

Integrating Cultural Inclusivity into Social Education in Japan: A Curriculum Framework for the Specialist Training Program

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Abstract—This study examines the alignment between national policy frameworks and localized university curricula in Japanese social education by evaluating a newly developed curriculum in Yokohama City. The curriculum was structured in response to the 2017–2020 national reforms and the introduction of the “social education facilitator (*shakai kyoikushi*)” title. It establishes an educational framework centered on community-based multicultural conviviality, incorporating cultural studies and interpersonal communication. A formative evaluation against the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) guidelines confirms that the program satisfies the statutory mandates for course content and credit allocations. The curriculum addresses diversity by allocating a portion of its core credits to multicultural paradigms, engaging specialized faculty in intercultural communication, and integrating field-based practical training. While the curriculum is in its initial stage of implementation, it provides a pedagogical foundation for developing professionals who facilitate social inclusion, intercultural dialogue, and community development. However, longitudinal assessments are required to evaluate student learning outcomes and refine syllabi based on local socio-cultural dynamics.

Keywords—social education, social education specialist, curriculum design, multicultural conviviality

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Legal and Philosophical Foundations of Social Education in Japan

In the context of the Japanese educational system, “social education (*shakai kyōiku*)” is a distinct legal and pedagogical domain, historically and philosophically distinguished from the formal schooling system. Social education, as defined by the Social Education Act of 1949 (Act No. 207 of 1949), is a legally recognized form of education that is specifically designed for out-of-school youths and adults. This term encompasses a wide range of activities, including physical education and recreational activities [1]. The fundamental philosophy of “social education” is predicated on the realization of a democratic

society through community-based learning, which is traditionally centered around public facilities known as *kōminkan* (citizens’ public halls).

To ensure the professional quality of these activities, the law mandated the appointment of “social education supervisors (*shakai kyōiku shuji*)” within local boards of education [1]. These professionals are entrusted with the responsibility of providing “specialized technical guidance and advice” to community leaders and residents. Historically, the training of these supervisors was heavily centralized, guided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). However, for several decades, the role was institutionalized primarily within the public service framework. As analyzed by Ogawa, this administrative status aligned professional expertise predominantly with municipal government operations, which historically positioned social education supervisors as public administrators rather than multi-sectoral community facilitators [2].

B. The Pre-2017 Curricular Framework: Theoretical Baselines

To comprehensively assess the significance of this reform, it is essential to examine the historical framework of the training curriculum prior to the 2017–2020 transition. According to the previous regulations, the university-based training curriculum for social education supervisors maintained a minimum requirement of 24 credits, though its structural organization evolved significantly over the post-war era. Originally established under the 1951 ministerial ordinance, the curriculum was classified into three distinct clusters: Group A (*Ko-gun*), Group B (*Otsu-gun*), and Group C (*Hei-gun*) [3]. Group A formed the theoretical core, focusing on the legal, historical, and philosophical foundations of social education, while Groups B and C provided administrative and pedagogical methodologies. In response to the growing societal emphasis on lifelong learning, a major structural revision was implemented in 1996.

This reform reorganized the previous tripartite system into four specialized domains: (1) Lifelong Learning and Social Education Principles, (2) Social Education Frameworks and Methodologies, (3) Social Education

Administration and Facilities, and (4) Special Lectures and Seminars [4]. While this 1996 framework enhanced elective flexibility and integrated broader concepts of lifelong learning, the overarching curriculum remained centered on classroom-based lectures and administrative compliance. As the demand for cross-sectoral community engagement increased, the lack of standardized, mandatory field-based practice in this pre-2017 curriculum presented operational challenges for future specialists adapting to evolving local needs [5].

C. The 2017–2020 Reforms: A Paradigm Shift toward “Co-creation”

To address demographic aging, the erosion of local communities, and the increasing necessity for disaster resilience, the administrative model of social education underwent structural revisions. In February 2017, the Central Council for Education released a report titled *The Future of Social Education in the New Era*, which outlined a transition from government-led provision to community-based co-creation [5].

This report led to the amendment of the Ordinance for the Training of Social Education Supervisors (Ministerial Ordinance No. 12, 2018) [6]. A key outcome of this reform was the formal introduction of the “social education facilitator (*shakai kyōikushi*)” title in April 2020. This title, distinct from the conventional “social education supervisor (*shakai kyōiku shuji*)” restricted to public service appointments, serves as a certification for individuals who complete the designated curriculum,

regardless of their employment sector. This initiative aims to integrate social education expertise into various sectors, including NPOs, private corporations, social enterprises, and community organizations [7].

Furthermore, as the credentials for “social education supervisors (*shakai kyōiku shuji*)” and the title of “social education facilitator (*shakai kyōikushi*)” are obtained through the completion of a standardized curriculum, both entities are collectively referred to as the “social education specialist” within the context of this paper.

D. Curricular Transformation: From Pedagogy to Strategic Management

The updated training curriculum, consisting of 24 credits, shifted from a classroom-based theoretical foundation toward a management-oriented approach. This structural transition reflects the expanding role of social education specialists from instructional leaders to community coordinators. A key aspect of this reform was the formal introduction of the Social Education Practicum as a compulsory component of the curriculum, which was previously an elective course. The recent implementation of this mandatory practicum requires students to engage directly with the local community beyond the university classroom. This engagement may take place in various settings, such as *kōminkan*, NPOs, or municipal offices. The objective of this mandatory practicum is to provide students with hands-on, experiential learning opportunities in community coordination.

TABLE I. NATIONAL CURRICULUM STANDARD FOR THE SOCIAL EDUCATION SPECIALIST TRAINING PROGRAM

Course Title	Credits	Objective	Core Content
Introduction to Lifelong Learning	4	To foster an understanding of the essence of lifelong learning and social education.	• Philosophy and policies of lifelong learning • Significance and development of social education • Laws and regulations concerning social education • Roles of Social Education Specialists and leaders
Lifelong Learning Support Theory	4	To acquire the knowledge and skills required for learning support tailored to the diverse characteristics of learners.	• Lifelong learning society (schools, families, communities, etc.) • Educational theories regarding learning support • Effective methods for learning support • Formulation of learning programs
Social Education Management Theory	4	To acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to connect learning outcomes to the resolution of local issues and school-community collaboration, while fostering partnership among diverse stakeholders.	• Practice of participatory learning and facilitation techniques • Social education administration and regional revitalization • Management strategies for administration and facilities • Assessment of learning needs and public relations • Development of human resources in local communities • Evaluation and practical utilization of learning outcomes • Formation of local promotional networks • Management Strategies for Social Education Facilities
Special Lectures on Social Education	8	To cultivate a broad perspective and social awareness required as a Specialist, and to enhance the understanding of specialized topics.	Elective topics linking social education such as Globalization, IT, Aging Society, Multicultural Coexistence, Social Inclusion, Health, Disaster/Crime Prevention, Human Rights, Environment, Career, Poverty, Home Education, Gender Equality, Social Welfare, Special Needs, Culture/Arts, Cultural Properties, Lifelong Sports, Local History, Local Industries, and Volunteer Activities.
Social Education Practicum	1	To practically reinforce the qualities and abilities necessary to fulfill the duties of a Specialist.	• Practical field training and internships at social education facilities, etc.
Social Education Seminar, Practicum, and Advanced Research	3	To cultivate a broad perspective and social awareness required as a Specialist, and to enhance the understanding of specialized topics.	• Seminars aimed at planning social education projects based on specific local issues • Practical training at social education facilities • Advanced research on challenges and issues in social education
Total	24	—	—

The updated framework is structured around four fundamental pillars:

- (1) Foundations of Social Education: Focuses on the philosophical and historical roots of lifelong learning and democratic citizenship.
- (2) Environment of Social Education: Examines the role of institutions (*kōminkan*, libraries, museums) and the necessity of cross-sectoral networking between schools, families, and communities.
- (3) Methods of Social Education: Covers participatory learning design, workshop facilitation, and the critical utilization of ICT in community settings.

Social Education Management: A core subject of the new curriculum, focusing on project design, resource mobilization, evaluation, and multi-stakeholder coordination.

In order to comprehend the concrete operationalization of these four pillars, it is necessary to examine the official ministerial guidelines. According to the notification issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), titled 29 Monka-Sho No. 736: “Enforcement of the Ministerial Ordinance for the Partial Amendment to the Ordinance for the Training of Social Education Supervisors (Notification)”, the current 24-credit system is formalized into the specific curriculum components presented in Table I [8].

This highly structured, official framework demonstrates how MEXT intended to balance foundational theories with practical applications. The strategic distribution of credits—allocating eight credits to “Special Lectures” and introducing the mandatory “Social Education Practicum”—clearly indicates a legislative intent to diversify the competencies of future specialists. By providing an explicit list of elective subjects within Table I, the national guidelines empower universities to select specific social issues, such as multicultural coexistence or disaster prevention, that are aligned with contemporary challenges.

The “Management” component constitutes the core of the new curriculum, which requires students to cultivate the capacity to “link” disparate local resources to address specific social issues [9]. As Matsuda [10] conceptualizes, contemporary facilitators are expected to function as “community designers”, who skillfully translate latent local needs into proactive learning opportunities. This role has become increasingly vital as the Japanese government has promoted the “100-Year Life Society” policy, where lifelong learning is positioned as a primary tool for social inclusion and economic vitality.

Moreover, the reform reflects a broader international trend in adult education. The UNESCO Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) has frequently emphasized the pivotal role of adult learning is accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in cultivating social cohesion and fostering active citizenship. In Japan, the social education specialist is regarded as the local agent of these global goals [11]. By decoupling the qualification from the civil

service, MEXT explicitly intended to “visualize” the skills of community coordinators, thereby allowing their expertise to circulate in the labor market and voluntary sectors [12].

Nevertheless, the professionalization of the social education specialist also faces considerable challenges. Preliminary research suggests that while the name of the qualification has changed, the actual content of university lectures often remains anchored in conventional frameworks [13]. A persistent tension exists between the “standardized” national curriculum and the “unstandardized” reality of local community work.

E. The Gap in Context-Specific Curriculum Development

Despite the implementation of national reforms and the theoretical shift toward management, a critical gap remains in the practical implementation of training curricula. While the national curriculum establishes a standardized framework, the practical implementation of social education is profoundly influenced by the distinct characteristics of the local environment, including its historical background, demographic composition, and socio-cultural tensions.

The duties of social education supervisors and social education facilitators are heavily influenced by the culture and context of the local community. However, there is a paucity of examples of social education supervisor training curricula that reflect the cultural context of the local community. Existing examples include programs that integrate local history or specific regional revitalization needs; however, these constitute exceptions rather than the prevailing norm. In many cases, the subject of “Management” is taught as a generic set of administrative skills, with little to no attention paid to addressing the unique communication styles and power dynamics inherent in diverse community structures.

This absence of context-sensitivity is especially problematic in urban areas marked by high mobility and increasing cultural diversity. Standardized curricula may not fully encompass the nuances required for “multicultural conviviality”, which has become a central challenge for contemporary Japanese society. Furthermore, conventional training programs often underemphasize the communicative and cultural dimensions necessary for facilitating day-to-day interactions in diverse areas.

In light of this situation, the purpose of this study is to develop a curriculum for training social education supervisors and social education specialists who will be responsible for a multicultural society, specifically at a university located in Yokohama City, where multicultural conviviality is advancing.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to develop a social education specialist training curriculum for the recently established training program. The program’s objective is to cultivate professionals who support diverse learning and

coexistence in local communities. The study will also verify the curriculum's validity.

Prospective students who will be enrolled in the curriculum are located in Yokohama City, an urban area distinguished by its progressive multiculturalism. The city has implemented initiatives aimed at fostering the development of human resources that function as cultural intermediaries between foreign residents and local communities. Additionally, it has created learning environments that prioritize diversity and inclusivity. The curriculum aims to cultivate competencies for community coexistence and dialogue tailored to this urban environment. The university's objective through this initiative is to cultivate future social education specialists and facilitators. These individuals will be equipped to methodically examine the theoretical underpinnings and practical applications of social education. Additionally, they will be empowered to collaboratively design learning experiences with local communities, thereby contributing to human and community development grounded in multicultural coexistence. The establishment of this curriculum was accompanied by the formulation of a process that complies with the recent amendments to the Regulations for the Training of Social Education Specialists.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRICULUM

In accordance with the primary purpose of this research, a comprehensive curriculum was designed and developed for the social education specialist training program, with a dedicated institutional focus on fostering community-based multicultural conviviality. The curriculum aims to provide future social education specialists with the comprehensive theoretical knowledge

and practical skills necessary to promote inclusive and harmonious community development in an increasingly globalized society. In the formulation and design of this curriculum systematically, particular attention was paid to the following four critical imperatives:

(1) Compliance with statutory frameworks: The curriculum's structural architecture, including its specific course content, credit allocation, and the distinction between required and elective courses, was aligned with the legal requirements under the National Ministry Guidelines for the Social Education Specialist Training Program (*Shakai Kyōiku Shuji Kōshu-tō Kitei*). This approach is designed to ensure comprehensive institutional compliance and rigorous quality assurance.

(2) Strategic integration and visibility of multicultural themes: Approximately half of the mandatory core curriculum was intentionally dedicated to subjects focusing on multicultural paradigms to substantially enrich students' engagement with community-based multicultural coexistence. Furthermore, the term "multicultural" was deliberately incorporated into official course titles, thereby serving as an explicit indication of the program's core pedagogical focus.

(3) Interdisciplinary course configuration: A strategically curated cluster of foundational courses was systematically positioned within the curriculum to provide a multi-layered intellectual framework for understanding multicultural conviviality. These courses focus on the critical intersections of "Multicultural Coexistence and Social Education", "Internationalization and Social Education", and "Social Inclusion and Social Education". This approach facilitates a comprehensive examination of the diverse community dynamics by connecting administrative standards with intercultural communication and community arts.

TABLE II. PROPOSED SOCIAL EDUCATION SPECIALIST TRAINING CURRICULUM WITH A MULTICULTURAL FOCUS

Legal Course Title	Required Credits	University Course Title	Requirement Type	Credits
Introduction to Lifelong Learning	4	Introduction to Lifelong Learning	Compulsory	2
		Introduction to Social Education	Compulsory	2
Lifelong Learning Support Theory	4	Lifelong Learning Support Theory	Compulsory	2
		Multicultural Lifelong Learning Support Theory	Compulsory	2
Social Education Management Theory	4	Social Education Management Theory	Compulsory	2
		Multicultural Social Education Management Theory	Compulsory	2
Special Lectures on Social Education	8	Introduction to Multicultural Communication	Elective	2
		Multicultural Coexistence Theory	Elective	2
		International Exchange Theory	Elective	2
		Introduction to International Cooperation & Development	Elective	2
		Education in the Global Era	Elective	2
		Hospitality Studies	Elective	2
		Education and Society	Elective	2
		Art and Communication Seminar	Elective	2
		Multicultural Society and Sports	Elective	2
Social Education Practicum	1	Social Education Practicum	Compulsory	2
Social Education Seminar, Practicum, and Advanced Research	3		Compulsory	
			Compulsory	
Total	24	Total		24

(4) Deployment of specialized faculty: To ensure academic rigor and effectively translate theory into

practice, the program strategically deploys faculty members with high levels of expertise in relevant contemporary fields. These include specialists in multicultural education, intercultural communication, international development, and global cooperation. This approach is designed to ensure that students receive instruction of a sophisticated and evidence-based nature.

Table II outlines the structure of the proposed curriculum and its corresponding credit allocation.

In conclusion, the definitive strength of the developed curriculum lies in its integration of statutory compliance and a contemporary, in-depth investigation of multicultural coexistence. While adhering strictly to mandated course content, total credit requirements, and the distinction between required and elective courses to ensure institutional validity, the curriculum strategically embeds a focus on diversity. By allocating half of the required credits to multicultural paradigms, explicitly labeling course titles, establishing an interdisciplinary core, and employing an expert faculty, this curriculum surpasses the scope of a mere credentialing course. It provides a solid foundation for future social education specialists to promote inclusive and harmonious

community development in an increasingly globalized society.

IV. FORMATIVE CURRICULUM EVALUATION

A formative evaluation was systematically conducted to ascertain the validity and structural compliance of the proposed curriculum for the social education specialist training program. The evaluation's primary objective was to ascertain the degree to which the recently formulated curriculum aligns with the structural and substantive criteria stipulated by national regulations. In particular, the course configurations and pedagogical frameworks were examined against two sets of guidelines: the National Ministry Guidelines for the Social Education Specialist Training Program and the statutory directives outlined in the "Enforcement of the Ministerial Ordinance for the Partial Amendment to the Ordinance for the Training of Social Education Specialists (Notification)". The primary objective of this formative inquiry was to ensure that all mandatory instructional contents and core competencies legally required by the ministry were comprehensively embedded within the syllabus design.

TABLE III. FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF THE PROPOSED SOCIAL EDUCATION SPECIALIST TRAINING CURRICULUM

Legal Course Title	Core Content	Corresponding University Course Title	Relevant Sessions
Introduction to Lifelong Learning	• Philosophy and policies of lifelong learning	Introduction to Lifelong Learning	2, 4
		Introduction to Social Education	2
	• Significance and development of social education	Introduction to Lifelong Learning	3
		Introduction to Social Education	1
	• Laws and regulations concerning social education	Introduction to Lifelong Learning	4
Lifelong Learning Support Theory	• Roles of Social Education Specialists and leaders	Introduction to Lifelong Learning	5
	• Lifelong learning society (schools, families, communities, etc.)	Introduction to Lifelong Learning	8–12
		Lifelong Learning Support Theory	1
	• Educational theories regarding learning support	Multicultural Lifelong Learning Support Theory	1
	• Effective methods for learning support	Lifelong Learning Support Theory	9–13
Social Education Management Theory	• Formulation of learning programs	Multicultural Lifelong Learning Support Theory	2, 3
	• Practice of participatory learning and facilitation techniques	Multicultural Lifelong Learning Support Theory	6–8
	• Social education administration and regional revitalization	Social Education Management Theory	4–11
	• Management strategies for administration and facilities	Social Education Management Theory	1
	• Assessment of learning needs and public relations	Social Education Management Theory	2
Special Lectures on Social Education	• Development of human resources in local communities	Multicultural Social Education Management Theory	4–6, 11, 12
	• Evaluation and practical utilization of learning outcomes	Social Education Management Theory	13, 14
	• Formation of local promotional networks	Multicultural Social Education Management Theory	1–4, 10–13
	• Management Strategies for Social Education Facilities	Multicultural Social Education Management Theory	3, 6, 8
	• Multicultural Coexistence and Social Education	Introduction to Multicultural Communication	
Social Education Practicum		Multicultural Coexistence Theory	
		International Exchange Studies	
	• Globalization and Social Education	Introduction to International Cooperation and Development	
	• Local Industries and Social Education	Education in the Global Era	
	• Social inclusion and Social Education	Hospitality Studies	
Social Education Seminar, Practicum, and Advanced Research	• Culture/Arts and Social Education	Education and Society	
	• Lifelong Sports and Social Education	Art and Communication Seminar	
	• Practical field training and internships at social education facilities, etc.	Multicultural Society and Sports	
	• Seminars aimed at planning social education projects based on specific local issues	Social Education Practicum	6–26
	• Practical training at social education facilities	Social Education Seminar	11–13
	• Advanced research on challenges and issues in social education	Social Education Practicum	6–26
		Social Education Seminar	1–10

Table III summarizes the formative evaluation results, assessing the proposed curriculum's alignment with national ministry guidelines and statutory directives.

The results of the formative evaluation demonstrated that the proposed curriculum is in full compliance with the statutory mandates, establishing all legally required subjects and thoroughly covering the comprehensive instructional contents prescribed by national law. Furthermore, the evaluation indicated that the curriculum is strategically optimized to function as a highly practical training program tailored to contemporary regional demands. In Yokohama City, an urban area characterized by rapid globalization and a continually growing foreign-national population, the advancement of intercultural coexistence has become a critical administrative and social priority. The proposed curriculum established a pedagogical framework designed to cultivate social education specialists. This framework is designed to cultivate social education specialists who possess the specific professional competencies required to actively facilitate and sustain community-based multicultural conviviality within such diverse municipal environments.

V. DISCUSSION

The structural transition of the social education training curriculum from an administrative framework to a management-oriented model reflects shifting demographic and sociological realities in Japan. The formative evaluation conducted in this study demonstrates that it is methodologically feasible to balance national statutory requirements with context-specific, localized pedagogical demands. While the national curriculum standards established by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) provide a uniform baseline for quality assurance, they inherently possess a degree of abstraction when implemented at the municipal level. The Special Lectures cluster, with its inherent flexibility, has been utilized to systematically divide core competencies into discrete, multicultural-focused subjects. This has led to the establishment of a framework that translates localized urban challenges into clear instructional objectives.

The localization of the curriculum within Yokohama City serves as a case study for urban social education. In an environment characterized by increasing cultural diversity and population mobility, the role of the social education supervisor is evolving from conventional administrative management toward multi-sectoral coordination. The results suggest that future specialists are expected to function as coordinators who leverage community learning to facilitate interaction between foreign-national residents and local communities. The curriculum design features the explicit incorporation of the term multicultural into compulsory course titles and the structural integration of fields such as intercultural communication, international cooperation, and social

inclusion. This shift in educational focus, from passive administrative compliance to proactive, community-based co-creation, is a notable feature of the curriculum. This interdisciplinary approach directly aligns the professionalization of social education facilitators with broader international benchmarks, particularly the UNESCO Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) regarding social conviviality and active citizenship.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study successfully developed and verified a novel curriculum for the Social Education Specialist Training Program, tailored explicitly to the contemporary demands of a multicultural society within Yokohama City. A comprehensive formative evaluation was conducted, the results of which demonstrated that the proposed curriculum met all national statutory mandates, included the legally required subjects, and thoroughly covered the instructional contents prescribed by the 2017-2020 national reforms.

The evaluation indicated that the curriculum effectively connects administrative training with context-sensitive local practice. A significant portion of the mandatory core credits is allocated to multicultural paradigms, and a field-based practicum is in place, thereby establishing a pedagogical foundation. The developed framework is structured to cultivate social education specialists with the competencies required to facilitate community-based multicultural conviviality within local municipal environments.

Although the validity and structural compliance of the developed curriculum have been verified through this initial formative evaluation, several limitations remain to be addressed in future research. As the implementation of this newly designed educational program is still in its nascent stages, the current findings are primarily limited to syllabus architecture and structural mapping rather than longitudinal pedagogical outcomes. Consequently, it is imperative to undertake additional ongoing formative and summative evaluations based on empirical data, encompassing actual student learning outcomes, academic achievements, and real-time institutional operational conditions.

In particular, future research must implement multi-faceted evaluative measures to determine whether the curriculum successfully fosters human resources capable of achieving the core programmatic objective: the cultivation of social education specialists who can effectively promote community-based multicultural coexistence. This will necessitate the systematic collection of qualitative and quantitative feedback from various stakeholders, including students, faculty members, and hosting field institutions such as *kōminkan* and NPOs. In light of these empirical findings, it is imperative to undertake systematic and continuous refinements to both

the overall curriculum structure and the individual course syllabi. These refinements are essential for adapting to the evolving socio-cultural dynamics of the local community.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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