

How the tentative and suggested Course of Study was compiled in 1947

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This paper refers mainly to the memoir of Joseph C. Trainor who was a staff member of the Education Division of CIE (Civil Information and Education) of the Allied Powers, and focuses on the circumstances under which the Allied Powers played an important role in educational reform in Japan and how the tentative and suggested Course of Study was compiled.

When the first Course of Study was published in March, 1947, the adjectives "tentative" and "suggested" were attached to its title, partly because there was not enough time to make it perfect before its publication, and partly because it was an instruction manual and reference guidebook through which teachers could make a suitable curriculum for their own schools.

Three documents are regarded as having a great influence on the first Course of Study in this paper. One of them is the report of the American Education Mission to Japan. Another one is a brochure titled "Education in Japan" which was published by CIE to help the Education Mission discuss the educational situation in Japan at that time. The third is the report of the Committee of Japanese Educators which was established to cooperate with the American Education Mission.

This paper discussed the main ideas concerning the curriculum which are expressed in these three documents. All of them equally condemned the centralized, nationalistic method of teaching which had been

practiced in Japan before the occupation. They advised that Japan should adopt a child-centered method of teaching, allowing the teachers freedom to compile their own curricula suitable for each school and region.

Current Japanese education in elementary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools is conducted under the regulations prescribed in the Course of Study, or national standards for school curricula. The Course of Study describes the objectives of each subject, its allotted hours per week and the contents which should be taught at schools. Moreover it forms the principal criterion by which the Ministry of Education authorizes the textbooks which must be used at all elementary and secondary level schools. Therefore, it can be said that the Course of Study functions as a nationwide, centralized standard for the school education.

Now teachers, as well as administrators of education in Japan, are in a very difficult situation, similar to that just after the War. However, we can learn a lot from the enthusiasm of the educators at that time while they were compiling the Course of Study for the first time in the history of Japanese education.