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Newspaper In Education -
Focusing On The Activities Of Japanese Newspapers

By

Izumi Tadokoro
PARALLEL SESSION

Newspaper in Education

— focusing on the activities
of Japanese newspapers —

Izumi TADOKORO

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Nihon Shinbun Kyokai
(The Japan Newspaper Publishers and
Editors Association)

June 24, 1994
Bangkok, Thailand
This is the second opportunity for our association, NSK, to send a speaker on NIE to Asia. The first was in Seoul, Korea, last April when we sent our NIE Coordinator to report on the present status and future outlook of our activities in Japan. The Seoul Seminar on NIE, held jointly by the Korean Newspapers Association and Korean Newspaper Editors Association on April 21, was attended by 130 participants from local schools and newspapers. My presentation today will follow a similar line, explaining what NIE is, why Japanese newspapers have become more aware of NIE and how we are developing related activities. Now, I would like to use the writing format of a news story — 5 Vs and 1 W — to elaborate the why and how of NIE.

But let me first start by defining NIE briefly. NIE can be defined as a cooperative effort of schools and newspapers to utilize the newspaper as an active tool for instruction.

WHO?

The first of the 5 Vs stands for WHO, who will be involved in NIE and who will play an essential role?

I assume that most educational aims can be achieved if the teacher is capable of communicating effectively with pupils/students.

Therefore, it is the teachers that play an essential role, although newspapers came up with the initial idea of NIE. Teachers can use textbooks and reference materials for instruction as they like. Newspaper people cannot enter classrooms unless they are invited to speak about their experiences such as scoops, activities abroad and so forth.

On the other hand, newspaper people can assist teachers’ understanding and implementing NIE in the following ways:

- to publish guidebooks, supplements and other reference materials on NIE
- to carry stories and articles about NIE in their daily issues
- to deliver newspapers to schools in accordance with teachers’ requests
to provide opportunities for the teachers involved in NIE to report and exchange observations on their experiences

- to persuade principals and educational administrators to facilitate teachers in implementing NIE
- to raise funds for NIE with cooperation from others interested or involved in NIE

Thus, newspapers play a substantial but supplementary role in promoting NIE. I would like to, however, emphasize the key role of teachers again because active use of newspapers in the classroom depends on the willingness and capabilities of the teacher. If pupils/students — future subscribers to newspapers — were not interested in reading newspapers after all the teachers' efforts, all of the NIE activities have been of no use.

WHERE and WHEN?

Next, let me give a brief overview on the developments of NIE in the U.S., as the U.S. is regarded as the initiator of NIE.

Already in the 1950's and 1960's, several daily newspapers were involved in NIE, individually, in one way or another in their circulating areas. The first meeting at a national level, according to the NAA (Newspaper Association of America) Foundation, took place in Chicago in October 1969 under the title of "Newspaper in the Classroom Curriculum", and was attended by 21 curriculum specialists, ANPA Foundation staff and Chicago area newspaper personnel.

From 1973 to 1975, the conference called "Newspapers in the Classroom" was held annually. A change in the conference title from Classroom to Education Program Development occurred in 1976 and remained this way until 1981. In 1982, the title of the Conference was shortened to "Newspaper in Education". This seems to me to reflect some changes in NIE concepts, that NIE activities should be more concessions of parents-families, where children and their parents can have lively discussions on matters carried in newspapers. Education is not limited to classrooms, but can be extended to families — this idea sprouted a new word "Family Focus" in the late 1980's. In 1990,
ANPA Foundation held two large conferences, NIE Conference in New York City and the Newspaper Literacy Conference in Washington D.C. Those two conferences were combined the next year, and the Conference on NIE and Literacy has been held annually since 1992 with about 400 participants. In the U.S., about half of the daily newspapers are said to have their own NIE programs.

In recent years, literacy problems have become more serious in the U.S., so those involved in NIE tend to think and talk about literacy as well.

In Europe, Scandinavian newspapers have been known for their early enthusiasm for NIE, following them other European newspapers and national newspaper organizations have become more aware about NIE, exchanging information and experiences.

As for international newspaper organizations, the FIEJ (International Federation of Newspaper Publishers) has organized an NIE Committee with members from 14 countries including the U.S. and Japan. The committee meets several times a year, and is planning to hold a world conference on NIE in Sweden in September next year.

In Asia, the PFA (Press Foundation of Asia) recently decided to join FIEJ, and at the same time, to take up NIE as a new focus of its activities.

Besides newspaper circles, international organizations such as UNESCO seems to show interest in NIE as well.

WHAT?

Here, I do not think it necessary to repeat the definition of NIE, but would prefer to look at the newspaper as a tool of instruction.

The Journal/Sentinel Inc. in Milwaukee published a guidebook on NIE a few years ago. It described the role of the newspaper in the field of education as follows: "As a resource, the newspaper helps to bridge the gap between the subject studied in the classroom and the real world in which the student lives and to which the student relates. There are good reasons for using the newspaper in
It deals with reality, with what is happening here and now. Motivation for reading and for discussion are built in.
• It contains history as it happens, reported as completely and as objectively as is humanly possible.
• It contains something for every student—the comics, the editorials, real math problems, and science as it happens.
• It contains practical vocabulary, words students will use over and over throughout their lives.
• It can be marked, cut, pasted, colored—activities important to young children who learn by doing and by seeing.
• It contains in its news stories the best models for clear, concise, simple writing.
• It is the perfect model for teaching students to write for a purpose and for a particular audience.
• It is the only up-to-date social studies text there is.
• It is an influential and integral part of our free society. Its freedom is guaranteed under the Constitution."

These are the merits of the newspaper as a tool of education, if properly used. Good teachers who have accurate and sufficient knowledge about the newspaper and the newspaper industry can use newspapers for what they are, namely a mirror of the real world. If used improperly, with ignorance or prejudice, the newspaper can be detrimental to pupils/students. So, there is room for guidebooks and NIE manuals to insure proper use of the newspaper.

Another important point, quite a few U.S. newspapers has NIE coordinators and the likes within their companies. Some of them are ex-teachers, some journalists. They work to moderate or to serve as a bridge between educators and newspapers. Coordinators are principally indispensable for the smooth and successful implementation of NIE.

• WHY?

FIEJ conducted a survey in 1991 by sending a questionnaire to its member organizations. Two questions relate to why newspapers
started NIE and why they continue with NIE. The first question was, "What was the aim of the NIE program when it started?" and the second one was, "What is the aim today?".

Most of the original NIE objectives were similar and remain the same, such as: to promote newspaper reading; for mutual help for schools and newspapers; to foster future readers; and to encourage and develop reading habits among the youth. Some newspaper associations added new objectives such as: daily reading habits, critical conscience; literacy campaign; competence at writing, civic awareness; tomorrow is readership, today—literacy.

Objectives from the newspapers' standpoint should also be added. Countering the trends showing that young people are losing interest in reading (newspapers) was one of the most touching objectives for Japanese newspapers. We enjoy an extraordinary high literacy rate in Japan, thanks to the nation's educational policy and hundreds of years of cultural tradition. Yet audio-visual media has become more and more popular so that pupils/students (even schoolteachers!) spend more time in front of TV sets and various terminals. Of course, people can live without reading or writing (or even thinking). Reading or culture of letters is an invaluable asset that human beings have inherited from generation to generation. We have to retain readers and if possible, to increase them. Regarding circulation, as we have already reached a saturation point and the Japanese population will decline in the next century, the best we can do is to maintain the present status of the newspaper as an influential and reliable communication medium in Japan. NIE is, after all, a kind of readers' relations since both teachers and pupils/students, together with their family members, are present and future readers.

HOW? — our experiences in Japan —-

Not many years have passed since NIE activities were formally set in motion in Japan. In November 1980, a specialist committee on NIE was set up under the umbrella of NSK's Circulation
Committee with the aim of studying NIE. The subcommittee sent study teams overseas to the U.S.A. and Scandinavian countries, published a pamphlet to introduce what NIE is and delivered it to schools and member newspapers. In 1987, the NSK Board of Directors decided to establish a new NIE Committee, comprised of Executive Directors from member newspapers and news agencies. The committee, initiated in February 1988, The committee organized three specialists committees in charge of (1) editing NIE manuals, (2) launching pilot projects and (3) working out the rules and the methods for delivering newspapers to schools. In January 1989, the NSK appointed Mr. Akira Sono, who was a former chairman of NIE specialists committee, as NIE coordinator, a permanent staff of the association.

The first NIE pilot project started in Tokyo in September 1989, delivering newspapers to an elementary school and to two lower secondary schools. The pilot project was extended to Osaka prefecture in 1991 and then to Niigata prefecture in 1992. Besides the pilot project, a number of influential local newspapers have successfully organized various study groups with cooperation of local educational boards and schoolteachers. By the end of the 1993 school year, 14 elementary schools, 52 lower secondary schools and 11 upper secondary schools had participated in NIE pilot projects, and a total of 91,525 copies of morning editions and 50,758 copies of evening editions were delivered to schools for the project.

As for the present status of our NIE Committee, please refer to chart 1.

Results of the pilot projects have been reported to NSK by teachers involved and we publish them regularly in order to communicate their experiences. We also published a manual for elementary schoolteachers in January 1993, and we are preparing a new one for teachers of lower secondary schools covering every subject. Most of them are written by teachers involved in NIE about their recent experiences. A series of guidebooks with the title of "I am the newspaper" was published from 1990 to 1992 in order to help teachers learn more precisely about the functions and activities of the newspaper.
NSK is now planning to extend the pilot project nationwide beginning in 1994. Applications will be sent to our secretariat after the necessary negotiations at the local level are completed and I hope that more than a dozen prefectures will be able to start the project this coming fall. Just to explain our methods, the pilot project calls for several newspapers (general dailies published by members of NSK) to be placed in the classroom daily for a specific period of time for the students to freely choose and read, and for the teachers to use as teaching materials. The cost of having the newspapers in the classroom will be shared 50-50 by the newspaper company and NSK, and will be the same as the price of the newspaper. This was the case before in the three participating prefectures. As the duration of the project was formally set for two years in principle (three years at the maximum), some pilot projects in Tokyo, Osaka and Niigata will shift to a new method of soliciting subsidies from local organizations made up of newspapers involved in NIE and (in Niigata) from local government.

As for the funding of NIE activities, we have not solved all the problems yet. The Central government and most of the local governments in Japan are not ready to subsidize schools and teachers to implement NIE and educational authorities are not confident about the effects of NIE so far. Moreover, the price system of Japanese newspapers is not as flexible as you see in the U.S., and our very sophisticated home delivery system which enables such a high dissemination rate requires a fixed price for newspapers irrespective of the purpose of use. Somehow, we have to solve this problem in the near future.

I would like to say a few words about the Japanese education system and recent reform of its ideals.

There have been two positive developments in recent years. These were brought forth by the revision of the educational guideline "Course of Study" in 1989 by the Ministry of Education. The new Course of Study was put into effect in April 1992 for elementary schools, April 1993 for lower secondary schools, and last April for upper secondary schools. Fortunately, in a unit named transportation
schools, learning about the newspaper can be selected among other communications media such as broadcasting and telecommunications. Very few textbooks, however, mention the function of the newspaper to date. But I believe the situation can be improved if we continue our endeavors and convince authors of textbooks the importance of the newspaper in the information society.

The second development was the definition of a new notion of "scholastic ability" which is a key phrase in the new Course of Study. "Scholastic ability" means the ability to make comparisons and digest various information; students are expected to formulate their own ideas and be able to express their opinions—such abilities were deemed necessary for pupils/students to cope with an information society.

Quite promising declarations for the development of NIE! These correspond to the objectives of NIE and such ability could be acquired very effectively by using the newspaper in the classroom. However, as is often the case in Japan, conventional notions about scholastic ability are still dominant, whatever the government says. To do well on entrance examinations for schools, both teachers and pupils/students are very busy, forced to spend a great deal of time and energy finishing the extensive curricula within the school year. This is the reality.

In conclusion, I will be frank and say that our achievements are very limited to date. Please look at the number of schools in chart 3 and compare this with the number of schools involved in our pilot project. Also, please compare the total number of newspapers delivered to schools for the pilot project over these five years to our 70 million figure for daily circulation. I presume we are still in the infantile stages of NIE activities, and we have a long way to go. However, I still believe in the comments of an American friend at our Annual National Newspaper Convention in 1992, that students who were good readers in their youth can remain good readers after they are grown up, but bad readers in their youth seldom become good readers in their lifetime.
[Chart 1] NSK ORGANIZATION CHART (part)

BOARD of DIRECTORS

A Board Member in charge of NIE

NIE Committee (32 newspaper and 2 news agency executives)

Chairman and Vice Chairman

The First Specialists Committee
manuscripts and guidebooks

The Second Specialists Committee
pilot project

The Third Specialists Committee
delivery

Tokyo District Specialists Committee

Osaka District Specialists Committee

NIE section

Educational/Cultural Activities Department

Secretary General

SECRETARIAT of NSK
[Chart 7] CURRENT SCHOOL SYSTEM
(from "School Education in Japan" by K. ISHIZAKI)
### Chart 3: Statistics about Education

(from "Statistical Yearbook" 1993/94)

(unit: thousand)

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<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Pupils/Students</th>
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<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>4,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Secondary</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>2,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U. Secondary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>2,624</td>
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(statistics of special education schools are excluded)