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(福井大学教授)

Towards an alternative paradigm for teacher education in Japan

Richard C. Smith

Traditionally, a top-down, transmission model of teacher education has been most influential in Japan. This model has continually reproduced, and has itself reflected a particular view of what teaching involves: the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student. Language teachers have allowed themselves to be defined, and have tended to define themselves with regard to their mastery of various bodies of "academic" knowledge, including most obviously their knowledge of the "code" of the language in question.

Some teachers, however, have placed emphasis on "know-how in" as well as "knowledge about" language, and have come to believe that effective teaching itself involves mastery of a body of practical teaching skills, not simply a "display" of knowledge. This view of teaching as "craft" has not been widely adopted in teacher preparation in Japan (except in the two weeks of "teaching practice"), and is only witnessed occasionally in in-service teacher education, for example in the practice of observation (and intended imitation) of "model lessons." Improvement as a teacher is seen to involve the mastery of practical skills which are best learned from other teachers, and so the dependence of teaching on reception of "academic" knowledge is challenged in this paradigm of teacher education. However, another top-down view of teaching and learning tends to be implicated here, involving "demonstration and imitation" as practised within instruction in traditional Japanese arts and crafts. Teachers identifying with this paradigm tend to judge themselves and other teachers according to their mastery of "model behaviours" intended to develop students' language skills; not surprisingly, student mastery of language skills, in

turn, is itself considered to depend on progressive reduction of error, via imitation of model behaviours which need to be demonstrated by an "expert" teacher.

The two paradigms above emphasize the display and reproduction of pre-determined "knowledge" and "skills," respectively. A third, alternative paradigm may be characterized as emphasizing development of an active, self-directed *attitude* towards learning, with learning itself being defined primarily as a process of personal discovery and construction of meaning. In this perspective, if teachers are to foster positive attitudes towards language use and learning among their own students, they need first to acquire these attitudes for themselves, with regard to their own learning of the creative "art" of teaching. Teacher education may accordingly tend to focus on the fostering of active reflection with regard to the trainee's own experience, on creative planning and implementation of unique, personally and situationally relevant alternatives to current or "received" practice, and on cooperative sharing of ideas with other teachers or student teachers, in a non-hierarchical "workshop-style" atmosphere. If these innovations in teacher education are put into practice, teachers may come to realize not only that self-directed development throughout one's career is possible (and necessary, considering the short duration of teacher preparation, and the limited opportunities for in-service training), but also is a defining feature of the "good teacher," just as an active, self-directed attitude may be seen to define the "good language learner and user."

In conclusion, modes of teacher education inevitably reproduce ways (paradigms) of teaching and learning. If development of creativity, self-direction, reflection, self-confidence, and cooperation are truly to be seen as goals of education in Japan (as, in this rapidly changing social context, many believe they should be), then modes of teacher education need also to reflect these values. With a greater focus in teacher education on development of an autonomous *attitude* (towards the life-long learning of (language) teaching), teachers may become more empowered to develop the knowledge and skills *they* need, in their own situations, for their own and their own students' purposes. (東京外国語大学助教授)