-determined curriculum for integrated studies. Next, the deliberate lack of an official textbook (let alone a teacher's manual) for integrated studies means that teachers must find (and/or design) and use instructional materials not specified by MEXT. Due to the reform's emphasis on individualized, experiential learning, teachers of integrated studies must devise, use, and evaluate more experiential learning opportunities, and learn to assess student performance in a more qualitative fashion. Integrated studies' emphasis on community cooperation behooves teachers to learn to interact and cooperate with guest speakers and/or community agencies, to team-teach, and to devise and/or supervise field trips and investigations, to a much greater extent than before. In addition, the lack of teacher specialization in integrated studies and its emphasis on information technology and cross-disciplinary studies means that, more than ever, teachers must work collaboratively with teachers of other subjects. Finally, as noted by several of the educators I interviewed, the reform's emphasis on self-expression, student investigations and inquiry, and student presentations creates a need for teachers to learn to facilitate and assess skills with which they themselves are very likely to have limited experience.

As stated in the MEXT policy, teachers are not expected to become experts about the variety of topics included in the integrated studies curriculum specific to their school or grade level, but are expected to devise ways for their students to engage in learning activities about those topics. The goal of these activities is not necessarily for students to master the content, but to "learn how to learn"—strengthening their ability to engage in autonomous inquiry and self-expression. Together, the unfamiliarity of the objectives,

activities, and numerous curricular and instructional tasks associated with integrated studies—along with the fact that grade-level looping and regular transfers between schools give individual teachers little opportunity to perfect and/or reuse instructional materials year after year—create a significant challenge in terms of what teachers must learn in order to implement the integrated studies reform. Nevertheless, during my fieldwork in Japan, I witnessed dozens of teachers at the four junior high schools in Hatanaka and several other schools in Yamato Prefecture engaged in just the types of tasks outlined above. This suggests to me that the teacher learning required by the reform is necessarily taking place—or, from a cultural-historical perspective, has at least begun to occur and will likely continue on for as long as teachers are teaching integrated studies.

As for how the teachers have learned (and are still learning) to do what they need to do in order to implement the integrated studies reform, participants in my study made use of a wide variety of formal and informal mechanisms and resources, ranging from professional development workshops, case studies, and observation visits to other schools, to conversations with colleagues and “learning along with the students.” What these disparate means of teacher learning have in common is an emphasis on practitioner-centered professional development (as detailed later) with an orientation toward continuous improvement. This orientation seems to manifest in, and as, teacher learning that is ongoing, incremental, collaborative, and goal-oriented yet flexible enough to allow for local variation and adaptation of given models. According to the “mediational system” model in cultural psychology (see Cole, 1996; Datnow et al., 2002) described in Chapter 2, teacher learning of this sort is the result of a reflexive relationship between cultural factors, structural factors, and the agency of participants. In short, continuous

improvement is both a product and producer of the structures, cultural models, and individuals involved in teacher learning, within and across multiple communities of practice.

The communities of practice in which educators have simultaneous “multimembership” (Wenger, 1998) and engage in situated learning about their teaching practice may be considered “cultural communities” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 3), with cultural values and cultural models that are shared by their members (see also McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Since the orientation toward continuous improvement permeates teacher professional development at many levels of the education system and across various aspects of the integrated studies reform, it seems logical to conclude that continuous improvement is consistent with the cultural models and values of a significant number of these communities of practice, or cultures. While teachers function within a great number of such cultures at broader and finer levels of context, from transnational to grade-level faculty groupings and teacher-student groupings, here I shall examine the five about which I have gathered the most data—namely, the national, professional, community, school, and classroom cultures within which teachers are learning to transform their practice. Examination of these cultures reveals a variety of cultural models and values that appear to support (and result from) teacher learning with an orientation toward continuous improvement.

National-level cultural models. At the national level, it is possible to identify several widely-accepted cultural models related to teacher learning and continuous improvement (while still recognizing the influence of globalization and the important local variations that exist among Japan’s schools, among its educators, and so on). First,

Japan's history contains numerous precedents of hybridization and adaptation rather than radical, wholesale jettisoning of old for new, particularly in the case of large-scale reforms by the central government (see Hall, 1970; Hendry, 1987/1995; M. Lewis, 2000; Lincicome, 1995; Rubinger, 1989). Given that Asian history is often viewed as more "cyclical" than "linear," and therefore the concept of "reform" in Japan is often viewed with more skepticism than utopianism (Cummings, 2003a, p. 32) as it may be, for instance, in the U.S., (see Tyack & Cuban, 1995), there appears to be a cultural model of "slow" reform, involving building upon existing technologies, in Japan (LeTendre, 2002, p. 25; see also DeCoker, 2002; Roesgaard, 1998). The value placed on incremental progress is reflected in the Japanese proverb, "*Chiri mo tsumoreba yama to naru*" (Even dust, when piled together, becomes a mountain). In addition, a tendency in Japanese society to put emphasis on the group over the individual has been well-documented (see Hendry, 1987/1995; Nakane, 1973), and suggests a cultural model in which collaborative effort is valued. This cultural value is reflected in the various kinds of "standardized collectivity"—such as uniforms and rituals—used in schools across Japan to build group identity (Sato, 2004, p. 101), and in traditional interpretations of "individuality" which emphasize the self *in relation to the group* (Roesgaard, 1998, pp. 155-173). This group-orientation may facilitate (and reflect) certain aspects of continuous improvement, such as top-down/bottom-across information-sharing and collaboration.

Finally, researchers have found that concepts such as "perfectibility," "mutuality," and "effort" are some common themes related to teaching and learning in Japan, both within and outside of contexts of schooling. Perfectibility is the idea that, with "continual actions directed at perfection," unattainable absolutes are indeed possible, or at least

worth striving for. This means that the “process of learning continuously is normal” and there “is no final end point” to learning (Rohlen & LeTendre, 1998, p. 375), whether by students or teachers. Mutuality has to do with the concept expressed in the Japanese maxim, “To teach is to learn” (*oshieru koto wa narau koto*), which resonates with assertions made by my interviewees about teachers “learning together” with the students as they implement integrated studies, and a teacher needing only certain “basic knowledge” and letting the students do the rest. In his study of Japanese middle schools, LeTendre (1998) finds that although, generally, “The teacher is expected to have already successfully completed the path, or to be more advanced than the learner,” it is also generally assumed that, “Teacher and learner study the same thing; i.e., there is a correct form or order to the acquisition and interpretation of knowledge—one path, one set of discoveries” (p. 281-282). The acquisition of this knowledge involves an “experiential process that has mental, emotional, ethical, and physical components” (Rohlen & LeTendre, 1998, p. 287) and in which one’s effort (*douryoku*) counts for more than one’s ability (p. 374). In comparisons of U.S. and Japanese students and parents, Holloway (1988) and others have found the Japanese much more likely to attribute academic success and failure to effort (or lack thereof) rather than aptitude or ability (see also Sato, 2004). This emphasis on effort over ability may explain why the teachers selected to present at professional development sessions are not necessarily the most experienced or distinguished members of their school’s staff (as mentioned in Chapter 6).

In sum, the ideas that in learning, effort is more important than innate ability; that “all members of the learning collective” should participate in, and benefit from, the “continued general advancement” of the group; and that continuous striving for

perfection is not foolhardy, but commendable, can be found across various aspects of Japanese society, from Zen monastery rituals to Suzuki-method violin lessons (Rohlen & LeTendre, 1998, p. 370-371), to “zero defects” and “Total Quality Management” initiatives in manufacturing (Tenhover, 1984). To the extent that such concepts inform cultural models of teaching and learning in Japan, they may mirror and foster various aspects of continuous improvement—such as incrementalism and collaboration—in activity related to teacher learning. Indeed, in such cultural models, the processes of teacher learning and continuous improvement are inseparable.

Profession-level cultural models. At the level of “professional cultures” in which teachers participate, there are also cultural models that may result from and support the intertwined processes of continuous improvement and teacher learning. As noted in Chapter 1, the professional cultural context in which teachers in Hatanaka function includes a desirable yet demanding “staged” profession in which career-long learning is expected; a “culture of teaching” in which holistic, egalitarian, and group orientations are emphasized (see Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999; Shimahara, 2002); and professional development structures in which networks of classroom practitioners and examples of teaching practice play central roles. Cultural models of the teaching profession include high job security and the expectation of lifelong employment, involving several shifts between grade levels (through looping), schools (through periodic mandatory transfers), and responsibilities (through progressive advancement in rank and salary, and administrative task assignments for the “cooperative management” of schools), all of which resonate with an incremental approach to learning and change. Interestingly, when the Ministry of Education first introduced “middle-management” *shunin* positions in the

mid-1970s, the national teachers' union resisted strongly, on the grounds that differential rank and pay would undermine the "ethos of equality" among teachers in each school (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999, p. 174). While teachers' unions in Japan are no longer as strong as they once were (with membership declining from almost 95% of teachers in 1958 to only 55% in 1996 [Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999, p. 167-168]), the egalitarianism they have promoted between educator colleagues remains a salient part of cultural models of teaching in Japan (Shimahara & Sakai, 1995; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999).

This ethos of equality among teachers resonates with both the top-down/bottom-across and collaborative approaches involved in continuous improvement, as well as the cross-level collaboration I witnessed among teachers in curriculum design, instruction, and professional development related to integrated studies. Similarly, it is consistent with the enhanced "ownership" of the "total process" (Suzaki, 1987, p. 225) of education in the "systems approach" (Imai, 1986, p. 24) of an organization oriented toward continuous improvement. Rather than relegating responsibility for implementing change to the specialized skills of a few "experts," the knowledge and contributions of every member are legitimized and capitalized upon, thereby encouraging each member to take responsibility for the improvement of the total system.

As for prevalent cultural models of teacher professional development in Japan, some researchers have criticized what they call the "teacher as technician" model of professional development, which emphasizes decontextualized technical skills over "teachers' judgments and decisions in specific situations" and the "teacher as reflective practitioner" (Inagaki, 1993; Sato et al., 1993). While this may perhaps be the case in pre-service teacher preparation in Japan, which tends to be relatively brief and theory-

centered (Kinney, 1997; Kobayashi, 1993; Shimahara & Sakai, 1995), the professional development for in-service teachers that I observed during this study was, to a great degree, grounded in the context of teaching practice and practitioners. I found that both formal and informal mechanisms for teacher learning involved the ubiquitous use of examples and observations of actual classroom practice, and the sharing of information through extensive networks of teachers from a variety of grade levels, schools, geographic areas, and levels of expertise. Certainly in the case of informal “information exchange” in staffroom or listserv conversations, but even at formal *kenshuu* seminars and workshops, the conduits of information—those individuals who presented it for other educators’ consumption—were, to a large extent, current and former classroom teachers (rather than outside consultants from higher education or the private sector, for example). For these reasons, I came to think of the “practice-based, practitioner-centered” (see Ball & Cohen, 1999) professional development I observed as professional development “of educators, by educators, and for educators.” It is consistent with virtually all of the “principles for effective professional development”—such as teacher involvement in design and implementation of professional development activities, collaborative problem-solving, and school-based “job-embedded learning” that is ongoing and “part of a comprehensive change process”—endorsed by Hawley & Valli (1999, p. 140-143) and other education researchers (see Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988; Fullan, 1992; Huberman, 1995; Little, 1993; Loucks-Horsley, 1995).

While these features may have been intensified in the case of integrated studies, due to the enforced collaboration and localization inherent to the reform, information about teacher professional development in Japan prior to the reform and for other subject

areas indicates that its practitioner-centered nature is not unique to integrated studies (see Bass, Usiskin, & Burrill, 2002; Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998a; Takahashi & Yoshida, 2004). The expectation that teacher professional development is to be ongoing is reflected in laws that extend beyond integrated studies or the current reform, such as those stipulating that teachers in Japan “constantly be engaged in study for their work” (by participating, for example, in concentrated sets of formal professional development activities at specified intervals in their careers), and that their employers “must plan, and provide resources for, in-service education” (about which teachers have greater autonomy than other public servants to make independent selections from the programs offered; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999, p. 151). For these reasons, it seems that widely-held cultural models related to the teaching profession in Japan include continuous, career-long teacher learning, engaged in collaboratively by groups of peers willing to share examples of their practice, and aimed at the development of educators who can handle an evolving set of professional duties not limited to a single grade level, school, or work role. These cultural models comport with the incrementalism, collaboration, and top-down/bottom-across approach of continuous improvement, which they may foster, as well as reflect, in teacher learning for implementation of the integrated studies reform.

Community-level cultural models. At the level of the local community, Hatanaka appears to fit the pattern described by Okano & Tsuchiya (1999), in which public junior high schools, like elementary schools, are municipally-controlled by a mayor-appointed board of education (full-time municipal employees with teaching experience) yet “relatively closed” to parents and the local community, “in that their views are not

[necessarily] reflected in the running of the schools” (p. 161; see also Nemoto, 1999; Roesgaard, 1998; Schoppa, 1991). While the Fundamental Law of Education requires teachers to “serve the whole community” (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999, p. 143), it appears that the local board of education determines how this is to be accomplished (for example, the Parent-Teacher Associations at each of the four schools I studied serve primarily a supportive rather than an advisory role). As noted in Chapter 6, the Hatanaka Board of Education has recently begun sponsoring thrice-yearly professional development meetings for teachers at schools in the same municipal-ward “block,” and Hatanaka’s Municipal Education Research Center regularly provides local teachers with training and other resources about pertinent topics, including the implementation of integrated studies. For these reasons, cultural models about teaching and learning at the local community level include a strong administrative role by the municipal authorities in the interpretation of national and prefectural policies and the coordination of activities among various schools in the town.

In the case of integrated studies, local educators can turn to the municipal board of education for assistance with coordination not only among local schools, but between schools and various community agencies and resources—such as libraries, museums, senior centers, and festivals—that are also administered through city hall. This is consistent with continuous improvement principles of a combined top-down/bottom-across approach and information-sharing and collaboration across all levels (by education professionals, if not other stakeholders such as parents), and it can certainly influence the ways in which educators build on existing practices and resources as they learn to

implement integrated studies. Unfortunately, I lack data from other communities upon which to base comparisons that might illuminate the forms and nature of such influence.

School-level cultural models. At the school level, I found similarities and differences in patterns of implementation of integrated studies at the four junior high schools—in terms of the selection of themes and activities as well as the degree of significance staff members seemed to attribute to the new subject area—that appear to have some parallels the cultural models related to teaching and learning at each school. As noted in Chapter 4, survey respondents at each school indicated that their integrated studies themes had been determined by grade-level faculty members and leaders, indicating top-down/bottom-across collaboration, while the variation in themes between schools suggests that educators built upon existing practices and traditions specific to each school. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the study themes of “service learning” and “career exploration,” and class-trip activities (such as the “Nature’s Classroom” camping trip for 7th graders), were the only ones common to all four schools. The theme of “human rights” was used only at Kita JHS and Nishi JHS, schools with the largest *burakumin* and immigrant populations, along with significant student discipline problems, and hence perhaps the greatest relevance for human-rights topics such as discrimination against minorities. Only at Kita JHS, a school with fewer than 300 students and 31 staff members, located at the outskirts of town, did the integrated studies curriculum include a 7th-grade class trip (in addition to the camp and the customary 8th- and 9th-grade class trips), in order to give students more experience with urban transit systems they would rarely encounter near home. The theme of “hometown” and activities involving town festivals occurred only at Minami JHS and Nishi JHS, the two

schools located nearest to the center of town (and its various resources, such as libraries, museums, and community centers).

Those schools are also the two with the largest college-bound populations and the highest rates of cram-school attendance (up to 80%), according to interview and survey questions about student activities on Saturdays, and the only two at which I witnessed the co-optation and nonimplementation of integrated studies class time (as described in Chapter 4). In all fairness, the number of classroom observations I was able to make is hardly enough to substantiate contrasting such patterns between the schools with larger and smaller college-bound populations, but I did find similar contrasts in other evidence, suggesting that integrated studies was taken perhaps a bit less seriously by educators at schools where more students faced the prospect of taking high school and college entrance exams (which demand knowledge of the sort emphasized prior to the current reform). For example, Kita JHS and Higashi JHS (where top estimates of student cram school attendance were only 40% or fewer) are the only two schools at which integrated studies was made the subject of in-school research and subsequent case-study documentation, requiring significant investments of time and energy by teachers at those schools. In addition, questionnaire respondents indicated that, since the inception of integrated studies, their teaching style has “changed quite a bit” or “changed a little bit” for 48% to 56% of teachers at Minami JHS and Nishi JHS, compared to 60% to 65% for teachers at Kita JHS and Higashi JHS.

Although one might argue that the teachers reporting less change in their teaching style may have been teaching in ways aligned with the reform even prior to its enactment, I am persuaded otherwise by the rest of the evidence, including educators’ estimates in

2003 (well after enactment of the reform), that “most” of the students at their school spend their Saturdays attending cram-school (at Minami JHS and Nishi JHS) or engaging in club activities at school (Kita JHS and Higashi JHS) even though club activities are no longer mandatory. Overall, while the difference may be slight, the evidence from my limited sample suggests that, at schools with cultural models of teaching and learning in which participation in the education-examination system figures more prominently, integrated studies may be assigned lower priority than at schools with fewer college-bound students. In any case, school-level cultural models concerning, for example, the types of knowledge and training that students require, appear to correlate to the types of themes and activities included in the integrated studies curriculum at a given school, which in turn impact what teachers must learn in order to teach that curriculum, and possibly also their motivation to do so. Notably, I saw no evidence in Hatanaka of the “relaxation” or modification of school district boundaries (similar to “schools of choice” initiatives in the U.S.), which Cave (2003) and Nemoto (1999) note is not widespread in Japan and has generally been resisted by local authorities since its introduction 1997, so unless this changes, students will continue to attend the school nearest their home, and experience the integrated studies curriculum particular to that school.

Classroom-level cultural models. At the classroom level, even my admittedly limited sample of classroom observations contains evidence that cultural models shared by given sets of a teacher(s) and students in a classroom may relate to how given integrated studies themes and activities are used for instruction, and ultimately, for the continuous improvement of student and teacher learning. As discussed in Chapter 5, a variety of strategies were used for integrated studies lessons, even for similar topics, and

sometimes in different classrooms at the same school. The ways in which established practices, such as grade-level collaboration by teachers, and *han*-group collaboration by students, were hybridized with “innovative” practices prescribed by the reform, seemed to vary according to who was involved in a given lesson.

A prime example of this comes from my field notes on the day I observed four different 9th-grade homerooms at Nishi JHS who were wrapping up the same unit about environmental issues such as pollution (as noted in Chapter 4). In one classroom, I found small groups of students addressing their assembled classmates in presentations about research projects regarding land use, overpopulation, and pollution, with the teacher requesting the audience’s quiet attention and asking clarifying questions. In another, I saw the homeroom teacher pull desks into the hallway to conduct one-on-one conferences about career planning while the rest of the class was given time to finish their research projects, for presentation the following week. While a handful of his students appeared to be working on their reports and posters, others did homework, read comics or other books, or, in the case of two boys, did handstands in the classroom. Next door, a beginning teacher who had replaced a homeroom teacher on long-term medical leave partway through the school year explained to me that, as per his usual policy, he was waiting for the last group to finish their project before beginning on the group presentations, so the rest of the class was writing letters and so on at their desks. Yet another teacher with a specialization in chemistry had taken his homeroom class to the lab to complete experiments with rainwater, but reported that they had not gone as well as he had hoped.

A less-extreme example of variation between classrooms can be seen in the presentations made by 7th graders at Nishi JHS at the end of a unit about the theme of “hometown,” for which one homeroom used handmade posters, another overhead transparencies, and third original skits and puppet shows. While these examples both come from the same school, they illustrate the potential for variation between classrooms regarding the same unit or lesson. Unfortunately, I lack data about individual homeroom teachers’ and their classes’ shared beliefs about such things as methods of instruction, student discipline and advising, group research activities, and student presentation media, but it seems obvious that those types of homeroom-specific cultural models helped shape how a common curriculum was translated into classroom practice with results that varied from homeroom to homeroom. Given the mutuality of teaching and learning that LeTendre (1998) ascribes to Japanese junior high school classrooms, this variation likely also impacts the teacher learning taking place during implementation of the curriculum. For example, a teacher with higher proficiency in use of technology, classroom management, and group presentations would probably have different learning needs for teaching integrated studies than a teacher with lower proficiency in those areas.

To summarize, cultural models of teaching and learning that exist at various levels and communities of practice in which teachers function appear to support and result from interlinked processes of continuous improvement and of teacher learning. At the national level, these models include historical precedents regarding incremental reform and general assumptions about the role of such things as group collaboration, effort, mutuality, and perfectibility in the processes of teaching and learning. Cultural models related to the profession of teaching include a built-in expectation of ongoing,

incremental, collaborative learning by colleagues at various locations and levels. At the community level, the expectation that municipal authorities assist schools with the interpretation of national and prefectural policies and coordination among various local institutions reflects a collaborative top-down/bottom-across approach involving the incorporation of existing resources. School-level cultural models concerning the preparation of students for future endeavors, as well as school demographics, and their relationship to the entrance-examination system and integrated studies, shape both school curriculum and the teacher learning related to it. At the classroom level, ideas that homeroom teachers and their classes share about instructional and disciplinary issues also help shape how the curriculum is translated into classroom activity, which in turn informs teacher learning about implementation. Overall, the cultural models at the national and professional levels seem most directly linked to systemic continuous improvement, while those at the community, school, and classroom levels seem most directly linked to teacher learning during the process of implementation. Nevertheless, at every level, the ongoing, collaborative, and adaptive nature of teacher learning for implementation of integrated studies reform reflects a fundamental orientation toward continuous improvement.

Conclusion and Implications

So what does this case have to teach us, about teacher learning for reform implementation, or even more generally? Admittedly, this study has several limitations that affect the answer to that question. This study involves a very small sample in a single prefecture in western Japan, limiting its generalizability. It concerns the

implementation of a reform that is still ongoing, and the results of which will not be fully visible until years, or even decades, from now. Therefore, it is too early to evaluate how effective the teacher learning involved was in facilitating implementation of the integrated studies reform—or indeed, whether the reform itself ultimately achieved its goals and whether it had beneficial or lasting effects on teachers and students—though any of those would be ripe topics for future research. At this point, it would be premature and inappropriate to advise for or against the emulation of the processes described here. Even if one were to try to emulate the mechanisms for teacher learning and/or the principles of continuous improvement outlined here in education systems located in other cultural contexts, without this particular set of cultural models, the outcome would very likely be quite different. While cultural models are constantly evolving, and can indeed be shaped by the practices and processes that they in turn influence, it is unclear exactly how this reciprocal relationship occurs or how it might be manipulated for certain outcomes.

Furthermore, there are several current and potential problems (or “remaining issues,” to use the language of Japanese case studies) with the way teachers are learning to implement the integrated studies reform. First, the “practitioner-centered” model of teacher professional development found in Japan tends to focus on how teachers teach, rather than how students learn (see Shimahara, 2002). Unless this focus is changed, it could be quite problematic for a subject area like integrated studies, in which curriculum and instruction are supposed to be more student-centered and individualized.

Next, the reform’s incremental, top-down/bottom-across approach—in which examples developed by a select few research and development schools are disseminated

to the regional and local levels—has the potential to result in more “standardization” than “variation,” as it has prior to the reform and in the case of other subject areas, particularly when contrasted with the highly decentralized education system in the U.S. (see LeTendre, 2002). While the data in this study provide evidence of local variation in patterns of implementation, this may appear significant in comparison to pre-reform patterns in Japan yet exhibit a high degree of conformity when compared with other systems, such as those in other countries with which Japan competes in the global economy. With the ever-increasing pace of change in the world today, Cummings’ (2003a) question about whether Japanese education can “[keep] up with the needs of society” (p. 41) remains open. In fact, several educators mentioned to me the possibility that MEXT might take the unusual step of shortening its usual cycle of 10-year curriculum revisions, so that the current curriculum will be revised before 2011, but aside from the comments by the MEXT official at the conference mentioned in Chapter 4, during my fieldwork I gathered very little evidence that MEXT had such plans, or what direction the curriculum revision might take. Later, in early 2005, I saw signals that MEXT might be planning to reverse direction with regard to the relaxation of curriculum, when the Minister of Education publicly apologized to some junior high school students, saying there was a need to rethink (literally, do “*hansei*” about) “*yutori kyouiku*,” or the “breathing room” that the reform intended to inject into education (see Motomura, 2005; Takano, 2005). However, even if such a shift in policy takes place, it is far from clear at this point just what will happen with the new integrated studies course, and what residual effects that course (and its concomitant changes in teaching practice) might have on Japanese education even if it is reduced or eliminated from the curriculum.

In addition, there is significant evidence (as suggested by interviewees in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 6) that this reform has intensified the workload of teachers, which was already “demanding, especially at the middle school level” prior to the reform, with teachers in Japan *averaging* 10 to 11 hours at school each day (Shimahara, 2002, p. 152). Despite the reduction in class hours, and the official cutback to a five-day school week, most of the educators I spoke to indicated that they usually come to school on Saturdays and often on Sundays as well. While most of them attributed this “volunteer” work to a responsibility and/or fondness for the extra-curricular clubs they coach, I suspect their willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty also has to do with the current weakness of both teachers’ unions (the most likely source of resistance to such unpaid overtime) and Japan’s economy (providing incentive for maintaining one’s employment and job security). Teachers’ willingness to assume the extra burdens generated by the reform may change as the economy and/or union activity are revitalized.

Similarly, if the sharp decreases in Japan’s youth population mentioned in Chapter 1 cause significant alteration of university admittance policies regarding entrance examinations, the feasibility and relevance of integrated studies is sure to be affected. As school administrators in Hatanaka informed me, in order to keep their enrollment levels adequate, some institutions of higher education in Japan are already using interviews, essays, and/or “single subject” entrance exams, rather than the traditional five-subject (Japanese, math, science, social studies, and English) exams to determine admission (see DeCoker, 2002; Nemoto, 1999). If this trend grows and persists, the importance of mastering subject matter in the traditional core academic subjects may diminish, perhaps

rendering integrated studies a more appealing and significant area of study, in the eyes of teachers, students, and parents.

Despite these remaining issues and concerns, it seems that this case of teacher learning intertwined with continuous improvement can be instructional for those of us concerned with teacher education, professional development, educational research, and education policy. First, this is the first case of which I am aware that documents what continuous improvement in education—or at least in teacher learning for reform—actually looks like. Like the examples of teaching practice in the case studies Japanese educators create and use, it may offer us more concrete representations of the structures, concepts, and agents involved in this type of teacher learning than theoretical descriptions do. Perhaps most compelling is the fact that, for better or worse, and with varying degrees of compliance with policy, teachers are apparently learning to transform their teaching practice to include strategies and skills formerly quite unfamiliar to them, through professional development that is grounded in examples of practice, the creation and transmission of which is dependent upon classroom practitioners themselves.

According to Mr. Iguchi of the Yamato Prefectural Board of Education, Japanese teachers are “used to” simply “transmitting knowledge” to their students, but the new reform means that now students must learn to think for themselves and use their judgement, especially as preparation for functioning in the adult world—by taking in information from the internet, from other people, and also from their own opinions and knowledge, and using it to make decisions. The classroom teaching I observed certainly contained numerous elements of pre-reform practice, but it also definitely reflected a departure from the conventional patterns used in, for example, subject areas that have a

prescribed textbook. At least at the current point, in integrated studies, the following description of lesson planning by observers of Japanese secondary schools does not apply:

The Japanese lesson plan, and the hundreds like it we have seen, is meant to be used repeatedly. Each year it will be dusted off, with perhaps a few adjustments made or a small part deleted, but it will be used again. The lesson plan itself is based on a set body of pedagogical knowledge that is organized in as accurate or true a way as possible. The teacher has consulted the text, tapped several sources of accumulated knowledge on the subject, typically talked with other teachers about it, and summarized it in detail in a series of precise steps...The exact details of the process of understanding the material must be explicitly conveyed. Missing also are the American teacher's concerns about whether today's class may need a radically different set of instructions from yesterday's or last year's or whether one student may learn very differently from another. The Japanese teacher usually assumes that if the details of the knowledge acquisition process are presented in a time-tested and precise way, the grand concepts will reveal themselves to all students. (Rohlen & LeTendre, 1998, p. 14)

Although teachers may still tap "sources of accumulated knowledge" and discuss their lesson plans with other teachers, the nature of integrated studies forces them to move beyond the transmission of "exact details" in a "time-tested" manner, and to make use of innovative student groupings, class scheduling, team-teaching, qualitative assessment, and other practices that may seem quite unfamiliar. The means of this transformation appears to lie, at least in part, in teacher learning through practice-based, practitioner-centered professional development.

This type of professional development appears to be based on a view of learning as a social and cultural process—the "transformation of people's participation in sociocultural activities" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 237)—from which the incremental and collaborative nature of a continuous improvement approach to change makes enormous sense. It calls into question traditional western models of teacher professional development, which have focused primarily on skill-building by individual teachers,

rather than taking “explicit account of the contexts of teaching and the experience of teachers” and providing teachers with opportunities for meaningful interaction and collaboration with colleagues “both in and out of teaching” (Little, 1993, p. 138; see also Thompson & Zeuli, 1999). Again, it offers a concrete example of what the “principles for effective professional development” summarized by Hawley & Valli (1999) look like in practice.

In short, while this case of teacher learning is by no means ideal, it does contain several concrete examples of features ascribed to effective professional development by various education researchers, demonstrating that they are not pie-in-sky wishful thinking, but actual entities, achievable given the right conditions. From a cultural psychology perspective, cultural models, or shared beliefs, regarding teaching and learning not only influence educational practices and processes but are also influenced by them, in a continual evolutionary process. From this perspective, there is hope that a change in practice, in a process, or in emphasis on a principle, can help modify existing cultural models that will in turn shape the development of an institution such as education.

Therefore, this case holds implications for those working to improve education, and particularly the education of teachers. As an example from an education system and nation different from my own, I could choose to dismiss it as irrelevant to the improvement of education in the U.S., but instead, I choose to use it to ask questions about and better understand my own system, in hopes of improving it further. Those questions include the following:

***What are the cultural models related to teacher learning in the various communities of practice with which I am familiar, and how do they interact?**

***How do cultural models of teacher learning interact with educational research, education policy, and pre-service and in-service teacher professional development?**

***To what extent do the educational reforms and practices with which I am most familiar exhibit an orientation to continuous improvement?**

***To what extent is the teacher-professional development in which I participate practice-based and practitioner-centered, and what does that signify?**

***To what extent are teacher learning and continuous improvement linked, and what conditions make them so?**

***If continuous improvement is desirable in teacher professional development, and in education more generally, what structures, beliefs, and agents can help foster this orientation?**

These are, of course, only some of the questions that this study poses, any of which provides ample grounds for future research.

In closing, this case of teacher learning for reform implementation is also a case of continuous improvement. It illustrates how the processes of teacher learning and continuous improvement can be intertwined, and how they relate to cultural models of teaching and learning held by members of communities of practice at various levels of the education system, including national, professional, community, school, and classroom levels. It has taught me much about systems of teacher learning in a distant land, and provided me even more food for thought about the education system in my own country, and new ways to think about how best to strive for its improvement in my work as a teacher, teacher educator, and stakeholder in public education.

APPENDIX A

Methodological Appendix

The following observations about the methods used for this study come partly from the journal and field notes I kept during my fieldwork in Hatanaka, Japan.

Overseas Research on a Shoestring

Originally, I submitted revised versions of my dissertation research proposal to three different national/international agencies, seeking funding for eight to 12 months of fieldwork (totaling more than US\$10,000, including transportation to Japan, room and board, and expenses). When all three requests for funding were turned down, I radically revised my plan and decided to seek local and personal resources to complete my fieldwork in only 10 weeks, for around \$5000 total. Rather than trying to secure an apartment for such a short time, I made arrangements to stay at the home of an acquaintance in Hatanaka who runs a type of English *juku* in her home and has extensive experience providing homestays for international visitors. I obtained an air ticket and Japan Rail Pass from a discount travel broker at a significant savings. Upon arrival in Hatanaka, my host family loaned me a bicycle for transportation around town, and the local board of education kindly instructed each school I would visit to include me in their faculty's school lunch (*kyuushoku*) ration, thereby reducing my costs for both meals and transportation. Ultimately, various departments at my university with interest in Japan, education, and/or graduate-level research generously provided funding that nearly defrayed my costs. The cooperation and support of personal contacts in Japan and the U.S. made my scaled-back fieldwork plan possible, but I knew I would have to "hit the ground running" when I reached Hatanaka, in order to make my short visit as productive

as possible. Therefore, I made sure to meet with Board of Education staff members the day after my arrival (Friday) to confirm the arrangements we had made via e-mail and fax, and I began visiting schools on the following Monday. Throughout my visit, I strove to be pro-active without being pushy, and sociable while still keeping my focus on my research work as my top priority.

Research Sample – Revised Initial Plan

Soon after arriving at my research site, I realized that, though the board of education and other educators in Hatanaka were being very cooperative and helpful, my original plan for my research sample and methods would have to be revised according to the realities I found upon arrival. Ten days after arriving in Japan, I sent my advisor a revised sampling rationale, which continued to evolve as my work progressed. It contained the following facts I had not known prior to departure from the U.S., but learned through examination of documents and discussions with educators at the junior high school, elementary, and board of education level:

- 1) Integrated studies classes in Hatanaka's junior high school were offered approximately two class periods per week per grade level (in most schools, each grade has four to six homeroom classes, whose schedules may vary only slightly).
- 2) In Hatanaka's junior high schools, the teaching of integrated studies was the responsibility of each homeroom teacher, with some additional staff (non-homeroom teachers) also helping teach integrated studies.
- 3) In at least one of the four junior high schools, a general theme for integrated studies was decided by the staff for a given grade level. Individual teachers

would then build on this theme according to their own interests and/or teaching specializations.

- 4) In some cases, particularly before important midterm/final exams, teachers were known to use the integrated studies class time for student review for upcoming exams in other courses.
- 5) The integrated studies themes for each grade level were multiple within each school and varied from school to school as well as from grade level to grade level.
- 6) The themes chosen by each of the four junior high schools encompassed all four of the targeted subject areas of integrated studies—English, information technology, environmental studies, and international understanding/human rights—to some degree.
- 7) The instructional activities built around these themes varied widely, including some large projects, to which several consecutive class hours or days were dedicated, rather than a given number of class periods per week.
- 8) In all four of the city's junior high schools, it was the responsibility of each homeroom teacher to teach integrated studies to their homeroom class, so various sections of one grade level had integrated studies classes during the same class period.
- 9) In at least one of the four municipal junior high schools, integrated studies classes were offered at the same time (same day and class period) for all three grade levels (7th-9th).

Based on these facts, I sent my dissertation advisor the following information regarding my research plan at the time:

The number of integrated studies classes (and the number of grade levels) I may actually observe over the course of 10 weeks of fieldwork is somewhat limited, and the topics and themes involved might vary widely within and among schools. Since responsibility for teaching integrated studies is distributed among so many individual teachers (and opportunities to observe their teaching practice are so limited), and there appears to be significant variation in curriculum between grade levels and schools, I believe it will be best if I focus first and foremost on teacher decisions regarding curriculum (first, intended curriculum, and then to the extent possible, enacted curriculum). In asking them what they have had to learn in order to teach integrated studies (and how they have learned it), I believe I can gain insight into their learning regarding both curriculum and instruction in this new subject area.

Since it will be difficult to really study the development/learning process of a few teachers in depth, I want to aim for breadth—interviewing multiple teachers and administrators at each of the four schools, on the rotation schedule which the Board of Education set up for me (and, it turns out, is reluctant to change). If the results of these interviews suggest significantly different patterns between, say, two or three of the schools, I may focus on those schools and return for follow-up interviews/observations (I am not committed to full days at every school, so there is some flexibility in my schedule). When conflicting class schedules force me to focus on one of the three grade levels, I will focus my observations on the 9th grade, since at that level, teachers are required to teach more hours per year of integrated studies (and elective classes) compared to the 7th or 8th grade levels, and at the same time are under the most pressure to prepare students for high school entrance exams. At this level, I am most likely to find direct and substantial conflict between existing and proposed versions of cultural models of schooling, so it will make it easier to discern teacher choices regarding elements of the two. In my review of the plentiful documents to which I have been given access, and in the interviews, I can concentrate on what educators report about their experience of setting up and implementing this new curriculum. The schedule for observations and interviews looks like the following, so far (but is subject to change):

Oct. 20 – 31: Minami JHS - 1 principal; 1 curriculum coordinator; 3 classroom teachers

Nov. 3 – 14: Nishi JHS - 1 principal; 1 curriculum coordinator; 2-3 classroom teachers

Nov. 17 – 28: Kita JHS - 1 principal; 1 curriculum coordinator; 2-3 classroom teachers

Dec. 1 – 12: Higashi JHS - 1 principal; 1 curriculum coordinator; 2-3 classroom teachers

Dec. 15 – 19: follow-up and wrap-up

I have also been invited to take part in classroom observations and professional development activities as follows:

Oct. 23: research lesson presentation meeting on human rights education (elem. level)

Oct. 28: prefectural professional development seminar

Nov. 14: prefectural professional development seminar and research lessons

Nov. 20: prefectural professional development seminar

Oct. 30, Nov. 8, Nov. 17, Dec. 8: visits to local elementary schools

On various dates: visits to at least two other junior high school integrated studies classes in different towns in this prefecture.

Using the information I've gathered so far, I have revised my interview questions for administrators and for teachers, and devised a questionnaire with which I hope to survey each school's instructional staff (since I will only be able to observe and interview a fraction of the total number of integrated studies teachers in each school).

As the above communication suggests, one of the first fieldwork challenges I faced was attempting to strike a balance between what I had originally hoped to do and the concerns of the board of education that controlled my access to local schools. While I originally had no interest in visiting Hatanaka's elementary schools, the board made it clear that having the foreign researcher stop in at the "feeder" elementary schools for each junior high school was preferable for both political and practical reasons—so no one would feel "left out" and so I could be exposed to integrated studies curriculum and teaching practice that had had a few years longer to develop than that of the junior high level. Similarly, my original plan for a more staggered schedule of junior high school visits would probably have allowed me to make a greater total number of classroom observations—by working around midterm and final exams and so on—but the one-school-at-a-time approach of the schedule devised by the board made my movements easier for them to track and made any benefit or burden of my visits at least nominally equal among the four junior high schools.

Research Sample – Actual Implementation

Classroom observations – The actual number of integrated studies classes I was able to observe was even smaller than I originally expected, for several reasons. First, junior high school schedules were more flexible than I had remembered, with classes being cancelled, postponed, and substituted as needed on an almost-daily basis by each school's staff. This meant it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the board of education staff—or even a school's staff—to predict the class schedule of any given school so I could plan my schedule in advance. In one case, a class I was scheduled to observe in the afternoon was suddenly rescheduled to the morning that day, so it was over by the time I arrived. Secondly, I had not anticipated that integrated studies classes would not be held during the week before and day of midterm exams (in late October), and the two weeks after final exams (early December), so I was unable to observe any integrated studies classes during my scheduled visit to Higashi JHS in December. Thirdly, I originally hoped to focus my observations on 9th-grade classes (if forced to choose between grade levels), but found that the constant rearrangement of schedules made it possible to observe a relatively even number of classes across all three grade levels at three of the four junior high schools (Kita, Minami, and Nishi JHS). In the end, I included in my sample any and all classes I was able to observe at those three junior high schools, including: eleven 7th-grade, twelve 8th-grade, and eleven 9th-grade homerooms in integrated studies classes (over 13 different class periods). I was also able to observe three 7th-grade, six 8th-grade, and fourteen 9th-grade homerooms in classes other than integrated studies (at a different set of three Hatanaka junior high schools), as well as integrated-studies presentations by students at a junior high school outside of

Hatanaka. In addition, my observations at elementary schools in Hatanaka and around Yamato prefecture included integrated studies classes and activities by one 3rd-grade, two 4th-grade, three 5th-grade, and two 6th-grade homerooms, and non-integrated-studies classes at all six grade levels. Despite my initial resistance to the idea of spending my precious fieldwork time on such “extraneous” classes, they ultimately provided me with a useful basis for comparison and contrast between grade levels, subject areas, and so on.

Interviews – I conducted a total of 14 formal interviews and also had many informal conversations, some with notes, with educators at the junior high level. The formal interviewees included 4 principals, 4 curriculum coordinators, and 6 homeroom teachers (from Minami JHS, Nishi JHS, Higashi JHS, and a New JHS in a different town, as I was able to conduct only an informal interview at Kita JHS). My original plan to obtain interviews with top administrators at each junior high school in Hatanaka was successful, but my plan to interview multiple teachers at each junior high school was not (for primarily logistic reasons), and I obtained only 6 interviews with classroom teachers (representing only three of the junior high schools in the town). Of the six homeroom teachers I interviewed, two taught 9th grade, three 8th, and one 7th grade. My criteria for choosing which teachers to interview included trying to obtain interviewees who knew the most about integrated studies (teachers who were in charge of integrated studies for their grade level or the whole school) and teachers who would be the most frank with me. I also strove for some demographic balance, interviewing two female and four male homeroom teachers, ages 26, 38, 43, 44, 44, and 45, with a variety of teaching majors (1 art, 2 physical education/health, and 3 English). All but two of the interviews were conducted in private, using rooms in the school (principal’s offices, conference rooms,

library, nurse's office), which tended to be quiet (except for the predictable ringing of the class period chimes) compared to the family restaurant where I conducted the other two interviews (which yielded more background noise/distractions on the audiotape). A fellow Japan ethnographer had recommended off-campus interviews to heighten the frankness of the interviewees (perhaps at a quieter site like a secluded coffeeshop), but I felt some of my on-campus interviews were quite frank, and that teachers were so busy, they were squeezing me into their tight schedules as it was, and requiring them to meet me off-campus on their own time would have made it virtually impossible to recruit any interviewees.

Transcription – I decided to conduct the interviews entirely in Japanese (the interviewees' native language), to encourage the interviewees to be comfortable, frank, and express themselves as accurately as possible, realizing the tradeoff would be potential misinterpretation and/or missing of nuances as a non-native speaker. I then decided to transcribe the interviews as quickly as possible, while they were fresh in my mind, and succeeded in all but four cases—transcribing 10 interviews within 1~7 days of their occurrence, and four interviews within 2~4 weeks. My rationale for transcribing the interviews from oral Japanese directly into written English (rather than putting it first into written Japanese, and then transcribing into English) was that the process of transcribing oral Japanese into written Japanese is extremely tedious and time-consuming, due to the structure of the written language, and the plethora of homonyms in Japanese, and the fact that my final product would ultimately be for an English-speaking audience. Whenever I had doubts about the accuracy of my transcription, I would consult native and non-native professional interpreters.

Questionnaires – This went as close to my original plan as I could hope for. At each junior high school, I showed the questionnaire to the principal for his approval before copying and distributing it. In only one case (Higashi JHS) did a principal ask me to revise my questionnaire, and in that case, he only asked me to change the order, not the content, of the questions. Often, the principal would ask for the school staff's cooperation with the questionnaire when introducing me to the staff on the first day of my visit. Having the principal's official "endorsement" of my questionnaire may have helped me to receive very respectable response rates (between 63% and 83% at every school), though it was clearly indicated on the questionnaire that participation was strictly voluntary.

Access to documents and other sources of information – Before my departure to Japan, I found that my access to information about the integrated studies reform was limited primarily to Ministry of Education websites (in Japanese and English), and English-language texts written by researchers. Once in Japan, trade books about how to teach integrated studies were widely available at bookstores and the municipal education research center, and Hatanaka's board of education and school staffs generously provided me with copies of school handbooks, as well as reports, case studies, and student publications regarding integrated studies. However, obtaining copies of policy documents from the federal and prefectural levels proved a bit more difficult. In one of several serendipitous occurrences, a Japanese acquaintance from Yamato prefecture put me in contact with a prefectural official, with whom I was then able to schedule an interview. When the topic of prefectural guidelines came up during the interview, the official was able to provide me with a photocopy of the prefectural guidelines for

integrated studies, but only upon my specific request. Armed with the ISBN for several *Course of Study* guidebooks published by MEXT, I attempted to order them from local bookstores, but without success (perhaps their heavily-subsidized prices of only a few U.S. dollars each meant little or no profit for the stores?). Finally, a teacher friend of mine ordered the MEXT books I wanted from the bookseller who made regular visits to her school, and I simply reimbursed her. Other materials (and verbal information) were obtained from the educators associated with the nationally-governed Yamato Prefectural University Junior High School, who generously waived the usual charge for the publications.

My visit to Yamato Prefectural University High School was the result of another serendipitous connection. Via e-mail during my fieldwork, a contact from my university in the U.S. put me in contact with a Yamato Prefectural University education faculty member who wished to visit my university the following year to study our teacher preparation program. In exchange for information about my university and its program, he kindly invited me to visit the junior high school associated with his university's teacher education program, where they happened to have been piloting integrated-studies-type courses for over a decade.

Another important and unforeseen "lucky break" was the fact that, unbeknownst to me, the host family with whom I stayed during my fieldwork was very well-respected in Hatanaka, and particularly in the educational community. This enhanced my status, credibility, and access to educators in the community, particularly with those I was meeting for the first time. In one case, I first met the director of the municipal education research center when he came over for dinner with his old friend and former colleague,

my host father (a retired teacher), and he immediately expressed interest in my research and a willingness to help. In other cases, when I was introduced to educators for the first time, mention of my host family seemed to grant me instant respectability and to make those I was meeting for the first time more willing to speak to, and open up to, me. While these fortuitous occurrences may not quite fit in a discussion of methods, I believe an ethnographer can benefit by deliberately choosing to be open to meeting a wide variety of people, and discussing one's research with them in a friendly yet serious way, as I did.

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol for Teachers

The following protocol was used to guide semi-structured interviews with teachers. English is followed by the Japanese translation for each question.

Interview Questions for Teachers

先生方への 質問事項

1. When I observed your class, I saw you [address X topic/ use Y pedagogical strategy]. How did you decide to/learn to do that? (Probe for consistency with curriculum guide/teacher's manual, and similarities/differences with teaching of other subjects.) How does this compare to how other teachers teach?

先生の授業では、「X/Y」をされましたね。どのようにその「X/Y」を使うことを決められましたか。

どこでそれを習いましたか。

(総合学習のカリキュラムを作成したり、実際に効率良く運営する為に、なにか参考になるような資料は存在しますか。それはカリキュラムガイドのようなものですか。)

他の先生方の教え方と比べるとどうでしょうか。

2. How long have you been teaching integrated studies? How has your previous experience affected your teaching of integrated studies right now? (For instance, Where did you learn what you know about [English/international understanding/environmental studies/information technology]? Can you use ideas/materials from last year/other grade levels?)

先生が総合学習で教えられるのは、今年で何年目でしょうか。

先生の経験や実績などは総合学習授業にどのように反映されていると思われますか。

(例えば、英語と国際理解と環境問題とITのトピックに関してどのような事前研究をされますか。

今までに利用されたことのある資料やアイデアをどのように活用していらっしゃいますか。)

3. What have you had to learn in order to implement integrated studies? What resources do you draw on to learn about and implement the reform? (Probe for curriculum

guide and kenshuu/teacher professional development activities.) Which of these are most/least valuable, and why?

総合学習をしっかりと実施するために、先生は何を習うべきだと思いますか。
(それはどうやって習うことができますか。)

総合学習を実践するために、どのようなリソース(資料、知識、本、同僚などからの助言など)を利用しますか。

どれが一番役に立ちますか。どれがあまり役にたちませんか。
また、それはどうしてですか。

4. How does the education your students are currently receiving differ from yours? Do you believe the differences are good or bad? Why do you think so?

先生の生徒達が現在うけている教育は先生がうけた教育とどこがどう違いますか。
それはよい違いでしょうか、それともよくない違いでしょうか。
どうしてそのように、思いますか。

5. How are your students using their newly-freed-up time on Saturdays? How do you know this? How does this compare to students at other schools? How are you using your Saturdays? How does this compare to how other teachers spend their Saturdays?

現在、生徒も先生も土曜日には授業がありません。
生徒達は土曜日には何をしているか、ご存知ですか。
(ご存知の場合、それはどのようにご存じですか。例えば、親御さんとの会話の中、生徒との会話の中、からなど)

土曜日の過ごし方で、他の学校の生徒とはどのような点で違っていると思われますか。
先生は土曜日には何をされていますか。
他の先生方がどのように土曜日を過ごされているかご存知ですか。

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol for Administrators

The following protocol was used to guide semi-structured interviews with principals, curriculum coordinators, and other administrators. English is followed by the Japanese translation for each question.

Interview Questions for Administrators

校長、教務主任、教育委員への 質問事項

1. At your school, how are the themes and content of integrated studies decided? (Probe for teacher input into curriculum design, and similarities/differences with other schools.) Where did your teachers learn what they know about English/international understanding/environmental studies/information technology?

総合的な学習の時間には、何を教えるかは、どのように決めますか。

(総合学習のカリキュラムはどなたがどのようにして作成されますか。複数の先生方が寄り合って共同で作成されますか、それとも各先生方が個別で作成されますか。)

この学校の先生方の英語や国際問題や環境問題やITについての知識・能力はどの様にできましたか。

どの先生が総合学習をどういう風に教えるかは、どの様に決められますか。(教師の経験や実績などは総合学習授業にどのように反映されていると思われますか。)

2. What do your teachers have to learn in order to implement integrated studies? What resources do your teachers draw on to learn about and implement the reform? (Probe for various types of kenshuu/TPD and curriculum guides.) Which of these are most/least valuable, and why?

総合学習をしっかりと実施するために、先生方は何を習うべきだと思いますか。(それはどうやって習うことができますか。)

総合学習を実践するために、この学校の先生方はどのようなリソース(資料、知識、本、同僚などからの助言など)を利用しますか。

どれが一番役に立ちますか。また、それはどうしてですか。

(総合学習のカリキュラムを作成したり、実際に効率良く運営する為に、なにか参考となるような資料は存在しますか。それはカリキュラムガイド／手引きのようなものですか。)

- 3. How does the education your students are currently receiving differ from yours? Do you believe the differences are good or bad? Why do you think so?**

この学校の生徒達が現在うけている教育は先生がうけた教育とどこがどう違いますか。

それはよい違いでしょうか、それともあまりよくない違いでしょうか。

また、どうしてそのように、思いますか。

- 4. How are your students using their newly-freed-up time on Saturdays? How do you know this? How does this compare to students at other schools? How are teachers at your school using their Saturdays? How does this compare to how other teachers spend their Saturdays?**

現在、生徒も先生も土曜日には授業がありません。

生徒達は土曜日には何をしているか、ご存知ですか。

(ご存知の場合、それはどのようにご存じですか。例えば、親御さんとの会話の中、生徒との会話の中、からなど。)

土曜日の過ごし方で、他の学校の生徒とはどのような点で違っていると思われますか。

この学校の先生方は土曜日には何をされていますか。

他の学校の先生方がどのように土曜日を過ごされているかご存知ですか。

APPENDIX D

Staff Survey Questionnaire Instrument and Results by School

The following is the instrument distributed to teachers at every school in the sample, and the compiled results of each school's survey. An English translation of the Japanese versions appears in the "Compiled Responses" at the end of this appendix.

アンケートのお願い

日本の教育改革に添った総合的な学習をよりよく理解するために、実施されている先生方のご意見を教えて頂きたいと思っております。もしこの私の研究にご協力を頂けるようでしたら下記のアンケートにご記入頂き、封筒に入れて私の方に〇〇日までにお届け下さい。大変お忙しいところ申し訳ございませんが、どうぞ宜しくお願い致します。

アニー・ホガートより

記

1. 学年の総合的な学習のテーマは、どのように作成されましたか。
 - a. 学年の先生方のグループで作成しました
 - b. 学年主任の提案を採用しました
 - c. 教務主任の提案を採用しました
 - d. 学年の総合学習主任の提案を採用しました
 - e. 他の学校のテーマを見本にしました
 - f. その他： _____
2. 総合的な学習の授業・活動の内容は、どのように作成されますか。
 - a. 担任の先生が一人一人で作成します
 - b. 学年の先生方のグループで作成します
 - c. 教務主任・学年主任・総合学習主任に任せます
 - d. 総合学習の手引きを使います
 - e. 他の学校で使う内容を見本にします
 - f. その他： _____
3. 総合的な学習の授業と他の教科等の授業を比較した場合、指導される点で：
 - a. ずいぶん違います
 - b. 少し違います
 - c. だいたい同じです
 - d. 全く同じです
4. 総合的な学習を教え始めてから、先生の教え方は：
 - a. ずいぶん変わってきました
 - b. 少し変わってきました
 - c. ほとんど変わっていません
 - d. 全然変わっていません

5. 総合的な学習を実践するために、どのようなリソース(資料、知識、本、同僚などからの助言など)が一番役に立ちますか。

- a. 当校・学年の同僚 b. 他校の先生 c. 手引き d. その他：_____

6. 土曜日は、普通どんなことをなさっていますか。

- a. 学校に来て、部活動や授業準備をします
b. 家で教材研究やレポート作成をします
c. 家庭で自由に過ごします
d. 地域の活動に参加します
e. その他：_____

7. 当校に勤務した期間は：

- a. 1年間以下 b. 1～3年間 c. 4～5年間 d. 6年間以上

8. ○○市内の学校に勤務した期間は：

- a. 1年間以下 b. 1～3年間 c. 4～5年間 d. 6年間以上

9. 教師になって何年になりますか。

- a. 1年間以下 b. 1～5年間 c. 6～10年間 d. 11年間以上

* ご協力ありがとうございました。

Questionnaire Results: Higashi JHS (N= 19 [of 24 distributed])

1。学年の総合的な学習のテーマは、どのように作成されましたか。

(8)a. 学年の先生方のグループで作成しました

(5)b. 学年主任の提案を採用しました

(1)c. 教務主任の提案を採用しました

(5)d. 学年の総合学習主任の提案を採用しました

(1)e. 他の学校のテーマを見本にしました

(1)f. その他 : talked about it and decided as a school staff

(Total=21; 1 marked nothing; 2 marked a & d; 1 marked d & e)

2。総合的な学習の授業・活動の内容は、どのように作成されますか。

(0)a. 担任の先生が一人一人で作成します

(13)b. 学年の先生方のグループで作成します

(6)c. 教務主任・学年主任・総合学習主任に任せます

(0)d. 総合学習の手引きを使います

(1)e. 他の学校で使う内容を見本にします

(0)f. その他 :

(Total=20; 1 marked nothing; 1 marked b & c; 1 marked b & e; 1 crossed out b and circled c)

3。

総合的な学習の授業と他の教科等の授業を比較した場合、指導される点で :

(9)a. ずいぶん違います

(9)b. 少し違います

(1)c. だいたい同じです

(0)d. 全く同じです

(Total=19)

4。総合的な学習を教え始めてから、先生の教え方は :

(1)a. ずいぶん変わってきました

(10)b. 少し変わってきました

(5)c. ほとんど変わっていません

(1)d. 全然変わっていません

(Total=17; 2 marked nothing)

5。総合的な学習を実践するために、どのようなリソース(資料、知識、本、同僚などからの助言など)が一番役に立ちますか。

(13)a. 当校・学年の同僚

(2)b. 他校の先生

(4)c. 手引き

(3)d. その他 : Books (1); reference books and internet information, etc. (1); jissen at advanced schools (1)

(Total: 22; 1 marked nothing; 1 marked a & b & c; 1 marked a & c; 1 marked a & d)

6。土曜日は、普通どんなことをなさっていますか。

(14)a. 学校に来て、部活動や授業準備をします

(0)b. 家で教材研究やレポート作成をします

(6)c. 家庭で自由に過ごします

(1)d. 地域の活動に参加します

(0)e. その他 :

(Total=21; 2 marked a & c; 1 marked c & d)

7。当校に勤務した期間は :

(3)a. 1年間以下 (8)b. 1～3年間 (4)c. 4～5年間 (4)d. 6年間以上

8。〇〇市内の学校に勤務した期間は :

(0)a. 1年間以下 (5)b. 1～3年間 (2)c. 4～5年間 (12)d. 6年間以上

9。教師になって何年になりますか。

(0)a. 1年間以下 (2)b. 1～5年間 (0)c. 6～10年間 (17)d. 11年間以上

Questionnaire Results: Kita JHS (N= 22 [of 35 distributed])

1。学年の総合的な学習のテーマは、どのように作成されましたか。

- (8)a. 学年の先生方のグループで作成しました
 - (9)b. 学年主任の提案を採用しました
 - (4) c. 教務主任の提案を採用しました
 - (1)d. 学年の総合学習主任の提案を採用しました
 - (0) e. 他の学校のテーマを見本にしました
 - (2)f. その他 : following the grade-group-leader's lead, we make revisions as a grade group
- (Total=24; 2 marked nothing; 1 marked b & c; 1 marked b & d; 2 marked b & f)

2。総合的な学習の授業・活動の内容は、どのように作成されますか。

- (1)a. 担任の先生が一人一人で作成します
 - (13)b. 学年の先生方のグループで作成します
 - (5)c. 教務主任・学年主任・総合学習主任に任せます
 - (0)d. 総合学習の手引きを使います
 - (0)e. 他の学校で使う内容を見本にします
 - (3)f. その他 : all the grade group Ts make it together (and 2 added: and make revisions)
- (Total=24; 2 marked nothing; 2 marked c & f)

3。

総合的な学習の授業と他の教科等の授業を比較した場合、指導される点で：

- (10)a. ずいぶん違います
 - (8)b. 少し違います
 - (2)c. だいたい同じです
 - (0)d. 全く同じです
- (Total=20; 2 marked nothing)

4。総合的な学習を教え始めてから、先生の教え方は：

- (1)a. ずいぶん変わってきました
 - (11)b. 少し 変わってきました
 - (7)c. ほとんど変わっていません
 - (1)d. 全然変わっていません
- (Total=20; 2 marked nothing)

5。総合的な学習を実践するために、どのようなリソース(資料、知識、本、同僚などからの助言など)が一番役に立ちますか。

- (16)a. 当校・学年の同僚
- (2)b. 他校の先生
- (0)c. 手引き

(3)d. その他 : Internet (1); Independent study/learning by myself (1); putting them all together and thinking about them (1)
(Total: 21; 1 marked nothing)

6。土曜日は、普通どんなことをなさっていますか。

(13)a. 学校に来て、部活動や授業準備をします

(2)b. 家で教材研究やレポート作成をします

(7)c. 家庭で自由に過ごします

(6)d. 地域の活動に参加します

(1)e. その他 : Lesson preparation and housework (1)

(Total=29; 2 marked a & d; 1 marked c & d; 1 marked a, c, & d; 1 marked b, c, & d)

7。当校に勤務した期間は :

(6)a. 1年間以下 (8)b. 1～3年間 (2)c. 4～5年間 (6)d. 6年間以上

8。〇〇市内の学校に勤務した期間は :

(4)a. 1年間以下 (5)b. 1～3年間 (1)c. 4～5年間 (11)d. 6年間以上

9。教師になって何年になりますか。

(1)a. 1年間以下 (1)b. 1～5年間 (2)c. 6～10年間 (18)d. 11年間以上

Questionnaire Results: Minami JHS (N=25 [of 35 distributed])

1。学年の総合的な学習のテーマは、どのように作成されましたか。

(10)a. 学年の先生方のグループで作成しました

(2)b. 学年主任の提案を採用しました

(1)c. 教務主任の提案を採用しました

(12)d. 学年の総合学習主任の提案を採用しました

(3)e. 他の学校のテーマを見本にしました

(1)f. その他 : following the flow of S.G. up until now

(Total=29; 2 marked a & d; 1 marked a & e; 1 marked d & e)

2。総合的な学習の授業・活動の内容は、どのように作成されますか。

(1)a. 担任の先生が一人一人で作成します

(12)b. 学年の先生方のグループで作成します

(11)c. 教務主任・学年主任・総合学習主任に任せます

(1)d. 総合学習の手引きを使います

(2)e. 他の学校で使う内容を見本にします

(1)f. その他 : when we (special needs Ss) are able to mix with other students, it's up to the grade group; when we aren't, we follow the (special needs) teacher's plan

(Total=28; 1 marked a & b & f; 1 marked d & e)

3。

総合的な学習の授業と他の教科等の授業を比較した場合、指導される点で :

(19)a. ずいぶん違います (5)b. 少し違います (1)c. だいたい同じです

(0)d. 全く同じです

(Total=25)

4。総合的な学習を教え始めてから、先生の教え方は :

(1)a. ずいぶん変わってきました

(13)b. 少し 変わってきました

(8)c. ほとんど変わっていません

(3)d. 全然変わっていません

(Total=25)

5。総合的な学習を実践するために、どのようなリソース(資料、知識、本、同僚などからの助言など)が一番役に立ちますか。

(15)a. 当校・学年の同僚 (3)b. 他校の先生 (3)c. 手引き

(4)d. その他 : Books; My own way of thinking; Resource people in the community; and Studying in my Citizens Research Group

(Total=25)

6。土曜日は、普通どんなことをなさっていますか。

(9)a. 学校に来て、部活動や授業準備をします

(0)b. 家で教材研究やレポート作成をします

(12)c. 家庭で自由に過ごします

(4)d. 地域の活動に参加します

(2)e. その他 : Citizens Research Group; Shopping, Laundry, and Cleaning that don't get done during the week

(Total=27; 2 marked a & c; 1 marked b, c, & d; 1 marked nothing)

7。当校に勤務した期間は：

(2)a. 1年間以下 (10)b. 1～3年間 (6)c. 4～5年間 (7)d. 6年間以上

8。〇〇市内の学校に勤務した期間は：

(3)a. 1年間以下 (7)b. 1～3年間 (1)c. 4～5年間 (14)d. 6年間以上

9。教師になって何年になりますか。

(0)a. 1年間以下 (0)b. 1～5年間 (3)c. 6～10年間 (22)d. 11年間以上

Questionnaire Results: Nishi JHS (N=30 [of 36 distributed])

1。学年の総合的な学習のテーマは、どのように作成されましたか。

(7)a. 学年の先生方のグループで作成しました

(1)b. 学年主任の提案を採用しました

(2)c. 教務主任の提案を採用しました

(16)d. 学年の総合学習主任の提案を採用しました

(3)e. 他の学校のテーマを見本にしました

(2)f. その他： following the school's (administration's) lead, we decided as a grade group; everything was already decided

(Total=31; 1 marked nothing; 1 marked f and then erased—"aligned w/ homeroom T's major")

2。総合的な学習の授業・活動の内容は、どのように作成されますか。

(1)a. 担任の先生が一人一人で作成します

(16)b. 学年の先生方のグループで作成します

(13)c. 教務主任・学年主任・総合学習主任に任せます

(0)d. 総合学習の手引きを使います

(2)e. 他の学校で使う内容を見本にします

(0)f. その他：

(Total=32; 2 marked b & e)

3。

総合的な学習の授業と他の教科等の授業を比較した場合、指導される点で：

(15)a. ずいぶん違います

(15)b. 少し違います

(0)c. だいたい同じです

(0)d. 全く同じです

(Total=30)

4。総合的な学習を教え始めてから、先生の教え方は：

(3)a. ずいぶん変わってきました

(11)b. 少し 変わってきました

(15)c. ほとんど変わっていません

(0)d. 全然変わっていません

(Total=29; 1 marked nothing and wrote "I don't know")

5。総合的な学習を実践するために、どのようなリソース(資料、知識、本、同僚などからの助言など)が一番役に立ちますか。

(17)a. 当校・学年の同僚

(4)b. 他校の先生

(5)c. 手引き

(5)d. その他 : Internet (2); Research meetings at the city educational research center; examples from other schools; I don't know
(Total=30; 1 marked a & c; 1 marked a and wrote "no such thing" next to c)

6。土曜日は、普通どんなことをなさっていますか。

(17)a. 学校に来て、部活動や授業準備をします

(3)b. 家で教材研究やレポート作成をします

(10)c. 家庭で自由に過ごします

(5)d. 地域の活動に参加します

(3)e. その他 : Club activities (2); Housework (1)

(Total=37; 3 marked a & c; 1 marked a & b; 1 marked a & d; 1 marked c & d; 1 marked "a or d" & e)

7。当校に勤務した期間は：

(6)a. 1年間以下 (8)b. 1～3年間 (5)c. 4～5年間 (11)d. 6年間以上

8。〇〇市内の学校に勤務した期間は：

(5)a. 1年間以下 (4)b. 1～3年間 (5)c. 4～5年間 (16)d. 6年間以上

9。教師になって何年になりますか。

(3)a. 1年間以下 (3)b. 1～5年間 (1)c. 6～10年間 (23)d. 11年間以上

Compiled Responses to Staff Survey Questionnaire

	Higashi JHS (N=19; 79%)	Kita JHS (N=22; 63%)	Minami JHS (N=25; 71%)	Nishi JHS (N=30; 83%)	TOTALS (N=96 questionnaires)
1) How were the grade-level integrated studies themes set?	(21 total)	(24 total)	(29 total)	(31 total)	105 responses
a) by teachers in each grade-level group	8	8	10	7	33 (31%)
b) by the grade-group leader	5	9	2	1	17 (16%)
c) by the school's curriculum coordinator	1	4	1	2	8 (8%)
d) by the grade-level integrated studies coordinator	5	1	12	16	34 (32%)
e) using themes from other schools as examples	1	0	3	3	7 (7%)
f) other:	1	2	1	2**	6 (6%)
**one Nishi JHS respondent filled in and then erased: "aligned with homeroom teacher's specialization"	*discussed and decided as a school staff	*grade-level group meetings (2)	*imitating what has been done up to this point in integrated studies	*grade groups follow school's lead *everything was already decided	
2) How are the integrated studies lessons/activities set?	(20 total)	(24 total)	(28 total)	(32 total)	104 responses
a) homeroom teachers decide individually	0	1	1	1	3 (3%)
b) by teachers in each grade-level group	13	13	12***	16	54 (52%)
c) we leave it up to the curriculum coordinator/ grade-group leader/ grade-level integrated studies coordinator	6	5	11	13	35 (34%)
d) we use an integrated studies teacher's manual	0	0	1	0	1 (1%)
e) we use lessons/ activities from other schools as examples	1	0	2	2	5 (5%)
f) other:	0	3	1	0	4 (4%)
***one JHS 1 respondent marked b and added this note: "**when the Ss are able, with their homeroom, but when they're not, [the activities] are made by special ed. teacher"		*all Ts in a grade group make it together (and make revisions - 2)	*depends on whether we have time to discuss as a grade group		

3) How does teaching integrated studies lessons compare with teaching other subject-area lessons?	(19 total)	(20 total)	(25 total)	(30 total)	94 responses
a) it's quite different	9	10	19	15	53 (56%)
b) it's slightly different	9	8	5	15	37 (39%)
c) it's about the same	1	2	1	0	4 (4%)
d) it's exactly the same	0	0	0	0	0
4) Since you've begun teaching integrated studies, has your teaching style:	(17 total)	(20 total)	(25 total)	(29 total)	91 responses
a) changed quite a bit	1	1	1	3	6 (7%)
b) changed a little bit	10	11	13	11	45 (49%)
c) changed very little	5	7	8	15	35 (38%)
d) not changed at all	1	1	3	0	5 (5%)
5) To implement integrated studies, what kinds of resources (materials, books, knowledge, advice from colleagues, etc.) are most useful?	(22 total)	(21 total)	(25 total)	(30 total)	98 responses
a) colleagues in my school/grade group	13	16	15	17	61 (62%)
b) teachers at other schools	2	2	3	4	11 (11%)
c) teacher's manuals	4	0	3	5 "no such"	12 (12%)
d) other:	3	3	4	5	15 (16%)
	*cases (jissen) at advanced schools *books *research books & internet info	*all of them integrated *internet *independent study	*books *own ideas *community resource people *citizens' research group	*Internet (2) *cases (jissen) at other schools *city research center meetings *don't know	
6) What kinds of things do you usually do on Saturdays?	(21 total)	(29 total)	(27 total)	(37 total)	91 responses
a) coaching club activities/doing lesson preparation at school	14	13	9	17	53 (58%)
b) do instructional materials research/write reports at home	0	2	0	3	5 (5%)
c) spend time at home doing what I like to do	6	7	12	10	35 (38%)
d) take part in community activities/events	1	6	4	5	16 (18%)

e) other:	0	1	2	3	6 (7%)
		* housework and studying instructional materials	*shopping, laundry, & cleaning I can't finish during the wk. *citizens' research group	*housework (2) *club activities	
7) I have worked at this school for:	(19 total)	(22 total)	(25 total)	(30 total)	96 responses
a) less than 1 year	3	6	2	6	17 (18%)
b) 1~3 years	8	8	10	8	34 (35%)
c) 4~5 years	4	2	6	5	17 (18%)
d) 6 years or more	4	6	7	11	28 (29%)
8) I have worked in this town for:	(19 total)	(21 total)	(25 total)	(30 total)	95 responses
a) less than 1 year	0	4	3	5	12 (13%)
b) 1~3 years	5	5	7	4	21 (22%)
c) 4~5 years	2	1	1	5	9 (9%)
d) 6 years or more	12	11	14	16	53 (56%)
9) I have been a teacher for:	(19 total)	(22 total)	(25 total)	(30 total)	96 responses
a) less than 1 year	0	1	0	3	4 (4%)
b) 1~5 years	2	1	0	3	6 (6%)
c) 6~10 years	0	2	3	1	6 (6%)
d) 11 years or more	17	18	22	23	80 (83%)

APPENDIX E

Glossary of Terms

The following list includes Japanese terms related to education and their English equivalents.

akahon (赤本) – literally, “red books”; teachers’ manuals that accompany textbooks

bukatsudou (部活動) or *kurabu katsudou* (クラブ活動) – club activities (held after school and on weekends)

burakumin (部落民) – ethnic minority; descendants of outcasts of the 17th-century caste system

chuugakkou (中学校) – lower secondary school; junior high school (7th – 9th grades)

doutoku (道徳) or *doutoku no jikan* (道徳の時間) – ethics course; moral education

ensoku (遠足) – traditional 8th-grade class excursion, which usually involves a field trip within the students’ own prefecture or town, during which students were sometimes expected to work individually to produce sketches or other illustrations of scenes they encountered

futoukou (不登校) – chronic truancy or “school refusal syndrome,” in which socially induced emotional causes result in a student missing 50 or more days of school per year

gakunen (学年) – grade level

gakkyuu (学級) – homeroom, in which students remain with the same group (and usually in the same classroom, except for such classes as physical education) all day long,

as teachers of different subject areas rotate in and out of homerooms each class period to provide instruction

gakkyuu zukuri (学級作り) – fostering community through homeroom groupings & activities

gakkou gyouji (学校行事) – school events, such as school ceremonies, field trips, arts and cultural events, sporting events, and school cleanup activities

gakkou keiei kanri keikaku (学校経営管理計画) – school administrative handbooks

gakunen shunin (学年主任) – grade-level faculty leader(s)

gakuryoku (学力) – academic ability

han (班) – group or squad; student work groups, usually consisting of 5-6 students each, which served as pre-determined units for instructional and classroom management purposes; each has an appointed student leader, so teachers could easily assign tasks to groups and/or their leaders, without having to call students by name.

hanchou (班長) – squad leader; member in charge of the han group

hansei (反省) – reflection activities but more in the sense of soul-searching, self-examination, or reflection on one's past conduct

hensachi (偏差値) – literally, “deviation value”; a student's rank relative to other students, according to quantitative evaluation/test scores

ijime (いじめ) – bullying

ikiru chikara (生きる力) – literally, “power for living;” zest for life

jiko hyougen (自己表現) – self-expression

jissen jirei (実践事例) – case study/ies about educational practices/in-school research

jouhouka (情報化) – increasingly information-oriented; adaptation to an “information society”; computerization/digitization

jouhou koukan (情報交換) – informal information exchange between colleagues

juken jigoku (受験地獄) – literally, “examination hell”

juken taisei (受験体制) – entrenched entrance examination system

juku (塾) – cram schools, private, for-profit test-preparation centers

kaizen (改善) – continuous improvement process

kanji (漢字) – Japanese ideographs based on Chinese characters

kansou (感想) – impressions; (written or spoken) reflection(s) after an activity

kansoubun (感想文) – reflective essay(s); written descriptions of one’s impressions

kengaku (見学) – field trips/observation visits

kenkyuu (研究) – research

kenkyuu happyoukai (研究発表会) – research presentation meeting

kenkyuu jugyuu (研究授業) – literally, “research lessons” or lessons open for observation by educators for lesson study and often documented in case studies

kenkyuu kyougikai (研究協議会) – educators-only debriefing held after a research lesson observation(s)

kenkyuu shiteikou (研究指定校) or *shiteikou* (指定校) – certain schools designated each year by the national or prefectural government to conduct research about various educational topics of interest

kenshuu (研修) – professional development activities

kokoro (心) – heart(s), mind(s), or soul(s)

kokusaika (国際化) – internationalization; globalization

kosei (個性) – individuality

kouchou (sensei) (校長[先生]) – school principal(s)

kougai gakushuu (校外学習) – off-campus learning

koukai jugyou (公開授業) – public lessons open to parents/community members as well as educators

koukou (高校) or *koutou gakkou* (高等学校) – upper secondary school; high school (10th – 12th grades)

kounai bouryoku (校内暴力) – school violence; student violence toward classmates, teachers, etc.

kounai kenkyuu (校内研究) – schoolwide research (project/s)

kurabu katsudou (クラブ活動) – after-school club activities, primarily athletic and musical clubs, aimed at cultivating collectivism and egalitarianism

kyouiku iinkai (教育委員会) – board of education

kyouiku mama (教育ママ) – literally, “education mother(s)” who go to great lengths to ensure their children’s success in the education/examination system

kyoumu shunin (教務主任) – academic affairs chief(s); school curriculum coordinator(s)

kyoutou (sensei) (教頭[先生]) – assistant principal(s)

machi zukuri (町作り) – community-building (in a town/municipality)

mondai kaiketsu (問題解決) – problem-solving

Nihon Kyoushokuin Kumiai (日本教職員組合) – Japan Teachers’ Union (JTU)

Nikkyouso (日教組) – see *Nihon Kyoushokuin Kumiai*

nyuugaku shiken (入学試験) – entrance examination(s)

oshiekomi (教え込み) – teaching in which facts are “crammed” into students’

heads; see also *tsumekomi kyouiku*

purojekuto gakushuu (プロジェクト学習) – project-based studies (approach)

seika to kadai (成果と課題) – successes and [remaining] issues

shingaku (進学) – admission into school

shiteikou (指定校) or *kenkyuu shiteikou* (研究指定校) – certain schools

designated each year by the national or prefectural government to conduct

research about various educational topics of interest

shokuin kenshuu (職員研修) – staff development

shokuinshitsu (職員室) – central staffroom in a school

shougai gakushuu (生涯学習) – lifelong learning

shougakkou (小学校) – elementary school (1st through 6th grades)

shuugaku ryokou (修学旅行) – graduation trips made by 9th graders during their last semester in junior high school

sougouteki na gakushuu no jikan (総合的な学習の時間) – literally, “integrated type studies time” (usually called *sougou gakushuu* or “integrated studies”)

sougou gakushuu (総合学習) or *sougouteki na gakushuu no jikan* – integrated studies; a new subject area for 3rd through 12th grade that incorporates content from core subject areas into the theme-based study of information technology,

environmental studies, English language, international understanding, and/or human rights, with an emphasis on thematic, hands-on projects and problem-solving

taiken (体験) – direct experience; experiential learning

taiken gakushuu (体験学習) – experiential learning

tan'nin (*no sensei*) (担任[の先生]) – homeroom teacher(s)

tebiki (手引き) – teacher's manual(s)

tokubetsu katsudou (特別活動) – special activities, such as homeroom and grade-level activities, student council activities, club activities, and school events

tsumekomi kyouiku (詰め込み教育) – fact-cramming education; see also *oshiekomi*

yutori (ゆとり) – breathing room or opportunity to relax

Zen Nihon Kyoushokuin Kumiai (全日本教職員組合) – All Japan Teachers' Union (ATU)

Zenkyou (全教) – see *Zen Nihon Kyoushokuin Kumiai*

APPENDIX F

Notes on Observations of Integrated Studies Classes

The following are fuller excerpts from field notes regarding my observations of integrated studies classes at three of the schools in the sample Kita JHS, Minami JHS, and Nishi JHS (I was unable to observe lessons at Higashi JHS for logistical reasons).

They include the following six lessons:

- 1) a mass 7th grade lesson kicking off a local industries unit at Nishi JHS;
- 2) an individual homeroom lesson at start of a 9th grade unit on human rights/international relations at Kita JHS;
- 3) an individual homeroom lesson in which 8th graders at Minami JHS planned a class trip to Nagoya;
- 4) an individual homeroom lesson in which 8th graders at Nishi JHS planned a class trip to Kyoto;
- 5) a mass 7th grade lesson in which 7th graders at Kita JHS made presentations about their class trip to Kyoto; and
- 6) an individual homeroom lesson in which 7th graders at Nishi JHS made presentations about their investigations of local neighborhoods in the town.

Lesson 1: 7th Grade Mass Lesson at Nishi JHS About Local Industries

Lessons I observed that occurred at the beginning of units included a lesson at the beginning of a unit on local industries (7th-grade, Nishi JHS). The 7th-grade lesson on local industries took place on a Wednesday in mid-November 2003, around the midpoint of the second semester. All six of the 7th-grade homerooms (around 200 students total) and all 11 of the 7th-grade teachers gathered during 5th period in a multi-purpose room on the third floor of Nishi JHS. The students, in stockinged feet, sat on the carpeted floor in rows by homeroom, gender, and last name, as is customary for school assemblies—a long row of boys from Homeroom 1 in order by family name, next to a row of girls from

Homeroom 1 in order by family name, followed by a row of boys from Homeroom 2, and so on. Most of the teachers remained standing around the sides and back of the room, monitoring student behavior and disseminating handouts to students as needed.

Shortly after 1:35, the grade-group leader, a thin tower of a man named Mr. Kodama, called the class to order. He gave a few curt reminders to the group about appropriate school attire, including the need to wear nametags properly and keep all buttons on their uniforms fastened. He then initiated the customary start-of-class protocol, including formal bows and greetings between students and teacher, and turned the microphone over to Mr. Murata, a 7th-grade homeroom teacher, social studies teacher, volleyball coach, and integrated studies chair for this grade level and the entire school.

In a meeting with him the previous day, Mr. Murata had explained to me the Nishi JHS integrated studies curriculum, including a 7th-grade curriculum being implemented for the first time this year. It had previously included the cultivation of rice and vegetables in nearby fields, but had been revised due to scheduling conflicts and overlaps with their feeder elementary schools' integrated studies curricula. This year, the 7th-grade students had spent part of their first (April – July) semester studying the environment and natural resources (including a field trip to a nature education center in neighboring prefecture), and then in June, started studying the history of their hometown. During that “Neighborhood Rediscovery” unit, the 7th-graders studied their own neighborhoods, by means of tourist brochures and guest speakers, and had just finished making group presentations the previous week about a given festival or local historical site (such as the nearby birthplace of a famous samurai). With half of the 7th grade integrated studies class hours (105 per year, more than the 70-100 yearly total required by MEXT) devoted to a course titled “Information Technology Basics” on the school’s master schedule, the students are also expected to learn basic keyboarding during the first semester, and then move on to using various software programs and the internet.

Now in second (September – December) semester, 7th-graders were to begin a new integrated studies unit, called “Hatanaka: Local Industries of the Past, Present, and Future,” in which they would be required to make after-school visits to places like City Hall to gather pamphlets about living, working, and traveling in this town. The students would then be expected to use their newly-gained computer skills to display the data they gathered in graphs and charts, (as recommended, Mr. Murata noted, by their social studies textbook) to use in summary presentations. Moving in a past-present-future progression, the 7th graders were to focus on the future of Hatanaka during 3rd semester, making pamphlets or directories about their town as they predict it will be in the future.

The whole-class “orientation” (as it was called on handouts, using an English cognate) to the local industries unit was led by Mr. Murata, a rather diminutive 43-year-old with large round spectacles and an engaging manner. He addressed the assembled 7th-graders for about a half-hour, introducing the rationale, goals, and expectations for the upcoming unit. To illustrate the usefulness of such study in real life, Mr. Murata spoke about his own travels, inside and outside of Japan, and the usefulness of being knowledgeable about one’s own place, as a student or an adult, offering examples of encounters with residents of other towns and members of volleyball teams from other cities. He praised the progress students had made during the last integrated studies unit, and alluded to their potential for further improvement (“I bet when you get to 9th grade, you’ll be able to do really awesome presentations”).

After 10 or 15 minutes of these introductory remarks, Mr. Murata asked the other teachers to help distribute a copy of a large (B5/ledger size) handout to each student. Entitled “7th Grade Integrated Studies - 2nd Semester - Investigation Activity - Local Industry and Tourism in Hatanaka,” it listed examples of local industries, and explained how groups of students would be assigned to each of 12 sites (nine local industries and three local tourist attractions). It also included a schedule of activities, a list of potential resources (such as brochures and the internet), and the types of information to be gleaned from such sources (such as population and production amounts). The lower right-hand quarter of the page was a tear-off section for students to return to their homeroom teacher after indicating on it their top three choices from the 12 possible site assignments.

As Mr. Murata explained the handout, section by section, he made a distinction between this investigation of the students’ local community and the previous unit in which students investigated their neighborhoods. One difference he emphasized was the expectation in this unit that students would now be proficient enough at computer keyboarding to make use of their school’s estimable technology resources to do research on the internet and create graphs to display their quantitative data. Occasionally, Mr. Murata interrupted himself to ask a student or the whole assembly to “Quit talking,” with homeroom teachers chiming in when the offender was a member of their particular class. At one point, Mr. Murata confronted one particularly disruptive boy (perhaps from his own homeroom?), bringing him to the front of the room, handing him the microphone, and saying, “If it’s so important, share it with everyone.” The patently embarrassed 7th grader remained mute, and after 30 or 60 seconds, Mr. Murata finally said, “Enough? Now listen to what I’m saying, from now on,” and the boy resumed his seat. I found this teacher’s ability to deal promptly with inappropriate behavior and then continue calmly on most impressive, as I had grown used to seeing teachers in Japan (and the U.S.) simply “talk over” students’ unnecessary and inappropriate noise.

Finally, after Mr. Murata explained the timeline of activities for the unit and asked students to return their topic selections to their homeroom teachers by the next class meeting, he led the customary end-of-class protocol (in which students rise to their feet, and the students and teacher bow to and thank each other). Then Mr. Kodama, the grade-group leader, took charge again and dismissed the students, homeroom by homeroom, around 2:15 (10 minutes earlier than the scheduled end of 5th period). Students and teachers filed out the two narrow doors on one side of the room, retrieving their school slippers in the hallway, and returning to their classrooms or the central staffroom on the first floor.

Lesson 2: 9th Grade Homeroom Lesson at Kita JHS About International Understanding

Another example of a lesson I observed at the beginning of an integrated studies unit was a 9th-grade lesson on human rights and international understanding at Kita JHS. It took place on a Thursday in early December 2003, near the end of the second semester, during 6th period in Homeroom 3-A’s classroom. The homeroom teacher, Mr. Fujii, happened to also be the integrated studies chair for this grade level (and the entire school), and I had interviewed him in that capacity the previous week. The selection of Mr. Fujii’s homeroom for my observation was made by the principal, Mr. Hashimoto, who

accompanied me to the second-floor classroom and remained there with me for the duration of the lesson.

While my lesson observations in other schools had sometimes involved administrator escort/supervision, the process of selection of a homeroom to observe seemed singular enough to warrant description here. I arrived at Kita JHS almost an hour before my scheduled lesson observation and busied myself with other tasks as I waited in the staffroom. Shortly before 6th period (scheduled for 2:15-3:00), Mr. Hashimoto entered the staffroom, greeted me warmly, and escorted me toward the 9th-grade teachers' cluster of desks. The principal then proceeded to ask which of the three homeroom teachers there was willing to let me observe their integrated studies class next period. Each of them declined, in turn—claiming their students were too rowdy, or they were planning to use some class time to return exams, or the like—and exited the staffroom. Exhibiting no visible consternation at this uncooperative if not downright insubordinate response, Mr. Hashimoto turned calmly to me and asked, “Shall we go?” and then led me resolutely up the stairs to Mr. Fujii’s 2nd-floor classroom.

We arrived shortly after the chime had rung marking the beginning of 6th period, and therefore missed the opportunity to observe the customary start-of-class greeting between students and teacher. The 36 students in classroom 3-A sat in six rows of approximately six desks each, alternating by gender—a row of boys, then a row of girls—a customary arrangement that had been equally prevalent during my teaching stint in Hatanaka’s junior high schools 14 years earlier. All of them were wearing school uniforms (blue sailor suits for girls, black Prussian-military uniforms for boys), though some sported non-regulation sweaters, earrings, and dyed hair.

Standing before the chalkboard at the front of the room, Mr. Fujii—an energetic, boyish 41-year-old math teacher—was already addressing his class when Mr. Hashimoto and I entered through the sliding door at the rear of the room. The teacher paused to explain to the students the reason for our presence, admitting that he was nervous having observers. He then promptly resumed the lesson, briefly stating the topic of the new unit, human rights and international understanding, and then directing the students’ attention to the handout in front of each of them.

When I had met with Mr. Fujii the previous week, he had explained to me the Kita JHS integrated studies curriculum, which is essentially built around the “school education goals” of promoting awareness of human rights, the environment, and international understanding, often through combination with existing special activities and school events. While both the 8th and 9th grade integrated studies curricula include “human rights” as a major theme (the 7th-grade curriculum also includes at least five hours of activities focused on human rights per year), the emphasis in 8th grade is on the rights of those with disabilities and of others who might benefit from service learning (another major theme in both the 7th- and 8th-grade integrated studies curriculum). In 9th grade, the emphasis shifts to international understanding and the rights of non-Japanese citizens living in Japan (including 14 students from Brazil and Cambodia attending Kita JHS as of the 2002-03 school year).

In the Kita JHS School Handbook, the overall “school education goal” for integrated studies is listed as cultivation of students who have motivation, consideration, and discipline, and are “strong in mind and body, with high intellect and warm hearts, [and] can function in a global society.” The overall goal for 9th-grade integrated studies

is “self-expression” (jiko hyougen), using the twin themes of “human rights” and “technology/careers” so that students can “make presentations about their research investigations to community members and so on, solve problems with a consciousness of interdependence, and think about their own ways of life.” Listed subgoals for 9th grade include “oral communication” with the assistant language teacher (usually a native speaker teacher of English with limited proficiency in Japanese language), consideration of career pathways, and completion of a graduation thesis or personal history. Activities related to all three of these subgoals were staggered throughout the school year schedule, due to Kita JHS’s broad, multi-grade approach that incorporates schoolwide special events into integrated studies. (This contrasts with, for instance, the more sequential, grade-specific approach at Nishi JHS.) While Mr. Fujii did not give me information at that time specific to the lesson I later observed in his classroom, it appeared to function as a broad overview and introduction to issues of international understanding, which could then be extended to more specific issues of co-existence and interaction with citizens of other countries.

During that lesson in Homeroom 3-A, Mr. Fujii announced the topic of the current unit (human rights and international understanding) and then read aloud the title at the top of the student handout, “If the World Were a Village of 100 People.” On the large (B5 size) handout, an abridged version of this rather well-known list of world demographic statistics (credited to Okinawa-based U.S. political scientist C. Douglas Lummis, as translated by Kayoko Ikeda in 2001) had been made into a cloze exercise, in which the students were to fill in characteristics described by the ratios given (e.g., “Of the 100 people...17 people would speak _____ language”...“6 people would believe in _____ religion,” and so on).

Mr. Fujii spent most of the 45-minute class period leading the students through the worksheet, reading each line aloud and pausing at each cloze box so students could offer suggestions about what to write in the blank. Some raised their hands to be recognized before speaking, while others simply blurted out their answers. There was significant student participation, in terms of the number of volunteers and their enthusiasm. Mr. Fujii skillfully maintained student attention and interest by interspersing his reading of the text with comments that explained or extended the information on the worksheet. For instance, he explained that one reason the female population in the world exceeds the male population is that male infants—in various species, not just humans—tend to become fatally ill more easily than female infants. At another point, after reading a line about the world population being 6.3 billion, Mr. Fujii asked the class if they knew what the population of their own country is. When discussing the ratios of people living on each continent, Mr. Fujii reminded the class that Iraq, site of a current war, is part of Asia, just as Japan is. This type of ad-libbing drew questions from students, which the teacher would either restate to the class for their consideration, or respond to directly, usually attempting to link the topic at hand to the students’ own experiences.

When a student asked why the second most widely-spoken language in the world is English (a required and often unpopular subject in Japanese junior high schools), Mr. Fujii alluded to the fact that English is the language of many wealthy countries, so the rest of the world also learns to speak it. He reminded them, “You played that game the other day about who’s rich and who’s poor in the world, remember?” It wasn’t clear to me whether that game was part of a lesson in integrated studies, or some other subject

area, such as ethics or social studies (Mr. Fujii teaches this group of students math, ethics, and integrated studies).

After the listing of about 25 ratios (14 of which had blanks to be filled in) on the handout were a few lines of exhortative prose, which I translate as:

“There are lots of different people
In this village
Understanding people who are different from you
Accepting others as they are
And most of all being aware of these things
Is very important.
First please love yourself.
Yourself and the people living in this village.
Perhaps, if enough of us learn to love our village,
It may yet be possible to save it
From the diabolical forces that are tearing it apart.”

When Mr. Fujii read this aloud to the class, one boy asked, “What does this have to do with human rights?” The teacher quickly replied, “Human rights begins from love and the valuing of self and others,” adding that “valuing oneself” meant not just adopting an indifferent attitude and saying, “Whatever.” Mr. Fujii reminded the students that “you can’t love others if you can’t love yourself,” and expanded this analogy to the world scene, urging students to first love Japan, so then they could love other countries and their people.

For the last five minutes of class, Mr. Fujii asked the students to write their kansou reflections about what they had learned on the small (half sheets of A4/letter size paper) handouts prepared for this purpose. These handouts were titled, “Hatanaka Kita JHS Human Rights Studies Reflection Sheet,” and included spaces for students to fill in their names, homeroom, and today’s date. Under the instructions, “Write what you felt and thought and so on through doing these studies,” was a series of 8 blank lines for students to write their answers on in prose. After giving his students this assignment, Mr. Fujii excused himself to go look for a student who had failed to show up for class. Mr. Hashimoto and I took our leave shortly thereafter, rendering the students of 3-A completely responsible for completing and submitting their assignment without adult supervision.

Not that the students of 3-A were renowned for their self-discipline and appropriate behavior. On the contrary, this homeroom of 20 boys and 16 girls included several outspoken non-conformists, three of whom even I had come to know by name within my first week of visiting their school, since they were constantly trying to get away with hanging out in the staffroom (which was against the rules and particularly strictly enforced during the week prior to final exams), where the visiting U.S. researcher made for an interesting distraction. There was Daisuke, who had colored his hair red and painted his uniform buttons (and sometimes his fingernails) purple; Yuuta, who wore his black hair in tall gelled spikes and loved playing on the tennis team; and Manaru, who eagerly grasped any opportunity to try out his limited English on native speakers like myself. The three classmates seemed to be buddies who would get into trouble, together

or individually, on a regular basis. (Once, after an emergency school assembly was called in response to a food fight at lunchtime, I heard the guidance director comment to a colleague that Daisuke was not the culprit “this time”.) Furthermore, Mr. Fujii had informed me that, unlike the 7th graders, the 9th graders often failed to see the difference between “integrated studies” and “special activities,” which suggested to me that these upperclassmen might not take this new subject area very seriously.

However, despite these ample reasons to expect classroom management challenges in Mr. Fujii’s class during my observation, I was pleasantly surprised to note the active participation of many students and an almost complete lack of inappropriate student behavior during the lesson. Even the notorious Daisuke stayed on task virtually all the time, both asking and answering questions in the teacher-led discussion of various topics related to the information on the handout. Yuuta and Manaru, on the other hand, remained unusually quiet throughout the lesson, and did not disrupt class. Of course, the circumstances were rather unusual—not only was an international researcher observing their class, but the principal remained standing in the back of the room throughout the observation, wearing a stern expression on his face—but the students in Homeroom 3-A did not seize this potential opportunity to make an outlandish bid for attention or try to embarrass their teacher or principal.

Lesson 3: 8th Grade Homeroom Lesson at Minami JHS About Off-Campus Learning Field Trip

Lessons I observed in the middle of units included a lesson in which Minami JHS students made preparations for an 8th-grade class trip to Nagoya. The only class trips to large cities that I remembered from teaching in Hatanaka 14 years earlier were the graduation trips (*shuugaku ryokou*) made by 9th graders during their last semester in junior high school. Now, however, class trips were being undertaken by 8th graders at all four schools I visited, with at least part of the trip (including preparation and/or debriefing activities) comprising an “off-campus learning” (*kougai gakushuu*) unit for integrated studies.

The class-trip preparation lesson at Minami JHS occurred during 5th period (1:35-2:25pm) on a Wednesday in late October, a few days after second-semester midterm examinations had ended, and nine days prior to the scheduled trip to Nagoya. Before visiting the 8th-grade homerooms, I was escorted by Mr. Taguchi, the curriculum coordinator, and Ms. Ise, the grade-level leader (*gakunen shunin*), to an unused classroom on the 8th-grade hallway, where they gave me an overview of the 8th-grade integrated studies curriculum and this off-campus learning unit in particular. They explained that, during the previous semester, the 8th-graders had begun researching careers and had interacted with different people in the community by taking part in the City Founding Anniversary Festival (during summer vacation!), building a mini-float from recycled plastic bottles, taking part in festival parades, and assisting with setup and cleanup. During third semester, students were to begin investigating cultural issues with an eye toward their 9th-grade graduation trip. Before that, however, the 8th-graders were to engage in “off-campus learning” related to the current second-semester theme of “the

environment around us.” Seventeen of the annual total of 100 class hours for 8th grade integrated studies was devoted to this unit, centered around a class trip to Nagoya. The class trip had basically been arranged by Ms. Ise and Mr. Taguchi, they informed me, along with another 8th-grade teacher who had traveled to Nagoya twice during summer break to gather maps and other information for use during this unit.

Ms. Ise and Mr. Taguchi informed me that, over the past decade or so, the traditional format of class trips, in which the whole group would travel from site to site en masse, escorted by a flag-carrying professional tour guide (*gaido-san*), had been abandoned in favor of students moving around independently in *han* groups. The small-group format would also be used for this 8th-grade off-campus learning trip. Earlier, each *han* work group (most consisting of three boys and three girls) had been supplied with a map of Nagoya and other information, and had drafted tentative plans for their group’s visit to the city, including how much money to bring, whether to bring or buy lunch, and possible places to visit within the given time frame. Then, two travel agents had come to the school to listen to the students’ tentative plans for making their way around the city and to offer them advice. Today, each of the *han* groups (five or six groups in each of the five homerooms) was to revise and begin finalizing those plans. The students had been given specific instructions about selecting a theme for their day-long trip and choosing no fewer than three places related to that theme to visit. In order to ensure that the students gained experience using mass transit (trains and subways), they were instructed to choose places located in disparate sections of the city. One of their destinations had to be chosen from a set of three key attractions—Nagoya Castle, Nagoya Zoo, and the Nagoya Harbor area (boasting an aquarium and science museum); another destination from a longer list of “recommended educational sites” such as museums and historical sites; and the third destination was left to the group’s discretion, and could include shopping centers or other non-education-related sites.

Ms. Ise accompanied me as I visited three of the 8th-grade homerooms, where I found about 30 uniform-clad students per class working in mixed-gender groups of five or six. Each *han* had clustered its five or six desks together, and most appeared to be engaged in lively conversation about plans for their upcoming trip. I noticed that many students took notes on sheets of paper in addition to the single worksheet per group on which one member of the group recorded final decisions about themes, destinations, times, costs, and modes of transportation as they were made. Some groups had written down rather unimaginative themes like “getting to know Nagoya,” and I wondered whether or how they would be able to pursue “research” focused on what seemed more like the means than the aim of the unit. Not surprisingly, several groups chose themes like “environmental issues” or “living things,” in keeping with the current 8th-grade integrated studies theme of “the environment around us.” In some cases, however, the relationship between the selected theme and destinations seemed tenuous at best. When I asked one group how their visit to a famous shrine related to their theme of “environmental issues,” they had no ready answer (although, I later realized, they could supposedly have built an argument on Shinto’s animistic reverence for all of nature).

The students were expected to plan their trip in minute detail, including train departure and arrival times, stops to check in with teachers at given checkpoints, admission fees for attractions, and so on. (Despite the student-discount or free admission at many of the attractions, the most popular destination by far was the aquarium at

Nagoya Harbor, with its IMAX theater, despite its comparatively steep ¥1000 admission fee.) Finally, each group was also expected to devise a seating chart for the chartered train they would take to Nagoya and back. Ms. Ise told me that the 8th-grade teachers were keeping track of the students' deportment, and assigning demerits to students exhibiting inappropriate behavior, with possible trip-related consequences, such as not being able to bring extra spending money on the trip. When I asked what would happen if a student received more than one demerit during the trip unit, Ms. Ise told me that would call for a meeting with the group and/or the whole class, during which they would talk to the student in question about his/her behavior. In each classroom, Ms. Ise and I circulated among the student groups, offering assistance and asking questions, and the students and their teachers seemed unfazed by our involvement in their lesson.

Lesson 4: 8th Grade Homeroom Lesson at Nishi JHS About Off-Campus Learning Field Trip

I also observed a mid-unit 8th-grade class trip preparation lesson as part of an off-campus learning unit at Nishi JHS. It took place in individual homerooms during 6th period (2:15-3:00pm) on a Wednesday in early November 2003, around the middle of the second semester. During first semester, the 8th-graders had taken part in job-shadowing and service-learning activities, as well as a field trip to the local Spring Festival in April. Now in second semester, they had just finished making summary reports about their job shadowing unit, and would spend the latter half of the school year studying human rights and international understanding. In between, they were scheduled to spend one day on a class trip to Kyoto as part of an "off-campus learning" unit. The trip itself was counted as six hours of "school event" time on the annual schedule, but several hours of integrated studies class time were used for the preparation before and summary reports after the trip. During today's lesson, students were to assemble booklets that would serve as both guidebooks and journals for the trip they were to take the following Wednesday.

When I visited the seven 8th-grade homerooms, I found the same general pattern in each. At first, the uniform-clad students (around 35 per class) were seated in rows, facing the teacher at the front of the room as s/he explained how to assemble the pre-printed pages of the booklet. Then, with much scraping of metal legs on the wooden floor, the students moved their desks and chairs into groups of 5-6 students each to complete the task and finalize decisions about information to be recorded in the booklets, including budgets, schedules, and seating assignments. These han work groups were mostly single-gender, and had been specially formed for the purposes of this off-campus learning unit, in which students were to study in topic-specific groups.

Again, the students were expected to plan their trip in minute detail. Each homeroom used identical handouts to construct the pocket-sized trip booklet which, when finished, consisted of over 30 pages of maps, worksheets, and so on related to the students' investigations of selected sites in Kyoto. In Homeroom 2-5, Ms. Ito, a gamine 26-year-old English teacher, distributed blue and white half-sheets, making comments like, "There's a whole lot of these! Yes, there are gobs!...Does everyone have nine handouts?...OK, here comes the tough part." She then gave specific instructions about how to fold and assemble the handouts into a booklet, such as, "Fold it so page three and

page four are inside,” as she demonstrated with her own half-sheet at the front of the room. Several of the pages featured maps, and one page labeled “Money to Take Along” had space for students to record their budget for the trip. There were also pages on which students were to take notes on each “field trip site” visited and to record their impressions (“*kansou*”) about each site. The inclusion of one page per site for a souvenir photograph (“*kinen shashin*”) reinforced my impression that these booklets were expected to become albums or keepsakes to which students would refer in the future, in addition to their immediate function of providing structure for a rather complex, collaborative learning activity.

In Homeroom 2-1, the ever-cheerful Ms. Oka became briefly crestfallen when she suddenly ran short of handouts when distributing them to her students. As she left the classroom to get extra copies from a colleague down the hall, her students remained seated and waited quietly. A few minutes later, Ms. Oka was back and giving instructions with her usual smile: “Once you’ve put the pages in order and stapled it together, fill in the page about what time you will get to which destination and so on...Make sure your group leader [*hanchou*] knows who is going to sit in which seat on the bus there and back...Once you’ve got everything filled in, you’re done.” In two other classrooms, drawings on the chalkboard served as visual aids—in one, a sketch of how to assemble the booklet pages, and in the other, a seating chart for the bus, on which students were filling in names with chalk.

A week later, on the day of the trip, the principal’s “Nishi JHS Daily Report (No. 119),” a half-sheet distributed to every teacher’s desk, began with a paragraph about the 8th-graders’ trip to Kyoto. Above the customary lists of schedule changes and staff members on leave or business trips appeared the following:

8th Grade Off-Campus Learning: Theme—
Let’s Learn Together [About] Kyoto’s Culture

The day of the 8th-grade off-campus study trip has come, and this morning it seems we’re blessed at long last with good weather. At this time of year, I believe we will be able to see the best Kyoto has to offer. I think the students will work hard in their theme-specific groups, doing investigations until their research produces results. I hope they also use this as a positive stepping stone toward next year’s class trip.

Starting/Ending Points:

Higashi Honganji Temple, Heian Shrine, Kinkakuji Temple, Botanic Gardens

Checkpoints:

Nijo Castle, Sanjusangendou Temple, Ginkakuji Temple, Kiyomizudera Temple

Optional Sites to Visit: various

Here’s to an orderly and fruitful trip to Kyoto—we’ll be back!

And the day after the trip, the principal’s “Nishi JHS Daily Report (No. 120),” began with the following:

Off-Campus Study Trip to Kyoto Completed Successfully

The 8th-grade off-campus study trip to Kyoto took place under blue skies, and all homerooms returned safely to school at 5:00pm, as scheduled, with no accidents or illness. I'm glad about this, since safety is our number one priority. The theme was 'Let's Learn Together'. The major goal was for students to move around and complete an activity in small groups. I was invited to go along with the group, and at the departure meeting, I told them, 'Please be aware of the need to be on time.' It seems that a number of groups were unable to stay on schedule, but I'm told this will be addressed at an assembly in the 3rd-floor all-purpose room after cleaning time [today]. Eighth-grade teachers, thank you for your cooperation in this. Coaches, please understand that this may delay the start of after-school practices.

It struck me how much the principal's commentary resembled a kansou—describing what went well, what didn't go well, and the countermeasures being put in place immediately so certain misconduct would not be repeated during the 9th grade graduation trip.

Lesson 5: 7th Grade Mass Lesson at Kita JHS About Off-Campus Learning Field Trip Investigations

Lessons at the end of units included a mass lesson at Kita JHS involving student presentations about the 7th graders' class field trip to Kyoto. The presentations about the students' off-campus field trip investigations took place on a Tuesday in late November 2003, toward the end of the second semester. All three of the 7th-grade homerooms (around 90 students total) and all seven of the 7th-grade teachers gathered during 5th and 6th period in a multi-purpose room on the first floor of Kita JHS (the usual schedule had been altered to provide double the usual class time for integrated studies this day). The students, in uniforms and stockinged feet, sat in rows on folding chairs in the carpeted room, grouped by homeroom and gender (two columns of boys next to two columns of girls for each homeroom), facing the podium and screen at the front of the room. At first, most of the teachers remained standing—and as the two-hour session progressed, eventually seated themselves—at the front, back, and right side of the room (there was no aisle space at the partition on the left), vigilantly monitoring student behavior.

For a few minutes after the 1:20 chime signaled the start of 5th period, four male and two female teachers moved around the room, encouraging students to find their seats (presumably in order by last name) and asking them to sit down so the lesson could begin. I noted that the students were being noisy but not belligerent. I was seated in a row of chairs (for observers and parent visitors) at the back of the room, and soon a boy and a girl also planted themselves there and began chatting, clearly out of compliance with what the teachers were busily exhorting the students to do—sit in their proper places and be quiet.

At 1:29, a female student—perhaps a grade-level student leader, or simply a student appointed to serve on the “emcee committee”—spoke into the microphone at the podium, asking for quiet. When she began to announce the start of the presentation session, she

was interrupted by the grade-group faculty leader, a burly 44-year-old art teacher named Mr. Motoyama. His call for silence was better heeded by the assembled students, and in the ensuing quiet, a homeroom teacher named Mr. Uchida came to the back and asked the two recalcitrant students near me to join their groups, which they grudgingly did.

After a renewed announcement by the student emcee, "The presentation session will begin," Mr. Motoyama stood and addressed the now-silent assembly of students. With a serious expression and no-nonsense manner, he advised the students to listen to their classmates' presentations as if they themselves were up front presenting, as they each would be, eventually. After Mr. Motoyama bowed and resumed his seat, the student emcee reclaimed the podium and asked Han (work-group) 1 from Homeroom A to come up and present, and Han 1 from Homeroom B to sit in the row of chairs in the "on deck" area to the right of the assembled students. Other student emcees (all girls, I noted, speculating that members of this particular grade must have divided up their extra duties along gender lines) dimmed the lights, and Group 1-A (two girls and a boy) began a PowerPoint presentation about their trip to Kyoto.

Initially, it was not clear to me whether or how the 7th-graders' field trip to Kyoto, or their presentations about it, related to the 7th-grade integrated studies themes of "environment" and "service learning." Later, I learned that this particular unit on "off-campus learning" was more an example of the various cross-grade-level activities used in the Kita JHS integrated studies curriculum. In a chart on page 4 of an official "2002-03 Research Bulletin" about integrated studies activities at Kita JHS, four such activities are listed: off-campus learning, human rights issues, school cultural festival preparation and activities, and a school cleanup campaign. When Mr. Fujii had explained the school's integrated studies curriculum to me, he had indicated that Kita JHS attempted to combine integrated studies with existing special activities (tokubetsu katsudou) and school events (gakkou gyouji), though he admitted there was some doubt about the degree to which this technically complied with the reform mandate. In deciding integrated studies themes and activities, he said, the school must address its overall educational goals (human rights awareness, for example) and take the students' current conditions and interests into account.

When I had taught at junior high schools in Hatanaka 14 years earlier, class trips to large cities like Kyoto and Tokyo seemed limited to the graduation trips (shuugaku ryokou) made by 9th graders during their last semester in junior high school. Now, however, I learned that class trips were being planned and taken by 8th graders at Minami JHS and Nishi JHS, and by 7th and 8th graders at Kita JHS, as part of their integrated studies curriculum and in preparation for the customary 9th-grade graduation trips. When I asked Mr. Sawamura, one of Kita JHS's two vice principals, why these "practice" trips occurred in both 7th and 8th grade at his school, but only in 8th grade at Minami JHS and 2, he explained that Kita JHS is "more out in the countryside" than the other two schools, so his students have fewer chances in everyday life to ride buses and trains and so on. For this reason, he explained, the Kita JHS students are given more chances to practice using mass transportation and so on through annual trips to places like Kyoto, Osaka, and Nagoya before their big trip to Tokyo in 9th grade.

This year, the 7th graders at Kita JHS had traveled to Kyoto, the ancient capital of Japan for over eight centuries (from 794 to 1603), on a Friday in early November. Once there, they spent the day exploring, in groups of four to six students, predetermined sites

of interest (such as temples, shrines, and museums). Two weeks later, the 7th-graders were working in those same groups to present reports about their field trip to their assembled peers and, I later gathered, a handful of parents and other invited observers.

In all, 18 groups (six mixed-gender han from each homeroom) gave five- to 10-minute presentations, in rotating order, with each group followed by a group from a different homeroom. Eight groups used Power Point, six used transparencies on the overhead projector and/or photographs on the Elmo “visual presenter” machine, and four used large handmade posters. The hand-lettering and illustrations on the posters and transparencies were generally clear and attractive, and exhibited a teenage penchant for bold and varied colors. The Power Point slide shows (with titles like, “7th Grade Kyoto Field Trip: Presentation About What We Learned”) were quite technologically sophisticated, featuring attractive photos, moving text and background graphics, various fonts, and even a few sound effects.

Though the exuberant colors, shapes, and motion sometimes proved distracting from the message being presented, they gave evidence of student proficiency in using the more complex features of the software. I felt a bit embarrassed that I, a graduate student at a technology-rich U.S. university, lacked the skills to produce such “fancy” computer presentations. I recalled Mr. Fujii’s comment that this year’s 7th graders often use Power Point for their presentations, but the 9th graders are not as proficient at it, so they tend to use either webpages or handmade posters. However, he had also estimated that only 25% of his students had a computer at home, while the principal had estimated the overall percentage for the school to be closer to 90%. Either way, I found it hard to reconcile the students’ apparent computer proficiency with the relatively low number of integrated studies class hours officially devoted to “Information Technology Basics” in 7th grade (only 15 per year, of 100 total yearly hours required by MEXT) on the school’s master schedule in the 2002-03 school handbook.

In general, the student presenters exhibited less proficiency and comfort with public speaking than with designing impressive visual aids. The students in almost every group announced clearly, “This is the start of our presentation,” and “That’s the end of our presentation,” and took turns speaking during their 5-10 minutes at the front of the room, sharing such tasks as holding up posters, changing transparencies, and advancing Power Point slides. However, the students also exhibited signs of the anxiety and discomfort such as I would expect from 7th graders speaking in front of an audience. Many spoke softly and stared at the floor; several “hid” behind their posters as they spoke. Some students made pronunciation or other errors, and a few stumbled over unfamiliar ideographs (kanji), looking to their peers and then teachers for assistance in pronouncing the characters on a poster or screen. During presentations, or while waiting to present next, some girls giggled uncontrollably, and some boys chatted with members of their own or other groups.

For the most part, the audience remained respectfully quiet and attentive, though there were a few signs and sources of distraction and potential disruption from the start, and these became more noticeable as the two-hour session rolled on. The boy and girl who had initially sat with me in the back row kept moving out of their assigned seats (at one point, the girl loudly stomped out of room, only to return later and sit next to me again, smelling of tobacco). Throughout the presentation session, certain teachers and students exited and entered through the back door, and adult observers also entered and

signed in at a table near that door (by 3:00, I counted six of them seated with me in the back of the room). There was also frequent off-task chatting and giggling in the student audience, but I was able to hear virtually all of the presentations fairly well, even from the back of the large room.

Between presentations, a student emcee would almost inevitably return to the microphone and politely intone, “Please be quiet,” to some temporary effect. Mr. Motoyama, the grade-group leader, interrupted occasionally to make stern admonitions to the group, but spent most of the time snapping photos of each group of presenters and surveying the audience rather grimly. I remember thinking that the repetitious nature of the presentation topics could not have been helpful in capturing the attention of the misbehaving students.

The topics presented were varied to a certain extent, with most groups talking about more than one site or activity—for instance, one group describing their visit to Heian Shrine and bracelet-making at a handicraft center, and another group showing pictures of the Kyoto City Zoo and the Old Imperial Palace. However, at least half the groups mentioned Kiyomizudera Temple, and another half the National Museum. This redundancy suggested to me that the groups, and the order of presentation, had not been determined by topic. More likely, students worked in their pre-existing homeroom han groups (each consisting of boys and girls, to encourage cross-gender interaction), collaboratively selecting two to three sites to visit from a given set of options determined by the grade-group teachers. The order of presentation, continuously rotating between homerooms, was probably intended to preserve equity as well as audience focus, but the fact remained that many groups had visited the same sites and were therefore presenting redundant information already familiar to the audience.

The content of the presentations consisted mainly of historical facts of the tourist-brochure variety (“Kiyomizudera Temple has Japan’s largest 3-story pagoda”) followed by the students’ kansou reflections about their experiences there (“It was hard climbing up the steep hill to the temple, but we learned about the good things Kyoto has to offer”). I was surprised at the frankness (or deliberate impudence?) of some of the students’ kansou; one saying the trip overall was “boring” (*darui*), and another calling it “rough” (*taihen*). I was impressed that, despite the inevitable mistakes by these inexperienced presenters, they were never subjected to ridicule or derisive laughter from the student audience. There were two occasions on which the audience gave a collective chuckle—once when a girl let out a sudden, loud giggle at the end of her presentation, and another when a boy’s oversized and flamboyant handwriting on a transparency contrasted sharply with his mouselike voice and demeanor—but on both occasions, the laughter seemed good-natured, not malicious.

At 3:25, after the 18th group had just finished their presentation, two of the student emcees came to the microphone, asked for quiet, posed a rhetorical question about how the session had been, and thanked everyone for their participation. At 3:27, Mr. Motoyama stood and addressed the assembled 7th-graders, offering his own kansou about the presentation session overall. The grade-group leader emphasized what students had done well, mentioning that he had overheard certain boys telling their misbehaving classmates to shape up and pay attention. He also acknowledged how difficult it is to get up and speak in front of others, but then noted that nine of the 18 groups hadn’t performed as well as they might have. In closing, Mr. Motoyama reminded the students

that today was not their last presentation, encouraged them to think about what they wanted to do and be as 9th-graders, and urged them to make up their minds to do even better in their future presentations. The students were dismissed to their homerooms around 3:30 (the official ending time for 6th period) and I stayed to help the non-homeroom teachers put away the folding chairs.

Lesson 6: 7th Grade Homeroom Lesson at Nishi JHS About Local Neighborhood Investigations

Another end-of-unit lesson involving student presentations was at the end of a 7th-grade integrated studies unit about local neighborhoods at Nishi JHS. It took place on a Wednesday in early November 2003, around the middle of the second semester. Rather than a mass lesson, the presentations were made in individual homerooms, and I was able to observe in three of the six 7th-grade homerooms.

Earlier, Mr. Murata, the integrated studies chair and a 7th-grade homeroom teacher, had explained to me that the 7th-graders had begun the current “Neighborhood Rediscovery” unit in June. The students were to investigate the history of their hometown, beginning with their own neighborhoods, by means of tourist information about local festivals and historical sites and a grade-level field trip to see Spring Festival events. After making summary presentations about what they had (re-)discovered, the students were to begin a new integrated studies unit, called “Hatanaka: Local Industries of the Past, Present, and Future,” in which they would visit local institutions and collect information about living, working, and traveling in Hatanaka. The 7th-graders were also expected to develop sufficient computer skills by 3rd semester to include original computer-generated charts, graphs, and perhaps brochures in their presentations, but right now, low-tech presentations appeared to be the norm.

I first visited Homeroom 1-6, accompanied by Margaret, an assistant language teacher from the U.S. in her third year at Nishi JHS. We arrived at the second-floor classroom a few minutes after the 5th-period chime had sounded. The homeroom teacher, Ms. Kawata, a ponytailed 29-year-old English teacher, stood near a large screen that had been set up to the left of the chalkboard. Her class of 17 boys and 16 girls sat in rows of desks, in the customary alternation by gender—a column of boys, then a column of girls, and so on. The Nishi JHS school uniforms the students wore—blue sailor suits with white piping for girls, and black high-collared Prussian-military uniforms for boys—were as familiar to me as the seating arrangement, appearing to be the exact style of the school’s uniforms over a decade before, when I had first taught in Hatanaka.

Ms. Kawata handed me a copy of the evaluation sheet she had distributed to every student. Titled, “Integrated Studies Group Presentation Session,” it contained a space for students to write their name, grade, and homeroom, above a type of rubric on which students were to evaluate the presentations of up to 11 groups. The students were to evaluate each group’s theme, content, visual appeal, creativity, and public speaking by giving scores of 2 (complete/sufficient), 1 (partial), or 0 (incomplete/insufficient) according to the criteria listed: “Is the theme and/or objective clear?” “Is the content assembled in an understandable manner?” “Are the text and/or pictures written/drawn neatly?” “Is the presentation style well-designed/creative?” “Is the presentation done

loudly and clearly?" At the bottom of the evaluation sheet were spaces for evaluators' impressions ("kansou") and brief comments.

The curtains had been partially drawn, and Ms. Kawata asked a student to dim the lights as she called the first group of presenters up to the front of the room. The group consisted of six girls, and seeing this, Margaret whispered to me that trying to create co-ed groups in this particular grade was sometimes "not worth the trouble." This suggested to me that the groups, and probably their themes of study, had been student-selected. The students had prepared transparencies for their report about the local Spring Festival they had researched, so Ms. Kawata turned on the overhead projector near the screen for them. As she did so, the teacher exhibited some unfamiliarity how to use it, placing a transparency on it first backwards, and then upside-down, before righting it. (I was reminded of Stigler & Hiebert's [1999] contrast between Japanese teachers' reliance on the chalkboard with U.S. teachers' penchant for the overhead projector.)

The students had written their report on the transparencies with colored markers, and interspersed the text with photos of festival events, which came out rather dark and grainy, suggesting they had been photocopied onto the transparencies. The six girls spoke in turn, standing near the center of the chalkboard, several feet from the projector and screen, in the order in which they would present. They essentially read aloud what was written on each transparency, occasionally referring to note cards in their hands or pointing to a relevant picture on the glass, before surrendering the floor—with obvious relief—to the next speaker at her left. The group first introduced their topic, gave some history of the centuries-old festival, and then briefly described the various floats used in the festival parade and the performances that usually accompanied them. Later groups gave similar presentations about various aspects of the Spring Festival, with a significant degree of redundancy. Despite this repetition, and the fact that the presenters spoke with varying degrees of volume and clarity (not to mention the overhead projector's distracting habit of suddenly alternating from bright to dim), for the most part the students in 1-6 remained seated and listened quietly to their classmates' presentations. Besides Margaret and myself, two other teachers stood in the back of the room and observed the lesson as well.

Down the hall, in Homeroom 1-3, Mr. Murata, the social studies teacher in charge of integrated studies for each grade level (and particularly for 7th grade) facilitated presentations on similar topics by his students (17 boys and 16 girls). While the teacher's desk boasted a large TV screen and computer, and an overhead projector and screen had been set up in the front right corner of the room, the visual aids for the student presentations consisted mainly of handmade posters. Indeed, one group of five girls squatted around a poster on the floor in the back of the room, apparently adding last-minute finishing touches under the supervision of a female teacher while Mr. Murata facilitated the presentations being made by other groups of students at the front of the room.

In this class, groups of 2 to 4 students (usually of the same gender) would approach the chalkboard and attach large handlettered posters to it, using long magnetic rods made for the purpose. Mr. Murata would sometimes lend students a hand with this process, but usually remained seated at the front of a row of student desks between the hallway doors on the right side of the room, giving instructions and asking questions as the groups took turns presenting. Each group had between 1 to 3 posters, sheets of white

paper about 1 meter square, on which they had attached photographs, drawn sketches, and written captions in colored ink. A few of the groups had also prepared a black-and-white transparency to go along with their posters, and I found the images and text on these easier to read from my position in the back of the room than those on the posters.

In this class, too, the presenters generally stood at the chalkboard, only occasionally gesturing or pointing to something on their posters as they read them verbatim, but unfortunately, usually spoke while facing away from the audience. With the exception of one boy who used a wooden pointer deftly, and spoke very clearly and audibly while looking at the audience, many of the presenters spoke softly and/or faced the chalkboard so they could read from their posters, making it difficult to hear. (I had particular difficulty hearing, given my proximity to the group working to finish their poster on the floor in the back of the room.) As the student groups took turns presenting their reports about the local Spring Festival, a nearby historical temple, notable samurai who had lived in the area, and so on, the rest of the students in 1-6 seemed to be quietly paying attention (though one boy had his head bent over a comic book and another appeared to be doodling energetically). Applause was not given after individual group performances, but at the end of the entire lesson, after all groups had presented.

Presentations took on an even more dramatic air next door, in Homeroom 1-2. Their homeroom teacher was Mr. Noda, a tall, enthusiastic 28-year-old language arts teacher with a deep voice that seemed simultaneously commanding and endearing. In his class of 16 boys and 15 girls, several groups had prepared unusual props and visual aids, including puppets, for their presentations. While some students used posters and overhead transparencies as I had seen in the other classes, I found two groups' reports particularly unique and engaging.

The first was by a boy (an anomalous one-person group!) who had performed in the Spring Festival. With remarkable confidence, he demonstrated how he had used a traditional *ogi* fan and played his flute during the festival parade. When explaining details of the festival outlined on his poster, he used a special pointer he had made to resemble a white-gloved hand. The overall effect was polished and entertaining.

The other outstanding presentation in Homeroom 1-2 was performed as a puppet show by a mixed-gender group of five students (three girls and two boys) who had researched a local museum about the history of local weapon manufacturing. As the chime marking the end of 5th period sounded, the five students positioned themselves behind the large metal teacher's desk in the center of the front of the room, squatting down and holding up paper puppets on sticks just above the rim of the desk. They spoke loudly and clearly enough to be heard despite the muffling effect of the desk, performing dialogue between five characters who had discovered many interesting facts during their visit to the local museum, and two historical characters involved in manufacturing the weapons.

The presentation was not only informative, but also extremely cute and engaging. Although school-cleaning time (*souji*) had officially begun partway through the students' presentation, and the accompanying noise of moving desks in other classrooms and students in the hallway was distracting, the puppeteers calmly proceeded with their presentation, while all but two or three of the other students listened intently. Two boys seated near the back even stood up next to their desks in order to see the puppet show more clearly. The end of this final presentation of the day was greeted with general

laughter and applause. The following week, I noticed that the hallways outside the 7th-grade classrooms were decorated with the posters and timelines the students had made for their presentations, clustered together under pink computer-generated placards stating, “7th-grade Integrated Studies.”

APPENDIX G

Notes on Observations of Professional Development Sessions

The following are excerpts from field notes regarding my participant observation in formal professional development sessions I attended during my fieldwork in 2003.

They include the following six activities:

- 1) a combined regional/prefectural conference about daily living and integrated studies courses;
- 2) a prefectural workshop about instructional activities for integrated studies;
- 3) a municipal conference about school research related to human rights education;
- 4) a municipal-ward meeting about strengthening students' communication skills and self-control;
- 5 and 6) school-level staff development meetings about special needs and human rights education.

Activity 1: Regional-Level Professional Development Conference

On a Friday in mid-November 2003, I attended a combined regional and prefectural teacher professional development meeting held at town about 30 minutes south of Hatanaka by train. It was a joint session of the "Sixth Annual Western Region Convention on Elementary School Daily Living Course Research" and the "2003-04 Yamato Prefecture Conference on Elementary School Daily Living Course and Integrated Studies Research," with the shared theme of "Toward a Daily Living Course that Cultivates the Foundations of Children's Independence." As an elementary school principal in Hatanaka had explained to me, "integrated studies" is part of the curriculum from the third grade up, while "daily living" is its counterpart in the first and second grades. Officially, the Regional Convention began with public lessons and debriefing sessions at three local elementary schools in the morning and ended with a closing plenary session scheduled for 1:30-2:00 that afternoon, but it seemed that virtually all of the nearly 300 attendees at that session stayed on for the Prefectural Conference, consisting of a single plenary session held in the same room from 2:00-4:30pm. Therefore, here I will first outline the day-long session as a whole, and then elaborate on

its various parts and how they relate to key instructional and professional development themes.

In the morning, teachers from Yamato Prefecture and other prefectures in the Western Region, as well as local parents, observed daily living course and integrated studies “public lessons” in first- through sixth-grade classrooms at their choice of three elementary schools in the district hosting the joint conference. Then, the visiting teachers gathered at three civic centers located near the schools for a 90-minute debriefing session. There were two debriefing sessions held concurrently at each site, featuring presentations about daily living course lessons by first- and second-grade teachers from around the prefecture, as well as discussion of the morning’s public lesson observations.

In the afternoon, all participants gathered in the gymnasium of one of the elementary schools for lunch and optional “poster sessions” conducted by sixth-graders at that school about their integrated studies investigations of environmental issues. Then, a closing plenary session was held, including remarks from the chair of the Regional Convention, a representative of the Prefectural Board of Education, and the superintendent of the hosting school district. After a five-minute break, the Prefectural Conference was officially opened. It included presentations by three speakers: the chair of the conference’s Research Subcommittee, a teacher’s consultant from the Yamato Prefectural Board of Education, and an official from the Primary/Secondary Education Bureau at MEXT in Tokyo. Throughout the day, I noticed how all activities were firmly focused on examples of actual teaching practice, even at this large-scale, government-sponsored, theoretically “top-down” professional development conference.

From 9:15-10:15am, I observed public lessons at Yama Elementary School. While the first- and second-grade lessons consisted mostly of group activities, the third-through sixth-grade lessons were primarily dedicated to student presentations about issues they had investigated in their integrated studies classes. Like the other participants, I received a stapled packet containing the typed lesson plans, schedule, and classroom map for the morning’s 24 public lessons. Before the lessons actually began, I observed a teacher coaching her fourth-graders, saying it was time to present the “results” (*seika*) they had practiced, reminding them of the tight schedule (five minutes per student), and cautioning them to watch the time and not be too disappointed if they ran out of time to ask a presenter a follow-up question.

In all, I saw dozens of students make presentations, using handmade posters as visual aids and answering questions from audience members, mostly peers from their own or the next grade level. The fourth graders addressed the theme of “Friends with the River,” discussing living things found in and around rivers, while the fifth-graders discussed their experiences with service learning under the grade-level theme of “A Pleasant Town to Live In.” When I saw one of the groups using a wheelchair as a prop and talking about their experiences with service learning, I realized to what degree junior high school curriculum planners were apparently heeding MEXT’s advice to “consider how experiential learning activities have been used in integrated-type studies time at the elementary school level” (MEXT, 1999; my translation), and why the integrated studies curricula I was investigating seemed to be in flux, particularly at the seventh-grade level. If students gained exposure to certain experiential learning activities and topics—such as public speaking and service learning—while still in elementary school, they would require new integrated studies topics and activities to challenge them once they reached

junior high school. With integrated studies introduced between 1998-2002, the 7th graders in Hatanaka had already had one to five years of integrated studies at the elementary level, and so their grade-level curriculum would logically be the first to require alteration to avoid redundancy with previous experiences.

At the Yama Elementary public lesson, each of the homerooms had apparently been split in two for logistic reasons, so homeroom teachers shuttled between the various classrooms where their students were alternately making presentations and asking questions of presenters. It seemed, however, that the students were largely in charge of facilitating the sessions and adhering to the tight schedule. Students in each group were responsible for introducing themselves and their presentation to the audience, and upon finishing, to thank the audience and ask for questions and reactions (kansou). While the degree of public speaking proficiency varied from group to group, I found the overall quality of the presentations impressive, particularly when comparing these 10-12 year-olds' performance to that of my high school students in the U.S.

For example, one group of fifth graders (two boys and two girls) made a very clear and effective presentation about their experience serving as volunteers at a local kindergarten. Three of the four wore their (recommended-but-not-required) school blazers over their street clothes as the group members stood at the chalkboard, two on either side their poster. While one student spoke, clearly and audibly, facing the audience, another student would point to the relevant pictures and text on the poster. The group finished by briefly stating what they would like to do if given future opportunities to volunteer, and then asked the audience for their kansou. Promptly, one boy in the audience stood and told them, "I think you spoke very clearly and well." The group then asked the parents at the back of the room for their kansou, but when none were forthcoming, promptly turned to ask students in the audience for questions about their presentation. Finally, one parent asked the group if they had thought of all the activities they had done with kindergarteners by themselves. One boy answered that the kindergarteners had suggested certain things they wanted to do, and the teachers had helped them choose from among those suggestions. Lastly, the fifth-grade homeroom teacher asked the audience if they had any further kansou before inviting the next group up to the front. None of the groups received applause at the end of their turn; instead, applause was offered to all groups at the very end when the teacher officially wrapped up the presentation session.

As I moved from classroom to classroom, I noticed that there were at least 8-10 parents (mostly women) observing in each room. Some of them had brought their small children along with them. In the hallways, on a desk near each classroom doorway, there was a stack of half-sheets on which observers were invited to leave their kansou by filling out the sheets and returning them to the trays provided. On each sheet was printed the following:

"Thank you for taking part in today's lesson observation. We would like to receive your impressions [kansou] and opinions of today's lessons to inform our future efforts. Please write them below, frankly. (Please include your name and the school name if you would.)"

For a public lesson observation by parents and others, the use of student presentations about concrete experiential learning activities seemed to me particularly apt. Rather than abstract concepts or obscure facts, the content focused on people and places in the local community, and the information was presented by the students themselves, rather than a teacher.

This use of a public lesson observation in conjunction with integrated studies struck me as yet another instance of “recycling” existing special activities and school events into the new integrated studies curriculum. It is but one example of the many instructional strategies I noticed were common to integrated studies curricula at both Yama Elementary School and Hatanaka’s junior high schools. During the public lesson, homerooms were divided into smaller groupings and students from different grade levels served as audience members and presenters in the same room, while teachers helped facilitate presentations by students in other classes in addition to their own homeroom. This is reminiscent of the team-teaching and innovative groupings used in Hatanaka. Taiken was also used, in that student presentations centered on their experiential learning activities, and it was obvious that public speaking had explicitly been made a learning experience in and of itself, one that students had practiced prior to the day’s presentation session. As for kansou, not only were presenters expected to offer their reflections about their learning experiences, but the students and other observers in the audience were also asked to contribute their reflections as a matter of course.

As a whole, the public lessons served as examples of instructional practice for the teacher professional development meeting, but they were not the only examples offered that day. The participants were provided with yet more examples from other schools at the debriefing meetings held immediately after the public lessons that morning. From 10:30am to noon, I took part in one of the “breakout sessions” (*bunkakai*) held in a conference room at a nearby civic center, with the theme, “Having a Conversation about Teaching Practice that Values the Inclusion of People and Things.”

There were 24 teachers (18 women and 6 men) in the audience, seated at long tables in rows facing the head table, at which sat a five-person panel (3 men and 2 women), including three teachers, a professor, and a representative from the Prefectural Board of Education named Mr. Iguchi. Mr. Iguchi, the designated discussant for this breakout session, was also a “teacher’s consultant” in charge of daily living and integrated studies curriculum at the Yamato Prefectural Board of Education. Principals and assistant principals served as discussants in the other breakout sessions.

After brief introductions and an outline of the session agenda, the emcee turned the floor over to the first of two presenters. She was an elementary school teacher in a town near Hatanaka, and gave a Power Point presentation about her 1st-grade daily living course unit called “Lots of Autumn Treasures!” in which her students gathered acorns in a forest behind the school and made various things out of them. The two-page outline of her unit (included in the 44-page booklet each participant received) featured four student drawings and one photograph of their acorn products. At one point, the teacher even played for us a brief recording of a student telling about his experiences during the unit.

After 25 minutes, it was the second presenter’s turn. He was an elementary school teacher in the prefectural capital, an hour away from Hatanaka by train, and his presentation was more low-tech. Using only handouts to supplement the unit outline in the booklet, he spoke about his 2nd-grade class’ daily living course unit called “Let’s Go

Explore—A Trip to Fun Town,” in which they had to take a public bus to a children’s adventure park outside of their city. The two-sided handout included photos of the students in their classroom practicing lining up for, entering, and exiting the bus, as well as handwritten notes from family members detailing their student’s reaction to the experience. Like the first presenter, he closed with a summary of the achievements and remaining issues (*seika to kadai*) of the unit.

The second presentation had taken only about 15 minutes, so at 11:10, the emcee invited questions or comments from the audience, beginning with teachers from the school that had hosted the public lessons that morning. One first-grade teacher from Yama Elementary finally spoke up, saying her class had had a lot of fun with an outdoor activity during that morning’s public lesson, but that it did not compare to what the presenter’s first graders had accomplished with their “autumn treasures” unit. Next, the emcee invited participants from other prefectures to comment. Finally, a male teacher from a neighboring prefecture commented that he had watched a 2nd grade class at Yama Elementary this morning working hard to make some games by themselves, but he wondered if that kind of activity really supported the overall aims of daily living and integrated studies. When the emcee asked for a response to this rather critical comment, the audience was silent, and when he finally called on the first-grade teacher who had spoken up earlier, she remained silent for a full minute before making a rather noncommittal response.

The emcee then changed gears and asked Mr. Iguchi, the discussant, for his initial comments or questions about the presenters’ units. Both teachers responded to his brief comments with more details about instruction and assessment in their units. The female teacher noted that she had conferred with preschool and kindergarten teachers during summer vacation before deciding to build the unit around gathering acorns. In a kansou reflection style, she admitted that she herself was not originally interested in gathering acorns, but as she watched the students figure out they could throw them, make noise with them, crush them, play with them, and so on, she too eventually wanted to gather and make things with the acorns. The male teacher described how he capitalizes on children’s natural motivation to do more and bigger things as they get older—getting 1st-graders to look forward to the annual 2nd-grade outing, and so on. He asked the teachers in attendance if they were enjoying their daily living and integrated studies classes, declaring, “As for me, I’m enjoying myself a lot.”

Around 11:40, Mr. Iguchi took the floor and addressed the assembled group of teachers for the remaining 20 minutes. First, he praised the female teacher’s selection of important key words, like “autumn,” upon which to build her unit goals, and her realistic consideration of the kinds of activities her students could handle that would also accomplish even larger purposes. He commented that teachers often focus too much on the activities and not enough on their overall aims and objectives. Next, Mr. Iguchi made comments about the male teacher’s unit, stating that there seemed to be good articulation between grade levels. Lacking this, he noted, students tend to forget whatever they learned or did, especially in the lower grades. Mr. Iguchi appreciated how the teacher used specific praise and linked it to the students’ future goals, “so the students can aim even higher next time.” He gave a concrete example of how to give specific praise: “Don’t say just, ‘Good job!’, but ‘Good job! Let’s count how many acorns you were able to pick up’.”

Mr. Iguchi offered further tips about linking lessons to students' interests, assessment of student performance, and the importance of student motivation. In closing, he drew from his own experience as a classroom teacher and posed questions to push the teachers' thinking:

"Even if we say "investigate", and the students do investigate, they may not really get it. They may not understand. One time, when I took my students on a bus trip, they mistook "9:25" for "Sept. 25," and totally misunderstood the bus schedule... I believe we'll be doing more and more investigations from now on but...I'd like teachers to think about when and how to have students get motivated and to whom the students want to communicate [that motivation]... The important question now is, "What kinds of experiential activities do I want to use to address these goals?"...and "How can I organize these things to work?""

This debriefing session was rife with examples of teaching practice, including both those from direct observation at Yama Elementary that morning, and secondhand examples shared by Mr. Iguchi and the presenters in spoken and written form. The booklet distributed to all participants included 12 examples of actual units designed and used by the teacher-presenters at schools around the region. Many of the outlines and handouts themselves also included examples of student products and photos of students at work in various activities.

Not surprisingly, the instructional units discussed made use of experiential learning and reflections (such as student self-evaluations and presentations about their experiences). More to my surprise, I noticed that elements taiken and kansou were also present in the debriefing session itself. In the written outlines and verbal descriptions of their units, the teacher-presenters included both empirical evidence related to how well their unit goals had been achieved and personal observations about how they and their students had felt about their experiences during the unit. In addition, the presenters included evaluative statements about what went well and what needed improvement in the future, also a typical element of the now-familiar kansou "formula." Even the comments from the discussant, Mr. Iguchi, involved his personal experiences and contrasts between more and less effective instructional techniques. Participation by members of the audience consisted mostly of comments about personal experiences and observations, rather than questions or references to theory.

During the 90-minute lunch break before the next session of the convention, participants were encouraged to visit the "poster session" being held at one end of the gymnasium. There, several groups of sixth-graders (ranging from 2-6 students per group) were clustered around handmade posters displayed on pegboards. When a potential "audience" approached, the students would launch into their rehearsed presentations about their integrated studies investigations of environmental units.

I visited three of the poster presentations. In one, a group of five boys showed me how they had measured the air quality in various areas around their school by looking at the stripes on pine needles they had gathered—the darker the stripes and more numerous the spots on the needles, they informed me, the more polluted the air is. They showed me the measurements they had recorded in charts and on a large map they had drawn. In

another, a group of four girls explained how they had counted the number of pine trees destroyed by insect infestation in various sections of the forest around their school. They had made a map of the area around their school, using colored stickers to represent the trees, with each section labeled and colored, according to the percentages of dead trees (3% to 43%). Just as I was about to return to my seat, two girls came up and politely asked me to listen to their presentation. Impressed with their confidence and manners, particularly in approaching a foreign visitor, I accepted their invitation. They gave a clear and nicely-illustrated presentation about measuring the pH of dirt samples from around their school grounds. When I asked them questions about it, they were able to respond quite well, rephrasing some of the more technical terms in laymen's language I could understand more easily.

From 1:30 to 2:00pm, the closing plenary session of the Regional Convention was held. Around 300 attendees sat in rows of folding chairs facing the stage at the end of the gymnasium opposite the poster session area. On the stage, a group of five local dignitaries and a panel of four invited speakers sat at two cloth-covered tables, in front of a vertical banner proclaiming the Convention's theme in hand-lettered calligraphy. Placards in front of the four speakers (all men) indicated that they were the convention chair, the assistant superintendent of the Prefectural Board of Education, the superintendent of the local school district hosting the event, and a professor from a university in Osaka.

After initial welcoming remarks, the first speaker thanked the teachers who had opened their classrooms for "wonderful" public lessons that day, and made some comments about the importance of the environmental issues the elementary students were studying. Next, the Prefectural Board of Education representative made brief remarks about the "new subject area" of integrated studies and daily living, alluding to the aims of the reform, using several key phrases from the policy. The local superintendent of schools explained how his district was on the leading edge of a new trend toward a businesslike "management system" for schools, in which "customer service" would play a larger role than ever before in compulsory education. The professor was introduced, along with other special guests, but did not address the crowd, and the session was officially closed.

Five minutes later, the stage had been rearranged, and a new banner unrolled, and the 2003-04 Yamato Prefecture Conference on Elementary School Daily Living Course and Integrated Studies Research officially began. The three speakers for this plenary session, scheduled for 2:00-4:20pm, were now seated at a single table on the left side of the stage. First, Ms. Harano, the chair of the conference's Research Subcommittee gave a Power Point presentation about the elements of a successful daily living course lesson, centered on the conference theme, "Toward a Daily Living Course that Cultivates the Foundations of Children's Independence." An elementary school teacher in a nearby town, she argued that the proper combination of three elements would result in the type of learning required to cultivate children's independence and "zest for living" (*ikiru chikara*): 1) clear objectives; 2) a comfortable setting; and 3) the teacher's eyes and hands guiding students and seizing teachable moments. I noted that these three elements had been included (as "three frames of reference of the research") in a type of template followed by all the unit plans and lesson plans distributed that day. In addition, a Venn diagram of the three intersecting elements appeared in the five-page copy of her address in the unit-plan booklet.

At 2:25, the next speaker came to the podium on the stage. It was Mr. Iguchi, the Prefectural Board of Education official in charge of daily living and integrated studies courses. After thanking the local board of education, teachers, and PTA members from the host schools, he began to share what he had “felt and learned” that day. Mr. Iguchi stated that he had been enthralled by the enthusiasm of the students he observed in the public lessons that morning. He had felt that “breathing room” (*yutori*) for students to move around, explore, and think of things on their own had been apparent in the lessons he observed. It was also apparent, he noted, that experiential learning (*taiken*) was the cornerstone of the daily living course—even mistakes constituted potential opportunities for learning.

True to his earlier declaration about the importance of specific feedback, Mr. Iguchi made comments specific to a 2nd-grade lesson he had observed, in which the students created various games and toys using plastic wrap, and a 1st-grade lesson in which the students were to draw pictures of objects associated with autumn. In the former, the teacher had reinforced, through comments, whatever aspects of the plastic wrap the students found interesting—its transparency, ability to be stretched and rolled into different shapes, and so on. In the latter, the teacher quietly observed students working on their pictures, and refrained from offering advice on how to improve their pictures, instead simply discussing each picture with its creator. In both cases, Mr. Iguchi said, he saw how it was possible for teacher and students to have affective experiences (*kandou*) together. In fact, he asserted, “the teacher has a great responsibility to listen to the students and feel what they are feeling,” and should build lesson objectives on feedback (*hansei*) from the students.

At 2:50, the stage was again rearranged, to make the large screen available for the keynote speaker, Mr. Nomura, a MEXT official and author of several books on integrated studies. A three-page synopsis of his address was included in the unit-plan booklet, along with Ms. Harano’s address (Mr. Iguchi’s remarks, more of an extemporaneous commentary on the day’s lessons, were not included in the pre-printed booklet). Mr. Nomura’s speech, entitled “Teaching and Assessment to Achieve the Aims of the Daily Living Curriculum,” was supplemented by a few slides of children involved in various learning activities outdoors, but was primarily a college-style lecture about the aims of integrated studies and daily living, and qualities teachers must possess to help achieve those aims.

A bespectacled man in his mid-50s, Mr. Nomura spoke clearly and energetically. He first introduced himself and mentioned his latest book on integrated studies. (I later learned that he was the author or co-author of at least 30 books, five of which were published in 2003, on topics related to the new curriculum.) Then he launched into a speech about the need for integrated studies in the 21st century. The main goal, he said, is to revolutionize the whole idea of academic ability (*gakuryoku*). The “zest for living” (*ikiru chikara*) that integrated studies is supposed to foster has cognitive, affective, and physical components. When university department chairs were asked in a survey what kind of citizens were needed in the future, Mr. Nomura said, one of the most frequent responses was people with “logical thinking ability and ability to answer questions.” The problem, he pointed out, is that traditional examinations and so on do not measure such problem-solving ability. Of course, he conceded, students must master the basics—such as reading, writing, and math—but they also need motivation, or they won’t be able to

achieve academic ability in any case. “If you say, we can’t have just activities, we have to have knowledge,” he asserted, “that’s a false dichotomy.”

Mr. Nomura acknowledged that the integrated studies curriculum is a work in progress, and might have to be tweaked or revised as needed. To my surprise, he also confirmed a rumor I had heard from teachers and administrators—that MEXT might break with its tradition of revising the Course of Study once every decade, and might begin revising it more often. He also offered specific examples of student experiences with integrated studies, using a few slides as visual aids.

In one instance, there was a school that had been closed for months after the Great Kobe Earthquake of 1995. When it finally reopened, the school had to decide which subjects to teach first, and some people wanted to start with the core academic classes, because the students had fallen so far behind. Then someone suggested starting with daily living classes, to help students cope with the disaster they had just experienced. In one such class, a student wrote this to the teacher: “Nature brought us the earthquake, but it also brought us spring, right?”

In a more recent episode, Mr. Nomura related that the students at an elementary school in Tokyo’s historic Sumida ward were studying traditions of various neighborhoods in their ward during integrated studies time. One student chose to investigate the famous annual fireworks displays over the Sumida River. That student discovered that the fireworks had been cancelled on six occasions—during the Great Tokyo Earthquake, Pacific War, and so on—thus learning that traditions are not simply static things to be taken for granted, but practices that have survived through various cycles, nearly dying out, and then being revived again.

Finally, Mr. Nomura addressed the types of qualities and practices teachers need to effectively implement daily living and integrated studies courses, writing key words on a whiteboard with a marker and occasionally referring to a slide. He argued that teachers need “educational vision” (*kyouikukan*) and an “educational philosophy” (*kyouiku tetsugaku*) that is consistent with integrated studies aims. They also need insight (*dousatsu*) and perspective (*mitoushi*) when dealing with student questions that may come up during experiential learning activities. Teachers need a certain empathy (*kyoukan*) or resonance (*kyoumei*) with students and their feelings, and the ability to value ineffable/intangible aspects of life. In addition, teachers need the ability to “draw out” (*tsumugidasu*) of students further and deeper information. To illustrate, Mr. Nomura described a teacher who took his class to the same park in the winter as he had in the summer, and heard one of his students say, “The sky was small when we came here last time, but now it’s big.” Rather than simply giving a factual lecture about the changing seasons, he said, a teacher in that situation should further investigate the student’s perception and try to understand where the student is coming from. He also showed another teacher’s written responses to two students’ essays. Though the essays were quite different, the teacher’s response to each was identical, and Mr. Nomura found that problematic. Teachers need to be specific in their feedback to students, he asserted—in advice reminiscent of Mr. Iguchi’s—and there is a need for more research and development of new methods of qualitative assessment appropriate for integrated studies.

In closing, Mr. Nomura reiterated some of the key concepts of daily living and integrated studies—starting with clear goals, developing each child’s individual strengths, letting students try things out for themselves, and so on. Daily living and

integrated studies courses, he concluded, are about raising the next generation, using their “heads, hearts, and bellies.” He predicted that such courses were not only necessary, but would become more and more necessary from now on.

While the back-to-back plenary sessions in the afternoon seemed to place greater emphasis on general educational principles than the example-specific focus of the morning sessions, they still featured a significant amount of examples of instructional practice, particularly in the presentations by the final two speakers. Mr. Iguchi and Mr. Nomura, whose speeches consumed two of the three hours allotted for the afternoon sessions, made reference to specific classroom incidents and teacher behaviors to illustrate or justify the more general principles or admonitions they offered the assembled teachers. Mr. Iguchi mentioned specific instructional techniques he had observed that morning and linked them to the more general advice he provided about effective instruction. Mr. Nomura’s examples derived from teaching practice at other schools in other areas of the country, but again, he provided specific examples of student activities and teacher feedback along with a set of general principles and specific instructions about how to teach integrated studies.

Overall, the greater part of this seven-hour-long regional/prefectural professional development conference was clearly dedicated to observation and discussion of actual teaching practice. It included direct observations of integrated studies/daily living course lessons at various grade levels, formal descriptions and discussions of such lessons at other schools in the region, and allusions to yet other lessons and teacher-student interactions that had occurred at other places and times. Even the 30-minute presentation about the three elements of successful daily living lessons was supported by 16 examples of those elements in the unit and lesson plans included in the conference program booklet distributed to all participants. I found a similar emphasis on teaching practice at other prefectural-level kenshuu meetings I attended. In contrast to the invited dignitaries and keynote speaker featured at the regional/prefectural kenshuu meeting, however, I found at the prefectural professional development sessions an even greater emphasis on the role of classroom teachers as facilitators.

Activity 2: Prefectural-Level Professional Development Activity

One prefectural professional development session I attended took place at the Prefectural Education Center, in a rural area about 45 minutes by train and bus from Hatanaka, on a Tuesday afternoon in late October 2003. Entitled, “Educational Activities to Foster Proactive Learning,” the session was, according to the agenda, intended to “explore effective ways of developing and implementing a curriculum of activities that promote each school’s distinctiveness, centered around ‘integrated-type studies time’ instructional practice.” The seminar, scheduled for 1:30–4:30pm, was open to teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as schools for students with disabilities. I counted 15 participants in the audience.

Virtually all of the three-hour session was focused on examples of teaching practice in integrated studies classes at the various school/grade levels. The first two hours were devoted to presentations by four educators about the integrated studies programs at their schools, and the last hour consisted of small-group discussions about

the programs presented and those at the participants' own schools, followed by reports about those discussions to the whole group.

The four presenters included one representative each from an elementary school, middle school, high school, and school for students with disabilities, in disparate locations around Yamato Prefecture. First, the elementary school teacher gave a Power Point presentation—complete with full-color handouts of his slides and outlines of his school's integrated studies curriculum and goals—about his school's "River Watch" activities. In order to increase student awareness of their community, his school focused their integrated studies themes and activities on the river that flowed through their town, and demarcated six segments of a 58-kilometer route near the river—one segment for each grade level. For the 1st- and 2nd-grade daily living courses, students did "orienteering" and other exploration activities in connection with a theme of "Let's Become Friends With the River." The 3rd- and 4th-grade theme for integrated studies was "Let's Learn How People Downriver Live," and students made visits to the river and a harbor to observe fishermen and others dependent on the river for their livelihood. The theme for 5th- and 6th-graders was "Let's Study the Upriver Area," and students in those grades went hiking in the mountains near a dam and the river's source. The presenter showed video clips of students on walks near the river, and explained that students were encouraged to take photographs of "things they wanted to remember" from those walks and use them in individual portfolios documenting their integrated studies experiences, including interviews and yearly presentations. He emphasized that experiential learning enabled students to move "from impressions to questions"—from reactions to what they had experienced to things they wondered about and wanted to investigate—and the school staff was still working on how to change their program to better meet this goal.

Next, a junior high school teacher made a less high-tech presentation (using handouts with color photograph illustrations, but no Power Point) about how his rural school had chosen to focus their integrated studies activities on the local tradition of growing and harvesting shiitake mushrooms. In order to foster students' "appreciation for nature and the value of life" as well as "the joy of hard work and importance of group effort," the students in all grades cooperate to grow, harvest, and sell the mushrooms. The 8th-graders collect hundreds of logs in which the 7th-graders drill holes and "plant" mushroom spores, while the 9th-grades later harvest thousands of mushrooms, which they sell to the community, donate to the local school lunch center, and use to prepare various dishes themselves in the school's home economics kitchen. In addition to the shiitake mushroom activities, he noted that students at his school also learned how to do interviews, make Power Point presentations, use wheelchairs, and did job shadowing, investigated their community, and took field trips to major cities during integrated studies. Like the previous speaker, this presenter ended his presentation with a recap of the successes (seika) and unresolved issues (kadai) of his school's integrated studies curriculum.

The third presenter was from a school for students with disabilities in the northern part of the prefecture. In another low-tech lecture, she explained the school's curriculum and activities for students of junior high school age, noting that the school had traditionally made use of experiential learning activities (such as cooking, shopping, and camping) and cross-grade-level groupings, since students were often grouped by ability. When grade-level groupings were used, the 7th-graders studied about historical figures

from the local area, the 8th-graders continued this study and went on an overnight camp, and the 9th-graders studied the environment and took a class trip to sites of significant environmental problems. In other cases, day-long school events (such as a cultural festival, or *bunkasai*) focused on the school's integrated studies themes involved students from every grade level. All students took part in some form of *happyou*, or presentations, about what they learned.

The last presenter of the day was the principal of a high school in a mountain town just east of Hatanaka. Using an initially balky Power Point slide show and a single-page handout, he explained that his town was one of two designated by the Prefectural Board of Education to do research on the theme of developing citizens with "rich hearts" (*yutaka na kokoro*), so they focused the high school's integrated studies curriculum on service learning. Beginning in 2002, they incorporated volunteer activities into the 10th-grade curriculum, and then into the 11th-grade curriculum in 2003, with plans to integrate them into the 12th-grade curriculum the following year. The 10th-graders took part in a "service learning walk" in which they hiked 20 kilometers, picking up roadside litter and obtaining refreshments from PTA members stationed along the way. The 11th-graders beautified the small forest area in a public park next to their school, planting trees and conducting fundraisers, as well as taking a class trip to Hokkaido (a northern island with vast national parks). Students were also allowed to work individually or in groups to clean the school's sports facilities, assist at local festivals and hiking events, lead sports activities at a nearby elementary school, and volunteer at homes for the elderly. Afterwards, they were expected to present "experiential learning reports." In closing, the principal noted that his school was still developing their integrated studies curriculum, particularly for the 12th grade, and trying to devise classroom activities to support the various service learning themes.

At 3:15, the facilitator—a Prefectural Education Center staff member—announced a short break, and the breakout discussion session began by 3:30. The attendees and presenters were clustered into three groups—high school (eight people), middle school (five people, including me), and elementary school (six people)—with a discussion leader and a recorder assigned within each group. The junior high school teachers in our group discussed issues of student grouping and assessment, sharing strategies being tried at their schools. After about a half-hour of discussion, the facilitator asked the recorders to share the major points of each group's discussion to the whole group. They did, standing in turn and reading from their notes about how much they had learned in this session, and how difficult qualitative evaluation of student performance was proving to be, and how student internships at local industries might be useful for developing particular skills. Finally, the facilitator asked me to stand and share my impressions (*kansou*) as an international visitor to this professional development seminar, and I commented briefly about the surprising degree of variation between integrated studies curricula at various schools.

The seminar described above is but one of many teacher professional development sessions offered by Yamato Prefecture every year. Like the joint regional-prefectural conference, emphasis on teaching practice and practitioners was a central principal of the seminar. Without any public lessons, this emphasis on cases of actual practice was perhaps less direct, but it seemed even more pronounced than at the joint conference, as there were no "outside" presenters (except my few minutes of comments).

Two hours of the three-hour seminar were devoted to “case study presentations” (so noted on the agenda) by four educators, with the remaining hour almost entirely dedicated to discussion of the cases presented and of programs at the attendees’ own schools. I noted that the elementary school teacher mentioned that his school had been implementing integrated studies activities for about six years, while the high school representative indicated that their program was only a year old, so the inclusion of various school levels at this seminar seemed consistent with MEXT’s staggered implementation schedule and its recommendation to look to schools with longer experience for ideas about implementing integrated studies.

Activity 3: Municipal-Level Professional Development Activity

One of the municipal professional development activities I attended featured public lessons, a public address by an invited speaker, and an educators-only debriefing, but less “audience participation” than the conference and seminar described above. It took place on a Thursday in late October 2003, at Hatanaka Elementary School #1, a feeder school for Minami JHS and, with around 1000 students, one of the largest elementary schools in Yamato Prefecture. Billed a “Human Rights Education Research Presentation Conference,” the event showcased the school’s work with human rights education since their designation the previous year by the Municipal Board of Education to do research on that topic. Mr. Kawasaki, the ever-youthful 60-year-old principal of Minami JHS, accompanied me to the meeting and remarked that his school had been designated one year earlier by the Municipal Board of Education to do a research lesson project on the same topic. Indeed, the integrated studies curricula at every junior high school in Hatanaka included themes related to human rights, peaceful co-existence, and self-expression, all of which were emphasized in the research highlighted at this conference.

The research presentation conference was scheduled for 1:20 – 5:00pm, with the first hour devoted to public lessons (open to parents and educators alike), the second hour to a speech by a social work expert (also attended by parents and educators), and the remaining 90 minutes allocated to a research presentation session by teachers from that school (open only to educators). From 1:20 to 2:15, Mr. Kawasaki and I observed public lessons in math, ethics, and Japanese language arts for 6th-graders, students who would attend Minami JHS the following year. While the dozens of parents (again, mostly mothers) who had come to observe generally stayed in their own child’s homeroom for the duration of a lesson before moving on to, say, a younger child’s homeroom, the two of us moved from classroom to classroom to see as many different kinds of lessons as possible. In the math lesson, a female teacher clad in a casual denim outfit performed a demonstration about proportion, mixing red and blue liquid and asking students to figure out various ways of determining which ratio of red to blue would produce the same purple color she had produced originally. In the ethics class, a young male teacher led a discussion about gender roles portrayed in a story they had just read. In the Japanese language lesson, students worked in groups, writing on large posters summaries of what they had read and taking turns presenting those to the whole class. Mr. Kawasaki, a former math teacher with some elementary school teaching experience, made comments

about how fractions and ratios were the most difficult part of elementary school math, and how stories were often used in both ethics and Japanese class. The difference, he noted, was that in Japanese class, students were to use their hearts/spirits (*kokoro*) to understand how characters in the stories felt, while in ethics class, students were use their *kokoro* to better understand their own thoughts and feelings.

At 2:20, all the observers gathered in the elementary school's spacious new gymnasium. Its polished wood floors and walls gave it a bright and airy look. More than a hundred parents and educators (including principals from other elementary and junior high schools in town) sat in rows of folding chairs facing the large stage, which was decorated with a single miniature pine tree in a stand, and two large flags suspended from the ceiling—the Japanese *hinomaru* national flag and the school's flag. Over the flags was a horizontal banner proclaiming today's "Human Rights Education Research Presentation Conference," and to one side hung a long vertical banner bearing the invited speaker's name and the title of his talk in calligraphy: "Let's Protect Our Community's Children—A Feeling We Get Whenever We See Them."

At 2:30, a representative of the school's PTA announced the start of this segment of the day's event. The principal gave a few words of welcome, noting the need to protect children during "these troubled times" (*taihen kibishii genzai*). Then, the female vice principal (Hatanaka Elementary #1 has two vice principals, due to its large student body) then introduced the speaker, an expert in the field of social work named Mr. Nonaka. The elderly man advanced to the podium on the stage, stopping to bow to the national flag before beginning his talk. Unfortunately, Mr. Nonaka spoke in a halting monotone, and for nearly an hour droned on about the changing family structure in Japan and its effects on student discipline, making repetitious references to the increasing number of students who eat alone or having trouble sleeping, and issuing numerous calls for community members to step up and fill the burgeoning need for children's guidance. By the end of his speech, many of the audience members appeared to have fallen asleep. The male vice principal thanked the speaker, and the female vice principal gave a brief (and much clearer) synopsis of his speech.

At 3:30, parents and community members who had come to observe departed, leaving around 25-30 teachers and administrators to gather in the 2nd-floor multipurpose room for the research presentation session. The carpeted room appeared newly-refurbished and well-equipped with whiteboards, a computer projector and screen, and padded folding chairs, but was noticeably chilly. (During the 14 years since I had first worked there, all of the town's school buildings had converted from using space heaters to some sort of central heating, but fuel costs remained exorbitant and the indoor temperature was often kept cooler than in the Midwestern U.S. schools to which I was accustomed.)

At two tables at the front of the room sat two representatives from the Municipal Board of Education and three representatives from Hatanaka Elementary School #1. Promptly at 3:35, the school principal first made a brief speech, noting again what difficult times we live in, and how challenging it is even for teachers to notice important things about children when interacting with them. Next, the superintendent of the Municipal Board of Education spoke about the importance of human rights, and the need to value self and others and to enhance people's ability to communicate effectively with each other (I later realized that self-expression was a popular way of operationalizing the

rather nebulous concept of “human rights”). Beginning at 3:45, a half-dozen teachers of different grade levels at the school took turns narrating a Power Point presentation about their school’s activities regarding human rights education.

First, a male teacher introduced the overall theme of their project, communication based on both independence (*jiritsu*) and co-existence (*kyousei*). In order to express themselves, he explained, students need both verbal skills and the will to communicate with others. The school staff strove to enhance communication ability through human rights education, special activities, and student guidance (*seito shidou*), each of which was then elaborated on by a different teacher. A female teacher stood and reported that the staff’s efforts in student guidance had focused on raising levels of trust between the members of their school and encouraging appropriate behavior during practical activities that require self-control, such as greetings, daily cleaning time, and conduct in the hallways. Next, a young male teacher explained that human rights education activities included efforts to value each individual student, such as marking students’ birthdays by giving them birthday cards and keeping a monthly record of each student’s citizenship on a “human rights check sheet.” Then, an older female teacher described aspects of special activities that had been used to encourage interpersonal communication, such as student council newsletters and closed-circuit broadcasts, and greetings and cheers for participants in school Sports Day events and so on. Finally, a young female teacher added that the school had also instituted a “morning reading” program three days a week. For 15 minutes at the beginning of the day on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, students read independently or to each other, and once in a while, PTA members would come in and read stories to the students. (I later found such morning reading programs being implemented at various elementary and junior high schools around town.) In closing, the teacher who had started the presentation originally summarized the school’s overall activities, reporting that the staff had altered their customary morning and afternoon homeroom meetings (*asa no kai* and *kaeri no kai*) to include student speeches and reading to each other, and had encouraged self-expression among students in other ways as well.

At 4:30, the Municipal Board of Education member in charge of designated research assignments addressed the assembled group, thanking the teachers for their efforts and pointing out three important aspects of their project. First, the staff had begun from a praiseworthy premise of attempting to build a society in which human rights are respected, and had focused on systematically building students’ communication ability, a skill he found necessary for both human rights and “zest for living” (*ikiru chikara*). Second, the staff had worked to cultivate both trust and tolerance among the students. It is not enough, he noted, to put an idea like “sensitivity to others” in their heads; students must experience it to truly believe in it. Therefore, concrete activities like the human rights check sheets, quiet morning reading sessions, and teacher-student communication through journals were effective. Third, the element of personal challenges was laudable, he said. Having students try unfamiliar and potentially difficult things, such as giving a speech in front of one’s class at 10 years of age, could help build both the independence and interdependence the school was aiming for in their efforts to build communication skills. At 4:45, the female vice principal of the school wrapped up the meeting, thanking all who had participated.

The overall feeling of this professional development activity was more formal and less participative than the others described earlier. While the staff had certainly collaborated with each other—as well as parents and members of the larger community—to investigate human rights education and present the results of that investigation, the presentations were offered with greater finality than the “case studies” at other seminars. I had a sense that this seminar was for a single school to showcase their “final products” after a year-long effort, rather than the “work-in-progress” networking and exchange that had marked other professional development activities. Nevertheless, most of the three-and-a-half-hour conference had been focused on teachers and teaching practice, with one hour of direct observations of classroom practice, another hour of teacher reports about their instructional activities, and 30 minutes of commentary from a local educator and former classroom teacher in the community. While the focus had not been explicitly on either integrated studies or daily living courses, the themes of human rights, co-existence, and self-expression were so prevalent in the integrated studies curricula of Hatanaka schools, I felt it was a good example of a source of teacher learning for instruction related to those themes.

Activity 4: Municipal-Ward-Level Professional Development Activity

Another professional development activity I attended occurred at a level somewhere between school- and municipal-level. It was open to educators from neither all the schools in town nor just a single school, but instead, from a “northern block” of schools in a certain municipal ward encompassing Minami JHS and all its feeder schools—including even preschools and kindergartens, which are not technically part of public, compulsory education. (I learned that in other “blocks” in town, even prefecturally-governed high schools were included in such meetings.) The “Second Annual Northern Block Pre-K Through Ninth Grade Cooperation Exchange Meeting” was held at Minami JHS on a Thursday at the end of October 2003. Like many other professional development activities, the block meeting began with public lessons, and ended with an educators-only discussion session. It was scheduled for 1:35-4:20pm, and centered on two themes described in the agenda as follows: 1) “Establishing Warm Human Relationships—Boosting Students’ Ability to Communicate,” and 2) “Increasing Respect for Rules—Boosting Students’ Self-Control.” Again, the meeting’s focus was not directly on integrated studies per se, but about issues that the curriculum reform was intended to address, including one skill (self-expression) that was plainly emphasized in activities, such as student presentations, used in all junior high school integrated studies courses in Hatanaka. These block meetings occur three times per year, I learned, with teachers required to attend at least one of the debriefing sessions annually, so the professional development activity described below is certainly an example of regular, mandatory kenshuu undergone by the junior high school teachers of integrated studies in Hatanaka.

At the northern block meeting, public lessons were held during 5th period (1:35-2:25) in all 18 homerooms at Minami JHS—five homerooms from each grade level plus three homerooms for special needs students. Virtually every subject area was represented, from math and social studies to art and physical education. The lessons were

open for observation by educators from feeder schools in the same block as Minami JHS, as well as parents and community members, but the number of observers was noticeably lower than at the elementary school public lessons described earlier. Visitors were provided with a two-sided handout including a map of the school and a list of the homeroom class, subject area, and location of each lesson.

I visited a “reduced class size” 8th-grade English lesson being team-taught by a non-native speaker certified teacher from Japan and a native speaker assistant language teacher from the U.S. In the classroom, there were only 16 students (nine boys and seven girls) seated in desks facing the chalkboard, above which hung the requisite placard stating some of the many school goals (see Lewis, 1995; Sato, 2004): “The type of students we strive for: Students who move forward in their learning; students who have consideration for others; students with self-motivation.” Aside from the small class size, the lesson was unremarkable, in terms of both instruction and classroom management, particularly in comparison to the well-rehearsed, “special” research lessons I had observed at the regional conference. By the same token, however, the English lesson at Minami JHS seemed more representative of a “typical” lesson. The Japanese English teacher spent the first 30 minutes of class returning midterm exams to students and discussing them, and then used the last 20 minutes of class to introduce vocabulary with the help of the native speaker teacher. The two teachers did most of the speaking in class, used more English than the students did, and tried to squelch occasional chatting at inappropriate times by some of the students. While I stayed for the duration of the lesson, four other observers shuttled in and out of the classroom.

I found the “exchange meeting” (*kouryuukai*) session held afterwards, from 2:45-4:20, far more interesting than the public lesson had been. By 2:45, 26 teachers from Minami JHS and its feeder schools had gathered in pre-assigned groups of three to six people around six tables in the multipurpose room on the second floor of Minami JHS. At the front of the room, the student guidance director of Minami JHS acted as facilitator, opening the meeting and introducing Mr. Kawasaki, the Minami JHS principal, who made introductory remarks. Mr. Kawasaki welcomed the participants to the block meeting, noting that ideas from the corporate world suggest that schools are well-integrated horizontally (cooperation between two junior high schools in the same area, for instance) but not horizontally (preschool through kindergarten, elementary, and junior high in the same area), so the day’s event was a unique opportunity to consider common challenges and the longitudinal development of students living in this part of the city. After the principal left, the student guidance director rearranged the participants from six groups into five, so there would be 5-6 people per table, and appointed the most senior member of each group to act as that group’s leader. He instructed the groups to discuss the two themes of the meeting (self-expression and self-control), and to report out to the whole group during the final half-hour of the session.

I had been assigned to a group of five, of which Mr. Segawa, the gruff-looking but soft-spoken vice principal of Minami JHS was, at age 50, the most senior member and therefore group leader. He first invited us to share our impressions of the public lessons we had observed, beginning with teachers from schools other than Minami JHS, stating, “In about 10 years, your students will be like this.” An older woman who taught fourth grade at Hatanaka Elementary #1 said she had been pleased that all the students she had encountered as she walked approached the gymnasium had greeted her politely.

A younger woman, a teacher at a nearby kindergarten, made comparisons with her previous observations at Minami JHS, noting that the school had become more “beautiful” since her visit four years earlier, and not just in physical terms. When she had observed cleaning time (*souji*) at Minami JHS previously, it had been primarily the teachers doing all the work, but this time, students were properly engaged in their cleaning tasks, and the hallways appeared very tidy. In the public lesson she had observed that afternoon, there was none of the misbehavior she had witnessed four years ago, such as students wandering out of class into the hallway and so on. When I was asked to make comparisons between the Minami JHS of 14 years ago and the present, I commented that the students seemed much less inhibited about approaching a foreigner like me and speaking to me in English, and this probably had to do with the increased emphasis on English at earlier grade levels, and the greater numbers of foreigners living in Hatanaka than before.

Next, the only other Minami JHS teacher in our group, Mr. Wada, began to offer what turned out to be a series of thoughtful and well-reasoned comments based on both personal observations and research. Mr. Wada, a rugged 45-year-old with unusual reddish hair, had been a physical education and health teacher for 22 years, and had worked at Minami JHS for the past three years. He noted that the Minami JHS students seemed much calmer and more well-behaved than three years earlier. Nevertheless, he admitted, in recent years he had come to rethink “what education should be” and has concluded that there is a need for more research and emphasis on the developmental needs of adolescents in junior high school education.

What should a 15-year-old, Mr. Wada asked, be able to do, say, and think about, and what kinds of experiences (*taiken*) does s/he need? Use of this type of developmental focus is well-established at the kindergarten level, he argued, but is lost as students move up through the grade levels. As teenagers, junior high school students are very concerned about what others think of them, and some of them seem just plain lonely (*samishii*), while others (especially boys) lack certain communication skills and end up resorting to physical violence when they cannot get their point across. Mr. Wada reported to us the results of a survey he had conducted among his students every year for the past five years. When asked, “When are you most relaxed/calm?” about 80% responded that it is when they are lying on their bed and resting; the next most popular answer was when talking with their mother. The fact that most students had not mentioned interacting with friends suggested to Mr. Wada a departure from the customary peer-orientation of adolescents. However, when the same students were asked whether they would let their own children learn solely by computer/internet at home or send them to school, 99% said they would send them to school, which Mr. Wada saw as a sign that the students value and desire interaction with other people, but are perhaps unable to achieve it.

Both the elementary and kindergarten teachers lamented that they can no longer assume their students come to them with certain skills, as they used to be able to. They reported that their students are now spending more time studying English, either during school or in after-school *juku* (cram schools), but are losing familiarity with certain Japanese words and concepts, such as the names of certain trees, or even the word for “cash” (*genkin*, a term with which one 4th-grader apparently seemed utterly unfamiliar). Mr. Wada voiced the opinion that “our culture seems to be changing”—and some parents

are treating their children as if they were pets. Mr. Segawa added that the speed of change in the culture has also increased. He said he had spent 25 of his 28 years as a teacher at the junior high school level, and every year, saw the same kind of students come in as 7th-graders. For the past few years, however, every 7th grade class had been different, and this presents a real challenge for teachers and administrators. Mr. Wada agreed that the students are quite a different breed lately, and offered the example that the other day, five boys who were unable to complete some task in physical education class had been crying openly, and some girls had comforted them, “like grade schoolers.”

All of the educators in my group indicated that they have become aware of situations in which students state that they are going to “play together” (*issho ni asobu*) with other children, and instead end up doing individual activities (like reading a book or playing a computer game) while sitting in the same room (or house) as the others. Mr. Wada, father of two, asked incredulously, “They really believe that’s ‘playing together’?” Mr. Segawa stated that there is no need to glorify the past or think it was perfect, but while politicians attack the “postwar education system,” it is also important for parents to raise their children well. He stated that there are different kinds of education, and that “school education” (*gakkou kyouiku*) and “family education” (*katei kyouiku*) share the same goal—to create people who can stand on their own two feet, and function on their own.

At 3:50, just as our group was launching into a discussion of values (*kachikan*) in relationship to the cultural changes mentioned, the student guidance director announced that it was time for each group to share a synopsis of their discussion. Representing our group, “Group F,” Mr. Segawa reported our conclusion that Minami JHS students have improved their behavior in recent years, but they also seem to have weaker communication skills and less self-direction, always relying on the teacher for help. In an increasingly materialistic society, he added, we must redefine what “richness” really means, and made an allusion to the “richness of spirit” mentioned in the curriculum reform policy (*kokoro no yutakasa*). Group E felt that students now were less likely to offer each other support (during play or learning activities) than in previous years. Group C reported a perceived decrease in students’ communication skills and self-control, with more and more students unable to make friends, or requesting/refusing particular work partners, and with boys and girls having more difficulty working together after the 4th-grade level. Group B lamented the growing number of students (from preschool through junior high) who have poor interpersonal skills (*ningen kankei*), are unable to truly relax (*ochitsukeru*) at home, and have low task-persistence (*gaman*). Two possible solutions, they proposed, might be to give students more problem-solving activities and to give students more “opportunities to fail,” by allowing them to have experiences in which not everything goes as they had expected or hoped. Finally, Group A offered up similar observations about today’s students, and suggested further countermeasures, including letting parents know that “discipline begins at age zero,” and recognizing that while students may need some experience with hardships, they also need praise for what they do right. One member of that group added that task-persistence (*gaman*) has perhaps not been extinguished, but simply redirected; now children are persistent about things—especially things they want—instead of toward situations of human interaction.

Activities 5 and 6: School-Level Professional Development Activities

During my fieldwork, I was able to attend only two school-level formal professional development activities at junior high schools in Hatanaka—a presentation about inclusion of students with disabilities and a seminar on human rights education. In both, there was very little “audience participation” or emphasis on observations of teaching practice, as neither involved in-school research nor research lessons/lesson study. However, there was still an element of focus on teaching practice and practitioners, as facilitators in both cases were current or former classroom teachers, and the content of both presentations included concrete recommendations regarding instructional practice.

The first school-level kenshuu session I attended took place at Kita JHS from 3:10-4:30 on a Wednesday afternoon in late November 2003. Mr. Hashimoto, the Kita JHS principal, had warned me in his frank style that this session would probably be a rather uninteresting “lecture-type” presentation, but I insisted on attending. The invited speaker was a former classroom teacher now working at a municipal board of education in a town about 25 minutes south of Hatanaka by car. He appeared to be in his early 50s and technology-savvy, comfortably using Power Point and handouts of his slides for a talk entitled, “Concerning the Future of Special Needs Education and the Basic Understanding and Support of Children.” True to Mr. Hashimoto’s prediction, the speaker delivered a lecture to the 31 assembled staff members of Kita JHS about students with learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and autism. He argued that the whole school system needs to change to a more inclusive model, in which students with special needs are mainstreamed and receive special support on a “resource room” or “pull-out” basis as needed. The speaker gave some examples and recommendations regarding instructional practice, but much of his talk focused on imparting new information and explaining general principles. Many of the teachers in the audience appeared to have trouble staying focused on the presentation, and several seemed to nod off from time to time. Overall, the session was reminiscent of the one-shot, “talking-head” model of professional development decried in U.S. educational research (see Little, 1993), but its conspicuousness in that regard seemed to make it the exception that proves the rule, suggesting that most kenshuu is far more participatory and practitioner-centered.

The second school-level kenshuu meeting I attended concerned a topic closer to integrated studies per se—human rights education. This meeting took place at Nishi JHS on a Friday afternoon in late November 2003. From 2:00-3:00pm, about 28 members of the Nishi JHS staff, including the principal and vice principal, gathered around a series of long tables arranged to form a large circle in the 2nd-floor multi-purpose room. At the head of the table sat the facilitator, a 48-year-old English teacher at Nishi JHS named Mr. Tamaki, who was also an 8th-grade homeroom teacher and chair of the school’s human rights education committee. In the latter capacity, Mr. Tamaki had attended a prefectural kenshuu activity about human rights education and was going to share what he had learned there with the rest of the school staff. He first distributed a three-page handout he had prepared, outlining 13 key human rights topics of which the Prefectural Board of Education wanted teachers to be aware. All of them were written in the form of slogans, such as “Let’s Elevate Women’s Position in Society,” “Let’s Give People with

Disabilities Full Participation and Equality,” and “Let’s End Prejudice Against People with HIV and Hansen’s Disease.” Mr. Tamaki basically read aloud the bulleted list and its subpoints, pausing occasionally to apologize to his colleagues (in very polite language) for monopolizing the meeting and being the only one to talk. Towards the end of his hour-long presentation, he distributed to everyone a packet of readings for students to read (one page per day) and discuss during afternoon homeroom meetings during the United Nations’ Human Rights Week in early December. In closing, Mr. Tamaki asked the teachers to read through the information and direct any questions about it to the human rights committee members in their grade-level groups. Again, the presentation style was less than scintillating, several attendees seemed to nod off periodically, and there was very little audience participation, but the presentation did include several specific examples of indicators of human rights violations and actual instructional materials to use in homeroom classes. I was struck by a potential benefit of this type of kenshuu—even if the teacher facilitating the meeting was basically simply passing along policy from above, it would probably be more readily accepted coming from a peer than from administrators or a written directive.

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