

Educational Challenges of a Japanese-Filipino Child in a Japanese Classroom

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Research on bicultural children remains limited. Little is particularly known about their educational experiences. Therefore, this article aims at addressing such research gap. In its entirety, this research piece describes the lived experiences of a bicultural child as he immersed himself in the Japanese educational system. Its sole purpose is to highlight the problems of the bicultural child which may provide school personnel insights on how best they can help bicultural and immigrant children adjust. While this paper only tackles one specific subject, this includes discussions on how the child's school and mother responded to his educational experiences. Thus, it provides a detailed exposition reflecting his school challenges and a comprehensive and in-depth discussion on Japan's elementary education. The data for this article were drawn from my field work in a Japanese elementary school which is the initial phase of my doctoral dissertation on Japanese-Filipino children's educational outcomes and experiences in Japan. The child's school challenges revolved around the issues of language, classroom discipline and practices, and parent-school relationships.

Keyword: Japanese-Filipino children, educational challenges, elementary education, Japanese education

“The bicultural child is plunged alternately into several cultural baths and each of them colors him or her to a certain extent.”

Barbara, A. (1989, p. 139)

“Bicultural” is a term used to describe the offspring of couples in intercultural marriages. Other scholars, however, use the terms “biethnic” (Nash, 1995; Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007), “biracial” (Nash, 1995; Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005), “mixed heritage” (Tikly, Caballero, Haynes, & Hill, 2004), and “multiracial” (Nakazawa, 2003; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). In Japan, they are informally referred to as “*haafu*” (half) or “*daburu*” (double) (Kamada, 2006; Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007). Parallel to the growing number of international marriages in Japan is also

the increasing number of bicultural children. In 2001 alone, there were about 22,000 births from women of bicultural unions in Japan (Tokyo English Life Line, 2003).

Researches on bicultural children are very limited. Little is particularly known about their educational experiences. Therefore, this present article aims at addressing such research gap. In the United States, studies had focused on identity issues (e.g., Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005) and bilingualism (e.g., Soto, 2002). In England, one quantitative research (Tikly et al., 2004) looked at the educational needs of “mixed heritage” children (White/Black Caribbean, White/Black African, and White/Asian); however, this dealt more on the barriers to academic achievement rather than describing lived experiences. In Japan, literature on the subject dealt on issues such as bilingualism (e.g., Suzuki, 2007) and identity (e.g., Greer, 2005; Kamada, 2006; Otani, 2009).

Education is one issue that needs to be explored in bicultural children research. In school, bicultural children may face educational challenges of different sorts. According to Shields and Behrman (2004), “multiracial” children are more susceptible to negative “self-images and school adjustment problems” (p.1054). Soto (2002) noted that children with diverse cultural background may encounter educational challenges in schools. There are anecdotal reports that substantiate claims regarding problems of bicultural children in school. For example, a bicultural child was “dismissed” from a U.S. school for having long hair, a tradition that Apache men keep to honor their ancestors (Soto, 2002, p.82). A Korean newspaper cited a case of a nine-year old Korean-Filipino child who had difficulties accomplishing school work (Schwartzman, 2008). Another newspaper in Taiwan noted that bicultural children were ranked at the bottom in terms of school performance in one of the elementary schools in Penghu County (Chang, 2003).

In the case of some Japanese bicultural children, although they can speak Japanese, their appearance alone reveal that they are indeed different, which makes them susceptible to ridicule. Few anecdotal pieces of evidence showed bicultural children being subjected to bullying (*ijime*) in the classroom (McMahill, 2000; Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007). Rivers (n.d.) described that in Japan, there are derogatory terms associated with being bicultural such as “*konketsuji*” (“mixed blood”) and “*zasshu*” (“mongrel”). To some of these children who consider themselves as Japanese, being labeled as “*gaijin*” is insulting because the word literally means “outsider” or “non-Japanese” (Greer, 2005). Greer (2005) explained that that the word “*haafu*” is a contested term due to its “negative connotations in English” meaning “half-breed and “half-caste” (p. 959) Otani (2009) similarly noted that the term implies the lack of “Japaneseness” of a person.

The school-related problems of bicultural children extend beyond the classroom to the home. The Japanese education system particularly elementary education fosters a strong school-home relationship. This relationship creates an impact on the schooling of children. According to Moorehead (2007), “the Japanese teachers describe a desirable family-school relationship as one that is based on trust, deference, partnership, and cooperation” (p.7). However, such relationship can be strained because of the possible cultural tensions between intercultural homes and the school. An example is a Filipina mother who had

a disagreement with her bicultural child over school activities in conflict with her religious observance (Abe, 2009).

In its entirety, this research piece describes the lived experiences of the bicultural child. Some of the words of my subject are reflected to ensure that this is “a collaboration between (me) and my subject, enabling (me) to tell his stories (on his behalf)” (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Etic in approach, this paper presents the researcher’s interpretation of a bicultural child’s school experiences based on the latter’s expressed emotions and words. As a caveat, this research does not in any way insinuate that bicultural children’s experiences at school are always negative or problematic. Its sole purpose is to highlight the problems of the bicultural child which may provide school personnel insights on how best they can help bicultural and immigrant children adjust to their educational challenges.

The data for this article were drawn from my field work in a Japanese elementary school which is the initial phase of my doctoral dissertation on Filipino-Japanese children’s educational experiences and outcomes in Japan. Such field work provided me with deeper understanding of Japan’s elementary education system and school culture. While this paper only tackles one specific subject, this includes discussions on how the child’s school and mother responded to his educational experiences. Thus, it provides a detailed exposition reflecting his school challenges and a comprehensive and in-depth discussion on Japan’s elementary education.

THE JAPANESE-FILIPINO COUPLES AND THEIR CHILDREN

The increased rate of Japanese-Filipino marriages in the 1980s has been largely due to the opening up of the entertainment industry in Japan in favor of Filipino women (Anderson, 1999). Licos and his colleagues (2006) reported that some Japanese men married Filipino women who were former night club entertainers or “talents”. Suzuki (2005) described that “Filipina-Japanese couples have actually been born out of encounters at nightclubs where many entertainers work” (p.14). Almonte (2001) noted that while the primary motive of some entertainers for going to Japan is to achieve social and economic mobility, others are conscious that marriage to a Japanese husband will ultimately lead them out of poverty. To achieve such

a goal, working as an entertainer in Japan is the easiest way to look for future marital partners.

In the late 1990s, the Japanese-Filipino intercultural marriages became the second largest intercultural marriage combination in Japan next only to the union between the Japanese and Chinese (Licos et al., 2006; Suzuki, 2005). Between 1992 and 2005, such marriage combination reached 99, 299 (Amante, 2007). In 2006, there were 12,150 cases of Japanese-Filipino marriages. In terms of live birth statistics concerning such marriage combination, there were 4,998 babies registered (Vital Statistics of Japan, 2006).

In this paper, I used the term Japanese-Filipino children to refer to offspring of the Japanese-Filipino marriages. Formally, they are either called Japanese-Filipino (Hashimoto, 2009; Samonte, 1998) or Filipino-Japanese children (Almonte-Acosta, 2008). Informally, they are being referred to as Japinoy and Japino (Almonte-Acosta, 2008). However, Japanese-Filipino seems to be the popular term used by government and non-government agencies in and outside of Japan.

There are only two studies I came across with that talked about the Japanese-Filipino children particularly on their ethnic identity (Almonte-Acosta, 2008; Nuqui, 2008). Experiences of Japanese-Filipino children in schools are still a subject that needs further research. Anecdotal pieces of evidence, however, attest that some Japanese-Filipino children did have negative experiences in schools. Almonte-Acosta (2008) narrated three cases of elementary Japanese-Filipino students who were bullied at school because of their being a *gaijin* (a foreigner). While the two studies dealt on identity issues, my focus in this paper is to highlight the educational challenges of a bicultural child owing to the differences in language and classroom discipline and practices.

METHOD

The data in this article were drawn from my five-month (from April to June, September-October 2009) field work in a Japanese elementary school. I was hired by the city government as an interpreter for a Japanese-Filipino bicultural child. From April to May 2009, I sat with the child three times a week and for the succeeding two months, twice a week. After summer break (mid-July and August, 2009) I continued my fieldwork in September 2009 with the same schedule.

For the month of October, I only reported to the school once a week. As the child's interpreter, it was my responsibility to translate the lessons from English to Cebuano (one of the languages in the Philippines) and to translate whenever the teacher spoke to the bicultural child. My work was extended to interpreting school correspondence and guiding the child on how to behave in class. I was also hired by the child's mother to be his tutor. Such opportunity gave me a chance to also familiarize myself with the child's home environment.

While reporting for my part-time work at the child's school and home, I jotted down all my observations using a diary. I engaged in informal conversations with the teachers, classmates, and the mother of the child. I also conducted a formal interview with the educational guidance director of the city education division office. At the end of my field work, I encoded my diary for easy editing and coding.

The elementary school is located in Beppu City, Oita Prefecture, Japan. It has a population of 324 students from 15 classes (kindergarten to grade 6) and 30 school staff/personnel. The class of the third grade bicultural child I was interpreting for has 24 students. They have nine classes scheduled unevenly throughout the week namely *seikatsu* (Life Studies), *taiiku* (Physical Education), *sansuu* (Mathematics), *kokugo* (Japanese), *ongaku* (Music), *rika* (Science), *sougou* (Integrated Studies), *doutoku* (Moral Education), and *zūkō* (Arts and Crafts).

The subject

Tarou, not his real name, is an 11-year old half-Japanese half-Filipino born and raised in the Philippines. His Filipina mother met his Japanese father in Kumamoto, Japan while working as an entertainer in a club. Tarou started his first grade in a Japanese school for the *nikkeijins* (Japanese emigrants and their descendants who have established families in other countries) in the Philippines but was later transferred to another private school until he finished Grade 5. Since birth until early 2009, Tarou spent his life with his grandparents. Tarou's father is sickly and this prompted his mother to bring him to Japan while his father can still manage to apply for his visa. Tarou carries a Philippine passport but his mother is trying her best to convert his nationality to Japanese.

Because of his inability to speak Japanese, Tarou had to enroll in Grade 3 in one of the elementary schools of the city. His mother expressed that she

stopped working at night as a part-time club hostess because she was needed by her husband and by Tarou. In an informal conversation with her, she added that she stopped working as a hostess because she does not want her son to know her work and she wanted to protect him from being humiliated and discriminated against. Luckily, Tarou's mother got a day job after a few months. Because of Tarou's father's inability to work, he and his family are receiving some financial support from the city government for the medical expenses and for Tarou's educational and personal needs.

During my field work, I personally observed three challenging areas with which Tarou had to contend with. My observations were based on his verbal and non verbal expressions and the stories I heard from his mother, teacher, and classmates. These challenges are language, classroom discipline and practices, and the parent-school relationship. Prior to the discussion of Tarou's challenges in his education, the succeeding section talks about how he and his classmates spend a day at the school.

A DAY AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (APRIL OF 2009)

Children arrived in school at 7:30 am. Some of them played in the school ground while others just stayed in the classroom talking with their classmates. At 8:30 a.m., they returned to the classroom for reading time. A parent-volunteer came in to read a story to the children. At 8:45, the bell rang for the first period classes but the students could not start because they were having their reading period. The parent-volunteer left the classroom after the activity. Then, two class officers (class beadles) checked the attendance. On this particular day, one student did not show up in class.

After the checking, the students stood up to sing their song of the month ("This Star was Born"). Two students took the cassette player and played the music. After singing, the students took their *renrakuchou* (contact notebook) to write their *meate* (goal) of the day. After the submission of notebooks, two student facilitators went in front to announce that the next part will be *senseinohanashi* (teacher's speech) or the formal start of the *asanokai* (morning homeroom) and that the students should listen to their teacher attentively. The teacher started her speech with a morning greeting. She then talked about the good

weather on that day. Since it is the first school day of the month, the teacher talked about the school's *meate* (goal) of the month (i.e., students should properly observe time by listening to the chime).

Then she announced (as she regularly does) that she received a call from Megumi's (not her real name) parent informing her that Megumi could not be in the class that day because she needed to go to a health clinic. She then directed the students' attention to the blackboard to show the changes in the class schedule for the day (the daily schedule is posted on the board). On this particular day, they had *gakkyuukai* (Class Meeting), *kokugo* (Japanese), *syakai* (Society), and *rika* (Science). They had no classes in the afternoon since the teacher had to conduct *kateihoumon* (home visits). In Japan, teachers visit their students' houses to look at their home environment.

Before the first class started, the teacher asked the students to return their things to the table compartment and to sit straight with their hands in their laps. The teacher shouted at one student for not following instruction and for talking with a seatmate. After complete silence, the students recited together a phrase in Japanese which means that they are about to start their *gakkyuukai* (class meeting). Four students came in front to facilitate the meeting, two facilitators (class leaders) and two documenters (class secretaries). The students discussed their problems in the classroom (proper behavior and cleanliness) and they agreed by themselves on how to solve them. Some students raised complaints while others provided solutions. Some students also expressed objections to some of the points raised by other students until they finally came up with a solution through voting.

Kokugo (Japanese) class followed the *gakkyuukai* (class meeting). The teacher read a story aloud and asked some students to do the same. She then invited the students to say out loud the words they did not understand. Some students were requested to summarize the story. She also asked questions regarding the lesson of the story, metaphors, and the students' favorite incident. After discussing the story, they had *kanji* (Chinese character) writing. A 15-minute break followed. During the break some students went outside to play, while others stayed in the classroom.

During their *syakai* (Society) class, the teacher asked the students to list down the names of countries they know other than their own. For ten minutes, the students tried to list down the countries. Each student

then gave out the names of countries while the teacher wrote them on the board. Following the exercise, the teacher asked me to talk about the Philippines. *Rika* (Science) came after the *syakai* (Society) class. The students went out for gardening as part of their science class.

After the science class, the students ate the lunch provided by the school. Wearing aprons, masks, and hair nets, they went outside to wash their hands. Students were assigned certain tasks. Some students wiped the tables; some got the food and utensils from the canteen; others served the food; while others with no assigned tasks just waited in their seats. Ready for dismissal after lunch, the students wrote their assignments and reminders for the next day in their *renrakuchou* (contact notebook). The teacher then discussed the requirements and reminded the students about her home visits before officially dismissing the class.

Language difference

One of the apparent issues that Tarou had to face is language which manifested both in academic and non-academic aspects. During the first few weeks, he could hardly speak Japanese so he just sat meekly in class without talking to anybody except me. He seemed to have difficulties in understanding his lessons and participating in class discussions. He was just attentive and participative during his Math classes since the subject involves numbers with merely no Japanese characters involved.

Tarou also had challenges making his tasks both at school and home. At school, they were required to write a *meate* (goal) for the day to encourage students to strive to achieve short-term objectives. Not familiar with the exercise, he had to seek my assistance in deciding a goal and in writing such goal in Japanese. Every day, before the classes start, students would sing their *kongetsunouta* (song of the month) which he could not participate. For him to sing it, I wrote the *romaji* (romanized) version of the song. Before each class, students have to recite some Japanese phrases as an introduction which Tarou could not recite (e.g., “*Tsutsukimasyou, kore kara ongaku no benkyou wo hajimemasu*” which means “*Let us continue, from now on, we will start our music class...*”). He also had to perform some classroom tasks (*kakari*) and lunch duties (*touban*) which were hard for him especially if I was not around to translate. In relation to school work at home, Tarou once shared that he had difficulty

accomplishing his homework because of his inability to understand the instructions by himself and his mother was not available at that time to help him.

Tarou also had difficulties relating to his classmate because of language. During breaks, he would just quietly sit on his chair knowing that he could not converse yet with his classmates. However, as months passed, he eventually started playing outside despite his limited Japanese. One day, he almost got into trouble with a Grade 5 student who reportedly provoked him to spar although it did not result to a physical fight. Because he cannot explain his side in Japanese, his classmates thought it was his fault. There was also one instance when Tarou accidentally pushed his classmate and he needed to explain to the teacher which he could not. As his interpreter, I had to explain what happened on his behalf.

Classroom discipline and practices

Discipline in the classroom is very central to the Japanese elementary education. The focus is not obedience but rather understanding (Lewis, 1995). Disciplinary measures in Japanese elementary schools are meant to instill values, respect, trust, and good conduct. In the Japanese educational system, discipline also denotes prohibition. Like other elementary schools in Japan, children in Tarou’s school are expected to observe rules both in and out of the classroom.

In school, students are obliged to wear their own classroom shoes; bring their own school supplies; hand in their assignments; and return home immediately after class and never to stay outside their house after 5 pm. At home, they are expected to show their *renrakuchou* (contact notebook) to their parents and to do their assignments before they go to sleep by 9 pm. At school, children are not allowed to wear accessories (e.g., earring, watch, necklace, band, etc.) and bring toys unless prescribed by the teacher. They are also prohibited to bring food, cellular phone, and unsafe items into the school premises.

Aside from the “don’ts” in the classroom, students are given specific tasks such as during lunch *touban* (duties) and *souji* (cleaning) assignments. Students also have to perform other functions assigned by the teacher. Students may be assigned to 1) take care of the distribution of school materials, 2) switch off electric fans and lights if they go outside as a class, 3) erase writings on the black board, 4) check attendance, 5) facilitate the singing of the song of the month, and to 6) assist in making sure that the students stand in line

according to their class number during class outdoor activities.

When the teacher finds a student misbehaving, she immediately talks to the concerned student. There were cases when the teacher had to shout at her students for disobedience. She then asked the questions, “Why do you think I am angry?”, “What will you say now?”, and “What will you do next time?”. In cases of conflicts between students, the teacher would ask the concerned individuals to clarify and resolve the issue immediately in her presence. If the fights are serious and expose students to danger, parents of involved children are being asked by the teacher to report to the school for discussion.

As I observed, Tarou had to adjust to some aspects of the school’s disciplinary measures, which are different in many respects from what he had in the Philippines. On one occasion, he was reprimanded by her teacher for bringing a miniature eraser that resembles a soccer ball. The teacher approached and requested him to put back the eraser to his pencil case and never bring it to school again. He was also quite surprised when his teacher asked him to remove his bracelet. With his astonished look, he asked about it and I had to explain to him that wearing accessories is prohibited in Japanese elementary schools. The teacher also once stared sharply at Tarou because he was caught looking at the window for long.

One classroom practice which Tarou had to familiarize is the class recitation, for which the student should stand up straight, push the chair towards the table and then recite or say their answer or opinion. Because of such classroom norm, Tarou was reprimanded several times because he would stand up with a heavy-eyed face and a sagging body during recitations. Also, students are not allowed to rest their head on the table during classes. However, on several occasions, he was caught by his teacher doing such prohibited act.

In their Mathematics class, Tarou’s attention was also called because he was using his hands to add numbers. In Japan, elementary students are not allowed to use their hands in solving Math problems. As he verbalized, Tarou could not understand why the teacher asked the students to explain or describe the process of solving a one digit multiplication problem because as far as he knows, the only way to learn it is to memorize the multiplication table (also known informally as times table; a list containing products of multiplied numbers usually from 1 to 12).

Another aspect of the Japanese education, which may be due to the lesser number of elementary students per class, is for teachers to give focus to every student’s abilities and weaknesses. However, such approach also created tension for Tarou. In one of their drawing sessions, he was deeply troubled by his teacher as manifested in his unwillingness to cooperate. Tarou was in a hurry to submit his work but the teacher told him to improve it. He went back to his seat and worked at it again. Then, he went to submit his work the second time but the teacher still did not accept his work. Tarou then started to display an irritated face. He looked at his classmates and wondered why the teacher was satisfied with his classmates’ work. By dint of my insistence, he polished his drawing again and rushed to his teacher to submit his work. Later, the teacher discussed with me about Tarou’s natural talent in drawing and the need to cultivate his talent.

Japanese education also focuses on the physical well-being of children. This explains why elementary students eat lunch provided by the school. This is to ensure that children eat a balanced diet. However, the teacher was quite surprised because Tarou does not drink milk. She talked to me about the importance of milk and that I should tell Tarou’s mother to slowly help him drink milk. Left without a choice, Tarou had to drink milk during lunch. In relation to maintaining good health among students, Tarou experienced a frustrating incident which happened in one of his Physical Education classes. He was really upset, as manifested through his facial expression, because his teacher did not allow him to swim. It was explained to me that Tarou could not swim because his teacher found *atama shirami* (lice) in his hair. Not to transmit the parasite to the other students, he was asked to refrain from swimming.

SCHOOL AND PARENT RELATIONSHIPS

Tarou is not the only person involved in his education. His mother is also part of his schooling especially under the Japanese elementary education system. Parents, like teachers, play a crucial role in a child’s education. One major issue that Tarou’s mother had to contend with, similar to him, is language. All letters from the school are written in Japanese. Although she can speak Japanese, she cannot read Chinese characters. When accomplishing assignments, Tarou would seek his mother’s assistance. However,

because the instructions are written in Japanese, his mother could not understand them as well. This situation at one instance hindered Tarou to make his assignment. As he shared, he could not sometimes bring the needed requirements to school because his mother cannot read what was written in his *renrakuchou* (contact notebook) or was unable to read the school correspondence.

Another challenge that Tarou's mother had to address was her attendance in PTA meetings and consultations. The school also requested Tarou's mother to sit with him whenever I was not around to interpret the lessons. But his mother was busy with her part-time job and with caring for his sickly father. Sometimes, her mother could not attend to her obligations in school. This necessitated the teacher to update Tarou's mother by writing her messages as often as needed in the *renrakuchou* (contact notebook).

Tarou's participation in basketball training also became an issue. The school principal and Tarou's mother had different opinions on this. His mother wanted him to stop because it was not helping him with his studies. However, he was really insistent and promised to do well with his studies. Tarou's mother went to the school to consult the principal. Much to her surprise, she said that she could not understand why the principal would say that basketball is actually good for her son. She compared that in the Philippines, studying is more important than playing.

There is also one school activity that pressured Tarou's mother to comply with social pressure. This happened during the *undoukai* (sports fest) – a much anticipated sporting event among elementary students in Japan. Because this is noted as a family affair, Tarou's mother invited me to join her as she was ashamed if she is the only one present. She said that she is too shy to stay alone watching her son while the other families come in big groups including their relatives.

One morning, Tarou did not go to school because he had an intense fight with his mother. His mother got a phone call from his teacher asking his whereabouts. Her mother was so surprised to learn that he did not go to school. Later, it was found out that he went to his classmate's house who was also absent at that time. Both of them were asked by the school principal to report to class even if it was already late. In Japanese schools, parents should inform the teacher if their child will arrive at school late, will be absent from classes, or will leave school earlier than the schedule.

Adjustment strategies

With his school challenges, Tarou himself developed his own ways to address his "dilemmas" through his social capital (classmates, mother, and mother's friends). Whenever he needed help for translation, he would usually ask his Japanese-Filipino classmate. In accomplishing his assignments, he would usually ask his mother. When unable to come to his rescue, due to language problems or time constraints, Tarou's mother would call her friends for assistance.

The school has also made sure that Tarou will be able to adjust comfortably to the Japanese education system. At some point, his teacher assigned him a seat next to Japanese-Filipino classmate. When I was not around, his classmate helped him with the translation. During the first month, Tarou was exempted from studying *kanji* (Chinese characters); he instead devoted his time in learning *Hiragana*. During lunch and cleaning periods, some of his classmates would explain to him his duties through gestures. After the first quarter, the school decided to offer separate classes for Tarou at least twice a week because Tarou's teacher could no longer attend to his personal needs as a student. During their *kokugo* (Japanese) classes, Tarou and his Japanese-Filipino classmate would transfer to another classroom where another teacher was assigned to polish their *Hiragana* (one component of the Japanese writing system that represents syllables) and review the past lessons they had.

Tarou was also fortunate that the city has an interpretation service for non-Japanese speaking children. During class, I did not only translate/interpret lessons; I also helped Tarou adjust to the classroom culture. I taught him how to behave properly inside the class and helped him catch up with his lessons. I acted like a disciplinarian making sure that he followed the rules and regulations in class. I also translated some of the school correspondence for her mother to understand. Such city government intervention as I saw it had made the adjustment process for Tarou much easier.

CONCLUSION

Tarou's school challenges revolved around the issues of language, classroom discipline and practices, and parent-school relationships. Unlike other bicultural children's experiences described in various literature cited in this paper, Tarou reportedly did not experience

discrimination or bullying during the conduct of my study. Language apparently became a problem because Tarou did not speak Japanese at all when he arrived from the Philippines after staying for 10 years. Such difficulty was manifested through his inability to comprehend questions during exams and accomplish school tasks and home works.

Having been raised and educated in the Philippines in a different way, Tarou also had to adjust to the Japanese classroom in terms of discipline and practices. Tarou's attention was called several times for his failure to observe school rules. In my own assessment, his non observance of rules, aside from the cultural tensions between his past and present environment, is may partly be due to his ignorance to such disciplinary measures. This was perhaps because nobody has informed him about school prohibitions beforehand. Tarou could have better coped if someone educated him about the rules and regulations of the Japanese classroom prior to the start of the school year.

Tarou's mother also had to familiarize herself with how the elementary education in Japan operates. Like Tarou, she also strived hard to be able to help her child cope with school demands. However, her limited Japanese and inability to read and write *kanji* (Chinese characters) hindered her to perform or participate in relation to Tarou's education. Besides language, her current situation as breadwinner of her family owing to a sickly husband also necessitated her to work hard to eke out a living. Her work hindered her to fully participate in PTA meetings, to help Tarou accomplish his assignments, and to provide her child's school needs (e.g., school materials). Her personal values and views also at once were challenged because the school principal viewed Tarou's basketball training as necessary.

The challenges that both Tarou and his mother experienced compelled them to seek assistance from their network. The personal and institutional strategies that they both adapted somehow eased the pressures relating to Tarou's schooling. The account of Tarou may perhaps reflect the experiences of other bicultural or immigrant children especially those in similar circumstances such as inability to speak the local language and different cultural upbringing. This paper somehow provided concrete lived experiences of a bicultural child. Thus, it is with high hopes that this will make people be aware of the issue and will encourage them to do research in this area.

What are the implications of Tarou's experiences on managing immigrant children at schools? First, immigrant students should be provided with translators so they can cope with their studies with ease. In addition to being offered the translation services, immigrant children also have to be acquainted with Japanese schools' practices in particular and the Japanese culture in general so they can understand why Japanese schools operate in a certain way. Second, it is also imperative to note that Japanese schools in the long run should eventually foster a multiculturalistic environment at schools without having to impose one cultural standard. To achieve such kind of environment, schools should provide services to immigrant parents who are also struggling with language problems. Letters and announcements should also have English translations for parents' easy understanding.

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