PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences
ISSN 2454-5899

Michi Ann Saki, 2018

Volume 4 Issue 2, pp. 1763-1784

Date of Publication: 2nd November, 2018

DOI-https://dx.doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2018.42.17631784

This paper can be cited as: Saki, M. A. (2018). Schooling Diversity: Newcomer Immigrant Youth, Education and Learning Support in Japan. PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences, 4(2), 1763-1784.

SCHOOLING DIVERSITY: NEWCOMER IMMIGRANT YOUTH, EDUCATION AND LEARNING SUPPORT IN JAPAN

Michi Ann Saki
Assistant Professor, Department of English, Faculty of Culture and Representation, Doshisha Women's College of Liberal Arts, Kyoto
msaki@dwc.doshisha.ac.jp

Abstract

This initial research study briefly examined the experiences of ethnic minority youth and their families regarding their education in public schools in Kyoto, Japan, as well as the trends and challenges for both local governmental and non-governmental support organizations. This paper aims to further increase awareness about some of the experiences of ethnic diversity and accessibility of language support in Kyoto. This brief study aims to point out the trends of ethnic minority education, the current status of learning support services and the main reasons why the improvement of such support services for the new generation ethnic minority youth in Japan is urgently needed.

Keywords

Newcomer Immigrant Youth, Diversity, Education, Public Schooling, Language Support, Community

1. Introduction

An ever-growing multiethnic population in Japan creates many challenges for these new multicultural families in the present state of Japanese society. One of the biggest challenges for their children is their education (Tsuneyoshi, 2010; June, Fujita, Kaiya, Gerald, 2010; Yamamoto & Li, 2012; DeKoker, 2014). With a growing multicultural population, the role of education in Japan needs to shift from providing education to accommodate an exclusive "so-called" homogenous society to a system of education where it can meet the complex and sensitive needs of ethnic minority youth. Japan's education system is due for a revamping to ensure the academic success of this next generation and the survival of Japan as a leading economic and industrial nation.

Kyoto is internationally well known as being one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world and has been receiving wider attention as an important hub for cutting-edge academic research, the Arts and entrepreneurship, as well as being known for its safe and quiet environment (Kyoto Research Park website, 2016; Kyoto Chamber of Commerce and Industry pamphlet, 2008). As a result of its popularity, the prefecture has experienced a drastic growth in immigrants - foreigners coming to live long-term in Kyoto together with their families. The majority of their children are enrolled in the local public schools. Throughout the past 25 years, research on ethnic minority youth (termed in Japanese as *"Gaikoku ni roots o motsu jidou seito",* or in English, "school-age children with ethnic roots abroad") has been conducted in the Kansai region, particularly in prefectures such as Osaka, Kobe and Shiga, which have dense populations of newcomer immigrant youth (Ishikida, 2005, Shimizu & Bradley, 2014, Dimitrova, R. et al.,2014, Douglas, M. et al.,2015). As for the newcomer immigrant youth population in Kyoto, however, are sporadic and are few in comparison. With such low numbers spread out all over Kyoto Prefecture, limited assistance is offered by the prefecture and city governmental bodies for desperately needed educational and cultural support for these children and their families. Ethnic minority youth and their families in Kyoto therefore mostly rely on support from grass-root level organizations, who often lack human resources and funding. The purpose of this initial research study is to briefly shed light on a few of the current issues concerning public schooling and educational needs of ethnic minority youth in Kyoto Prefecture. This paper is not intended to cover all issues of every category child who is considered an ethnic minority in Kyoto. Rather, it examines some of the personal and individual voices of the families

of ethnic minority children and the support organizations concerning education and learning support.

1.1 Research Questions

In particular, this initial study seeks to examine with asking the following questions:

1) How are ethnic minority children learning at Japanese public schools in Kyoto?

2) What are the trends and challenges of public schools, learning support teachers and governmental/non-governmental organizations for support ethnic minority youth?

3) What types of learning support services and education path guidance are readily accessible to ethnic minority youth and their families in Kyoto?

1.2 Purpose of the study

It is the intention of the author to continue conducting research in order to provide a resource for public schools, educational institutions, boards of education and other local governmental bodies in helping them to understand more about the Japan's growing multicultural population and encourage them to implement and develop systems to support both the learning and social needs of the new super-diverse generation of youth. The aim of this research is to increase awareness about social justice and equity in education in Japan and to shed light on why the reform of Japan's education policies and systems is so urgently needed.

2. Literature Review

It has been only in recent months that Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe has announced his plans to reform the immigration system in order to allow more "professional and skilled" foreign workers to enter Japan and "for eligible individuals to obtain permanent residency", in the attempt to solve the country's labor shortages. (Yoshida, 2018, *The Japan Times*). According to 2017 statistics, there are approximately 56,948 foreign residents in Kyoto Prefecture, (Statistics, Office of International Affairs, Kyoto City, 2017). With the growing number of foreigners who have decided to make Kyoto their long-term home in working and raise families, the issue of where and how they children will receive education is a major concern for parents.

2.1 Newcomer immigrant youth

Like their immigrant parents, the new generation of immigrant children are from highly diverse origins and socioeconomic backgrounds. 'Their economic situations, educational

attainment and health will shape their own future while significantly influencing the futures of their host countries' (Zhou & Bankston, 2016, p.1). As for Japan, its national minority populations which were seen as "invisible" many decades ago are now becoming visible with increased ethnic diversity being more evident within our communities (Lee, Murphy-Shigematsu, Befu, 2007, Graburn, 2010, Kao, 2013). Other than the category of newcomer immigrant youth who were born and partly raised abroad, Murphy-Shigematsu (2006), categorizes ethnic minority youth in various groups (but not limited to these particular categories): 1) children who hold more than one passport with dual or multiple nationalities; 2) children who are native to Japan but legally are a national of another country or foreigners in Japan 3) Nikkeijin of South America (p.136). In 1990, the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act was revised in 1990, which allowed younger generation Nikkeijin to take unskilled worked legally in Japan. This resulted in a visible increase in the number of South Americans and other identifiable types of foreign nationals such as foreign spouses of Japanese and children of international marriages.

2.2 Enrollment of ethnic minority youth in Japanese public schools

It is important to note that foreign children do not have the same rights to receive education as Japanese citizens. As explained by Befu (2010), parents of mainstream Japanese students have the legal obligation to send their children to school and school has the legal duty to educate them. However, in the case of foreign minorities, the government assumes no such obligation and parents have no legal obligation to send their children to school in order to educate them. Because of this difference, while schools are serious about educating Japanese children, foreign students tend to be neglected. Foreign students are much more likely to be absent for this reason (p.191-192). The educational issues these newcomers face are different from the other ethnic minority children of Japan such as Burakumin, Zainichi Korean, Chinese and Nikkei-Brazilian. These minority groups are each differentially impacted in the educational process in Japan as far as various social and political issues are concerned. 'The sociopolitical axis, as related to the educational process, includes human rights, civil rights, citizenship, equity/equality, multiethnicity, multi-cultural education, and finally school/classroom disorder (absenteeism and bullying)' (Befu, 2010, p.191). Many Japanese tend to assume that if one looks Japanese, one should know and understand how to behave, communicate and think in Japanese. For example, the Nikkei children from Latin America, as Befu (2010) points out are often asked by Japanese classmates why they cannot speak Japanese. Their inability is assumed to be due to their low

intelligence, rather than insufficient enculturation, resulting in these native Japanese children looking down on the Latin Japanese children (Seiyaa & Higa,2007, cited by Befu 2010, p. 192). There is more ignorance than just mere misunderstanding about the certain types communication abilities of immigrant minority youth in terms of learning in the classroom. Kojima (2009) discusses the two major types of communicative language ability, BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency), and while the time it takes someone to attain BICS skills is usually between 1-2 years, the time it takes to attain CALP skills is between 5-7 years. It is therefore logical to assume that acquiring the skill to learn in the classroom of a Japanese school takes much time and effort (p.21).

Befu (2010) states that 'at the basis of the bullying of foreign children by Japanese children, and in fact at the basis of the Japanese exclusion of foreigners is the habitus of homogeneity - an ethnocentric disposition to exclude anyone other than ethnic Japanese. Thus, foreign language speakers tend to be forced to speak Japanese but are made to feel inferior for their inability to speak Japanese well and for speaking a foreign language in hegemonic culture of Japan' (p.192). According to Okubo (2010), who has conducted extensive research on Chinese and Vietnamese newcomer youth in a Buraku community argues that 'the differential treatment of minority groups which results from the homogenization of old minorities and the teachers' belief in retaining and nurturing the ethnic identity of "newcomer" children is further complicated by the cultures of teachers and schools in Japan, and the attitude of the dominant Japanese toward foreigners. Japanese teachers in general have a tendency to treat a child as an individual without considering his or her background, and the same is true for dealing with a minority child. 'The child is not considered as being a member of the disadvantaged groups in society… they are reluctant to associate any problems with a child's social and economic background' (p.181-183). Miyajima (2014) discovered in his findings from interviews with parents of ethnic minority youth that many parents expressed that though their children seem to be given general basic rights at the public schools, there are discrepancies in its actual content. 'At Japanese schools, student's opinions are not heard and they are marginalized…'(p.22). Though the current internationalisation trends of education has acknowledged these children's ethnic identity and native language to a certain extent, they have been deprived of the options to either live like other Japanese or to live "in between" Japanese and their other ethnic background(s). They are treated and marked as the "other, which at times has negative connotations in Japan.

2.3 Communitarianism and egalitarianism

Tsuneyoshi (2011) explains that ‘inside schools, the newcomers are a visible challenge to the assumption of homogeneity. ... especially at the primary school level, with its ideology of togetherness in which Tsuneyoshi labels collective communitarianism (issei kyodotai shugi) and its stress on doing things together cooperatively, while at the same time, helps to sustain an image of homogeneity. For example, clothing and belongings that are matched with each other mask social class and cultural differences between children. Whole-class teaching is the norm. The newcomer visibly challenges this assumption in a manner that Japanese educators could not fail to notice (p.168)’. Shimizu & Shimizu (2006) argue that for the invisible newcomer minority youth, one cause of their "invisibility" may be due to the fact that school teachers are grouping them into a fixed cultural background, tagging them as belonging to a heterogeneous group, and therefore the teacher not acknowledging them, nor being able to understand the true cultural identity of these children. Due to these minority children being grouped into the mainstream Japanese student category, the particular problems of these children at school are blamed on "the family background" , "what is happening at home" or "the child's lack of academic effort or concentration (shameful, unable to concentrate, etc.) or personality.” As a result, they are labeled as "problem children" (p.77). According to Ikeyoshi (1996, cited by Shimizu and Shimizu 2006) it is because of the public schools’ doctrine of a "formal egalitarianism " (keishikiteki byoudo shugi), which is a dominating characteristic of Japan's public school culture (strict rules and regulation, no exceptions for individuality) that causes the individualistic and unique identities of minority youth to be ignored, and therefore be thrown into the "heterogeneous group" to survive on their own. In the interviewing of parents of immigrant youth, conducted by Shimizu, Yamamoto and Kaji (2013), they received feedback from two parents in particular who expressed their discontent with the public schools in what they thought about the school’s doctrine of a formal egalitarianism” and how it affected their children at the Japanese school: One parent said, “due to the schools principle of ‘formal egalitarianism’, the multicultural background of my child is ignored and dismissed.” Another parent expressed that their child was forced to become monolingual and become Japanese due to the schools’ principles of egalitarianism. Another parent commented that despite her child not having adequate ability in Japanese, the child was not assisted, ignored and just grouped in with Japanese mainstream students in the

classroom, with no offering of additional learning assistance to tend to his specific needs (pp.136-137).

2.4 Japanese-as a-Second-Language education at public schools

The Ministry of Education started to compile data from 1991 on "foreign pupils and children who need Japanese language instruction", one year after the revised immigration law. The definition of a student who required instruction in the Japanese language is as follows: "Pupils or students who have not mastered everyday conversation, or who can manage everyday conversation, but who lack terms necessary for study at the grade level, and thus have trouble participating in learning activities, and who require instruction in the Japanese language"(MEXT, 2009 cited by Murphy-Shigematsu, p.137, Gordon, 2014, Willis & Rappleye, 2011). Gottlieb (2012) argues that the quality of Japanese as a Second Language (JSL) education provided in public schools is low or even non-existent. Without a recognized tradition of multilingualism and without the teaching resources needed in terms of staff and materials, much remains to be done. There are a lack of specialist Japanese-language teachers in schools, few to zero teacher training courses for JSL teachers offered at universities, no government-endorsed scales for measuring the Japanese-language teachers in schools, no government-endorsed scales for measuring the Japanese-language proficiency of JSL students and no overarching language educational policy which takes into account the needs of both JSL and native Japanese students. It is up to each local Board of Education to decide what to offer its non-Japanese students in the way of support, and those schools which to make substantial provision for such students often have to rely on a considerable degree of community support. According to a 2017 survey conducted by the Japanese Ministry of Education, 'the number of non-Japanese children at public schools who are lacking in Japanese language skills and who need remedial lessons hit a record of 34,335. The number, up 17.6 percent from the previous biennial survey conducted in 2014, accounted for 42.9 percent of the 80,119 non-Japanese children at public elementary schools, high schools and other public facilities across Japan. Among most of those of the children with difficulties in the Japanese language were those holding Japanese citizenship but who were having difficulty speaking the language, either one or both parents are non-Japanese or they had lived overseas and recently moved back to Japan.' (Yoshida, 2017). While public schools in prefectures such as Aichi, Shizuoka, Tokyo and have a large number of foreign children with poor Japanese skills, support and services may be more accessible, while in many other areas, such as Kyoto, the

majority of public schools have only a few ethnic minority children enrolled in their schools who in fact need Japanese language support, and therefore services and support are difficult to access. These public schools have no choice but to seek assistance from the local community to assist these children with their Japanese language skills. It is nearly impossible for schools to deal with this problem in a uniform manner nationwide. While there are a various language schools in Kyoto for international students, the prefecture does not have a well-established system to train teachers who can teach fundamental Japanese to elementary and junior high school children. Such a system is not yet established.

Kawakami (2008, as cited by Gottlieb, 2012) acknowledges that MEXT has begun to institute some JSL related policies in response to two strong submissions from MIAC seven years apart, the most recent in 2003, requesting that more positive steps be taken to help non-Japanese speaking students attend Japanese schools. Such policies however are limited to providing financial assistance for JSL curriculum developments and running seminars to educate teachers working with JSL students in their classrooms. Although the national government considers these policies to be sufficient, Kawakami argues, they fall far short of what is needed, which is nothing less than a national policy on the education of children whose first language is not Japanese. As long as the government policies focus on the control of foreign residents as alien visitors in Japan rather than a s local residents with contributions to make, this will not change. Even the much vaunted post-2006 "tabunka kyosei" initiatives do not represent a giant leap forward into the future, in his view, but are merely the first step on the way to building a Japan for the 21st century (p.39)

2.5 Grassroots organizations providing language support

Japanese language lessons provided by NPOs or citizens' groups are often the only resources children have to build the language skills they need to become part of the school community, they said. The number of foreign students in need of Japanese instruction in public schools hit a record 34,335, up from 22,413 in 2006, according to the ministry's latest study in 2017. 'About 77 percent, or 26,410, were receiving language support, according to the survey. This may show that the remaining 7,925 children may not be receiving any type of language support. Even at schools that reportedly provide language support, some children struggle because of the uneven quality, which varies greatly between schools' (Aoki, 2017). It has been over the past five years, that the education ministry has provided four-day training courses for

567 selected public school teachers on how to teach Japanese as a second language. In March 2013, the government developed manuals, also available for download online on how to instruct non-Japanese students. (*Gaikojin Jidou Seitou Kyouiku Manual* – Manual to teach foreign students, 2013). In the same year, the ministry released guidebooks in seven different languages on how to get children into the Japanese school system. However, these efforts have proven been ineffective in keeping up with the rapid rise in demand for language support. With the lack of acknowledgement, attention and support for newcomer youth in many areas of Japan by state and local government bodies, grassroots organizations have stepped up in attempting to support immigrant youth, their families and teachers. Tsuneyoshi (2011) discusses the activities of a local immigrant children's supplementary study group based in Kawasaki City established by Japanese volunteers in order to help newcomer children living in a public housing complex, called Stand-By-Me (SBM) in May 2001. The group has organised a variety of activities, with over 200 members, including preschool children to college students. This volunteer, grassroots-based group, in which their main message is to "enable the newcomer members to live in Japan as foreigners, to discuss issues together, to accumulate a common experience, and to convey the information to those who are facing various issues for the first time."(182-186). This commonality as newcomer foreigners has enabled members to overcome difference in nationality. Having similar identities but they feel safe and accepted and acknowledged to be able to have their own unique ethnic identity. According to Miyajima (2005), due to lack of resources (both human and financial) as well as lack of understanding for the purpose of these activities to support immigrant youth, there are many cases of youth who fall behind in their academic studies, and have low attendance at school…(p.205-206). As a final result, new immigrant children youth are prone to quitting school and returning to their parents' home country abroad, not finishing school and not being able to find employment in Japanese society.

3. Methodology

This present study used qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. I would like to gather experimental data rather than statistics or measurements, in the attempt to examine phenomena that impacts the lives of individuals and groups of a particular cultural and social context.

3.1 Participants

In this initial and brief study, individual 45-60 minute interviews were conducted with five ethnic minority families and representatives from two different support organizations. Letters of Consent in receiving permission to use the collected data from the interviews were signed by all participants, and an ethics review was submitted and approved by the university supporting this research. The names of all interview participants and their relationships and affiliations with all other organizations are strictly confidential and have been kept anonymous with using pseudonyms throughout this paper. Due to the limited focus of this initial research study, only a selected number of the common experiences from some of the participants have been introduced and examined in this paper.

3.2 Research design

The research design for this study follows a qualitative approach being exploratory, descriptive and predictive in nature. As the author wishes to place a considerable amount of value on the understanding of the individual voices and experiences of my participants (newcomer immigrant youth, their parents, their educators, individuals supporting them, etc.), A phenomenological method for this research design was chosen in order to focus on the 'human experience'' and 'lived experience'. (Mills, 2014). Many researchers explain phenomenology as a methodology in which to understand what one's experiences are like how they should be examined as they actually occur on its own terms. Phenomenology therefore does not aim to develop a theory that might help us to control or explain the world; rather, it aims to bring deeper insight to help us be in greater contact with the world (Smith et al. 2009; van Manen, 1990, as cited by Mills 2014). The aim of using a phenomenological method in research is to generate understanding into the essential nature of a certain phenomenon which is under investigation. The way of coming to know the experience is through those individual people who have had lived the experience; those persons who have first-hand lived experiences of the phenomenon of interest (Mills, 2014).

3.3.1 Data Collection

In this initial and brief study, data was collected by conducting interviews with the following participants:

1) parents of ethnic minority children currently enrolled in public elementary schools. Parents of Filipino, Indonesian, British and American nationalities were interviewed.

2) Representatives of both governmental and non-governmental organizations supporting the ethnic minority youth. By using the method of qualitative data collection, this study aims to capture the personal and individual experiences of participants who may be able to widely represent a majority of their peers on some pressing and significant issues. Various data collection techniques were used such as purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is a way of sampling qualitative research which involved selecting participants or data on the basis that they will have particular and distinct characteristics or experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2014, p.56). As for data collection, information was gathered from the interview transcripts as well as a collection of archival data in order to secure and assure multiple perspectives and various levels of analysis.

3.3.2 Limitations

In initially conducting this research, the author was unable to observe a wide variety of elementary-school classrooms could not conduct observations in the classrooms in which ethnic minority school children were learning together with their support teachers. I chose not to interview the children, as it would be very difficult ascertain their true feelings and opinions accurately and truthfully especially to the author, considered by the children a “stranger” who is outside of their immediate social community.

3.2.3 Data analyses

Collected data was analyzed by qualitative methods such as thematic analysis, narrative analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis. Thematic analysis, is known to be a qualitative research method which analyses data from my many different sources to identify themes (Braun & Clarke, 2014). Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), is described as an approach to qualitative research concerned with understanding experiences of the "person in context", in prioritizing the participants' experiences and their interpretations of them (Braun & Clarke, 2014). The interview data was transcribed, and in some cased translated from Japanese to English. I am used the qualitative analysis software Nvivo to code common themes and help with analyzing my data. Data was examined and analyzed to try to find similar trends and threads and identify common problems among the groups of people.

4. Results

An ethnographic approach was followed in analyzing the qualitative data from interviews. First excerpts from the interviews are introduced followed by an examination and interpretation of what the qualitative data is telling us about current pressing issues and common concerns ethnic minority youth and their educational needs. This initial study found similar trends and themes of concerns among both parents and support organizations.

4.1 Language Support: awareness, quality and accessibility

Language support services–who to ask, how to access them and how much to expect from these services is considerable vague and uncertain for many ethnic minority youth and their families in Kyoto Prefecture. For instance, schools with principals who have an awareness or understanding of the needs of foreign children tend make efforts to inform their teacher staff of such services and, make such support available for students. Some schools even develop a special curriculum for students in need. However, this is not the case at many schools. 'It's up to each principal's own judgment.… principals and senior teachers are the ones who often lack such understanding, so they need to learn the reality' (Aoki, 2017). Language skills is something particularly crucial for learning at schools. Without the right academic support, these children will be deprived of a chance to gain solid academic abilities. As future members of society, these children may have a huge impact on Japan's future. The quantity, quality and consistency of language services and support are varied according to each area, each district and each public school in Kyoto Prefecture.

Jasmine, from the Philippines, has volunteered extensively as a translator and mother-tongue language supporter for Kyoto city expresses her opinion on the reasons behind the lack of academic support accessible for youth in Kyoto:

> *Jasmine: A reason why some ethnic minority youth and their families who are in need are not receiving the support that they need is that their schools are not providing the services. The school must make an official request to the board of education to access these services. If the school does not show any concern or make the effort to make a request for the child, then the child and their famliies are unable to get access to these support services....some teachers may see it as more work for them, who are already overworked as it is, or a "burden" for them to request such services from the board of education.*

Public school teachers in Japan are known for their extremely long working hours and responsibility overload. Due to overwork, many teachers do not have the time nor energy to be able to tend to each individual student in a 30 to 35-student classroom or take on anything else other than making daily lessons plans and completing endless administrative paperwork.

4.1.1 Support for ethnic minority children and families at public schools

Depending where one lives in Kyoto, the few elementary schools who have a number of ethnic minority youth enrolled in them may have years of experience with providing Japanese language support and access to these services is relatively straight forward for them. However, with the growing number of students who require language support in Japanese, teachers and parents who have never used this support do not clearly know or understand the process or system for accessing it. There are many ethnic minority families who have support from their local public schools, where the teachers make efforts to provide extra support for children and their parents.

Roberto, originally from the Philippines, moved to Japan about 10 years ago, then followed his wife and their two children once he became settled in Japan with his job. According to Roberto, they have had a positive experience at their local school. Roberto explains below about feeling overwhelmed by the amount of school information documents given to their children to bring home to their parents every day but seems grateful for the communication his local school provides his family.

> *Roberto: So many papers….the papers are good because we don't have to ask many questions because the information is already there. But it took me a while to get used to it because the Japanese is very difficult.*

When asked about what the does if there is a problem or if they don't understand something, Robert replied with confidence that he could depend on the homeroom teacher to help him and his wife to understand by using the *renraku-cho*, or notebook that is usually used in public elementary schools as a tool for communication between the school and the parents.

Roberto: Yeah, actually if I don't understand anything I just write in the book. And then we just, if they can talk to us through the book they can talk. But if not, the teacher will come to our house and explain.

When Roberto was asked about if there were other ethnic minority families at the school, he replied by explaining that there were a few families with multicultural backgrounds.

Roberto: ….since they have other multi-cultural families, I think they have experience of dealing with foreigners.
A school with a history of ethnic minority students attending the school may suggest that the teachers may have experience with needs in language and social support for both child and parent.

Sadie, an American who has lived in Kyoto for approximately seven years, talked about how accessing Japanese language support for her child was indirectly communicated to her by the homeroom teacher as if she had to request the support herself, and not the teacher suggesting such support for the best interests of the child.

"*…and (the teacher) is like, "So if a parent was to say to request someone, then I could ask on your behalf." And I said, "Oh." And she goes, "So if you'd like to request," I said, "I understand." So, I said, "I would like to request Japanese support." She said, "Oh, you would? That's a very good thing." And so she kind of let me know that there was a system in place but I just didn't know about it….she did it in a nice little roundabout way. "By the way, did you know?" So, I think that there's probably information out there…it seems to me that there's an information gap where the people at the school don't know what is out there."*

From Sadie's comments, it could be interpreted that Japanese language support is not widely or freely advertised to the parents. With many parents not even knowing that such support exists or even an option, it is difficult for both parents and schools to know how to access it.

4.1.2 Mother-Tongue Language support

An officer from a prefectural-affiliated organization supporting foreign residents in Kyoto Prefecture and the only individual in the office responsible for academic support for newcomer immigrant children shared her experiences in an interview. The organization dispatches their team of supporters once they receive a request from the Board of Education. In the interview, the officer explained what the organization provided for public schools as well as for support public groups and organizations. One issue discussed in particular was about one of the support projects called *Bogo Shien* (mother-tongue language support in Japanese). There are information

pamphlets about mother tongue language support translated into both Chinese and Tagalog for both the language supporters and the schools who are providing this support. The organization creates pamphlets for both the providers and the receivers of this service so that there are no misunderstandings about the content of this service. The reason why the organization made this pamphlet is because training cannot be provided for volunteers to do this type of support work. Considering the demographics of Kyoto is so far out and wide and there are not enough resources to cover such a huge area. When asked about the accessibility of this service, the representative explained that prefecture does not actively advertise this service for this type of support so extensively throughout the entire prefecture. Groups or individuals who wish to request this type of service are expected to contact the prefecture by themselves. One main reason is that there are too many languages to cover and we cannot create a supply bank of all the languages requested (such as Chinese, Tagalog, Urdu, Russian, Persian, Nepalese) and it is difficult to find qualified people who are native speakers of these language. With the fast-rising number of new coming immigrants from various nationalities residing in Kyoto, the prefecture cannot keep up with the demand for diverse language support. Kyoto currently does not have access to the adequate human resources nor funds to find native speakers of these languages within such a limited amount of time.

Despite Japan and Kyoto prefecture are making efforts to make services available for ethnic minority youth, their families, schools and affiliated support organizations, there is a lot of more work to be done in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility of these services.

Jasmine, a mother-tongue language supporter, explains the reasons for the limited number of language support volunteers available:

> *The reason that there are a limited number of language support volunteers for two reasons; one being that the schools in which they are needed are spread all throughout Kyoto Prefecture so it is very difficult to travel to these schools that are so far away and difficult to access by public transportation. Second being that not all travel expenses are covered by Kyoto City.*

When asked about how she thought Kyoto could improve their support and services for immigrant youth at public schools in need of language and emotional support, Jasmine replied:

> *Increase the number for Japanese language support volunteers and provide more reimbursement for the volunteers. The Board of Education must also make clearer, more attainable guidelines for the roles of language support volunteers. The problems ethnic minority youth and their families face are not just about language. Though (we)are told strictly to not get too involved with the students and their families (don't exchange personal information, don't provide personal support, etc.), there are some times when the students and their families desperately require more help than just language, and we as volunteers are at a loss as to what to do to help them.*

Jasmine also expressed the idea of having information sharing sessions with fellow language support volunteers in order to start an open and healthy dialogue to address the issues of language support services:

> *There should also be opportunities created for language support volunteers to meet and discuss together about their experiences, have an information exchange to share concerns and ideas, etc.*

4.1.3 Non-governmental language support groups

While many schools and organizations within Kyoto Prefecture and Kyoto city currently seem to not have the capacity to provide sufficient support ethnic minority communities, Kyoto needs to rely on local grassroots language support groups in running training sessions, and doing joint-projects with universities in helping them advertise the study support groups that they offer, and help them disseminate information to the foreign resident community. Still, information about these NPO and NGO is not readily available or accessible for many ethnic minority youth due to lack of awareness, knowledge and ignorance of the public schools and local communities.

4.1.4 Training for public schools and organizations

According to the comments of the representatives of governmental organizations and NGO's, While there may be some information on the topic of intercultural education and training on how to teach JSL to students is offered to people who are studying to be teachers or who are renewing their teaching licenses, the actual depth of the content, as well as how much they are trained in this issue is limited and at times unclear.

Sadie (American) talked about the lack of information given to teachers and lack of training for public school teachers on how to support ethnic minority students

> *… as for just the services that are available for foreign parents, there's just teachers that don't know about the stuff that's out there. And that isn't a function of them being a good or bad teacher, that's a function of the Board of Education providing time for them to have training on that……I know that teachers' days are busy….so the teacher on their own … it's not like they can go and investigate this stuff. They don't know what they don't know, so it's up to the Board of Education to provide them the time and the training for this kind of stuff.*

One prefectural-affiliated representative expressed that are not enough resources for sufficient training for both Japanese language support and Mother Tongue Language Support. Selected teachers from public schools within the prefecture where this is a significant number of foreign students to are invited to participate in this training for teaching EMY students. However, it seems that this type of training is not very consistent yearly, not do they put much effort in making it an effective type of training to be widely accessible. Though the Ministry of Education has published a manual in 2013 on teaching foreign students, there are not current studies to show to what extent this manual is dispersed throughout Kyoto prefecture, how much it is used and its practices are used at these schools. Using all of these resources is up to the area, the municipality, the district and the school with no pre-determined standards or streamlining.

4.3 Intercultural awareness and education

It may be argued that society can only begin to properly support ethnic minority youth's education issues by first truly acknowledging ethnic diversity in our communities. Not taking the time or effort to acknowledge the different ethnic backgrounds of children keeps society from accepting them into our schools, our communities and into our society as a whole.

Lusi, originally from Indonesia, is an academic, mother tongue language supporter and active advocate for ethnic minority youth in Kyoto. When she was told by her son's teacher that he may have a learning disability, Lusi consulted with a psychologist working for a public-interest incorporated foundation in Kyoto. After the psychologist evaluated her son, he then informed Lusi that he did not have any symptoms any learning disability, and advised her to take her son to a playgroup for children of multicultural backgrounds.

> *Lusi: "In order for children to relieve their stress, emotional support groups for children, Japanese children with multicultural backgrounds in particular, is very much needed in Kyoto".*

It is quite common for ethnic minority children to be tagged as "slow" and "inattentive", "forgetful" or having a "learning disability" by judging their academic performance at school. This in fact may be the case for some children, and for the teacher to bring the concerns to the parent is helpful and responsible action on the part of the teacher. However, for many of these children, this is not the case but due to the lack of intercultural awareness and understanding of the multicultural and multilinguistic backgrounds of their students, they are being failed by their in schools both academically and socially. Lusi adds that it is high time that some form of ethnic diversity education be implemented across the board, throughout all public schools in order to increase intercultural awareness.

> *Lusi: As for support, I think that the easiest and most fundamental thing that needs to be done is to educate school children and the school community that it is okay to be different, that everyone does not have to be the same, not all Japanese need to be the same, and that there are many different Japanese in Japan. Diversity education is needed to be taught at schools for the children, school teachers and parents.*

When discussing the possibility of policy reform in education and systems to support ethnic minority youth education, both representatives of public interest incorporated organizations responded quite negatively without encouraging responses. Some representatives described both the city and prefectural affiliated organizations in charge of education at both the city and prefectural levels as "unprogressive" , "overly cautious and protective" and concerns about maintaining "national identity" with their priorities being placed on issues other than on immigrant education. They further added that public schools cannot accumulate the know-how and knowledge of how to teach ethnic minority students when teachers change schools all the time. The Ministry of education must take a stance as to where they stand with their priorities of supporting ethnic minority children so that schools and the community have at least the basic knowledge and skills to support their learning needs.

Miyako, a Japanese civil engineer who has worked in urban management both for government organizations both in Japan and abroad, is married to an American and has one child

who attended a public school. She responds to an interview question about why policy reform is very difficult and slow to change in Japan:

> *Miyako: If (Japan) changes policy they (also must) change so many things. Then government officers, they shift every two, three years. They keep quiet for two years, then they get transferred. They don't like to be criticized, I think. They don't want to be, and if you change (something), you have to change everything. It's a lot of work to do, change…all the sections, departments, all the budgets, are all closely and intricately interconnected with each other.*

Issues of insufficient language support systems and policy not only in Kyoto Prefecture, but also throughout Japan may be largely blamed on the lack of awareness and general interest in the current issues by the policy makers of education. However, the reasons for policy makers' reluctance to reform policy and systems may lie deeper within the connection of existing Japanese values and moral institutions. Further examination of Japan's stance on national identity, culture as well as on the organizational structure of governmental systems in Japan needs to be done to further explore the reasons for Japan's reluctance to reform and change policy.

5. Conclusion

This initial study's qualitative data attempted to briefly highlight that the issues concerning ethnic minority youth are much more in need of attention than what schools, governmental officers and even parents of the children may think. Firstly, the supply does not meet the demand. Significant disparities are found in the quantity, quality and accessibility of services for both JSL support and mother tongue language support. Second, there is a lack of awareness and acknowledgement of not only the identity of the ethnic minority youth, not enough understanding about local ethnic diversity or multicultural community inside and outside schools communities. Depending on the ethnic and social background of that individual child, their academic challenges, struggles and needs are different and need to be acknowledged and supported. In following this present study, research will be continued to further analyze the experiences of ethnic minority youth and their families, as well as individuals, groups and organizations who try to support them in the hopes of increasing awareness about the multicultural identity in Japan and to explain reasons for the urgent need to improve services and support for this new generation of Japanese youth.

References

Aoki, M., (2017, July 16) New kid on the block gets the least help in Japan's schools, *The Japan Times.* Retrieved on February 20, 2018 from https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/07/16/national/new-kid-block-gets-least-help-japans-schools/#

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2014). *Successful qualitative research*. London: SAGE.

DeCoker, G. (2014). *Japanese Education in an Era of Globalization* (1st ed.). Teachers College Press.

Dimitrova, R., Bender, M., & van de Vijver, F. (2014). *Global Perspectives on Well-Being in Immigrant Families*. New York, NY: Springer.

Douglass, M., Roberts, G., & Roberts, G. (2015). *Japan and Global Migration* (1st ed.). Florence: Taylor and Francis.

Gordon, J. (2014). *Challenges to Japanese Education* (1st ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Gottlieb, N. (2012). *Language and citizenship in Japan* (1st ed.). New York: Routledge.

Gottlieb, N. (2012). *Language policy in Japan* (1st ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Graburn, N. (2010). *Multiculturalism in the new Japan* (pp. 181-183). New York: Berghahn Books.

Grant, C., & Ladson-Billings, G. (1997). *Dictionary of multicultural education* (1st ed.). Phoenix, Ariz.: Oryx Press.

Introduction of Kyoto | Kyoto Research Park. (2016). *Krp.co.jp*. Retrieved 14 November 2016, from http://www.krp.co.jp/english/basic_facts/about_kyoto/

Kao, G., Vaquera, E., & Goyette, K. (2013). *Education and immigration*.Polity Press: Cambridge

Kojima, A. (2009). *Nyukawa no kokomo to gakko bunka: Nikkei Buraziru jin seito no kyotoku esnogurafi* (1st ed., pp. 20-22). Tokyo: Keiso Shoten.

Kyoto Chamber of Commerce and Industry. (2016). *Kyo.or.jp*. Retrieved 14 November 2016, from http://www.kyo.or.jp/kyoto/e/

Kyoto City Board of Education (2016) Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of Multicultural Policy in Kyoto.. (2017). *Kyoto City official website*. Retrieved 14 November 2016, from

http://www.city.kyoto.lg.jp/templates/shingikai_kekka/cmsfiles/contents/0000210/210797/1shiryo.pdf

Kyoto Prefectural International Section (2017) Statistics on number for foreign residents in Kyoto Prefecture, retrieved on Feburary 1, 2018 at http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/kokusai/documents

Lee, S., Murphy, S., & Befu. (2006). *Japan's diversity dilemmas*. New York: iUniverse, Inc.

Mills, J. (2014). *Qualitative methodology*. London [u.a.]: Sage Publishers.

Miyajima, T. (2005). *Gaikokujin no kodomo to nihon no kyoiku*. Tokyo, Japan: Tokyo University Press.

Miyajima, T. (2014). *Gaikokujin no kodomo no kyōiku: shugaku no genjo to kyouiku o kenri (Educating Foreign Children in Japan: Their School Enrolment and the Right to Receive an Education)* (pp. 20-22). Tokyo: Tokyo University Press.

Okubo, Y. (2006). John Ogbu and minority education in Japan. *Intercultural Education*, *17*(2), 147-162. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14675980600693806

Shimizu, K., & Shimizu, M. (2006). *Nyūkamā to kyōiku*. Tōkyō: Akashi Shoten.

Shimizu, K., Yamamoto, B., & Kaji, I. *Okan suru hitobito no kyoiku senryaku*. Akashishoten.

The Japan Times, National. (2018, February 26) Government eyes making permanent residency easier for 'Cool Japan' talent. The Japan Times. Retrieved February 26, 2018 from https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/02/26/national/government-eyes-making-permanent-residency-easier-cool-japan-talent/#

Tsuneyoshi, R., Okano, K., & Boocock, S. (2011). *Minorities and education in multicultural Japan* (1st ed.). Abingdon, Oxon, England: Routledge.

Willis, D., & Rappleye, J. (2011) *Reimagining Japanese Education: Borders, Transfers, Circulations, and the Comparative*. Oxford: Symposium Books.

Yoshida, R., (2018, February 21) Abe calls for foreign employment review to bring in skilled workers from overseas, *The Japan Times*. Retrieved on February 22, 2018 from https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/02/21/national/abe-calls-foreign-employment-review-increase-skilled-workers/#

Yoshida, R., Aoki, M.,(2017, June 13) Number of foreign students at public schools who lack Japanese language skills hits record high, *The Japan Times*, Retrieved on January 7, 2018

from https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/06/13/national/number-foreign-students-public-schools-lack-japanese-language-skills-hits-record-high/#.WpZXrGaB3uQ

Survey results of the number of foreign residents in Kyoto Prefecture (2017) Statistics, Office of International Affairs, Kyoto City. Retrieved February 18, 2018 from http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/kokusai/documents/03gaikokujinjuuminsyasuu.pdf

Zhou, M., & Bankston, C. *The Rise of the New Second Generation*.San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.