

Book Review #1

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Japanese Culture and Society

Book: “*Japanese Education Today*” (1987), William K. Cummings

Summary

Japanese education provides all children with a high quality, well-balanced basic education in the science, music, and art through 9 years of compulsory schooling. The average level of student achievement is high by international standards. So is the retention rate: virtually everyone completes the 9 compulsory years and almost 90 percent of the students graduate from high school. Japan has also succeeded in:

- Motivating students to learn and teaching them effective study habits;
- Creating and maintaining a productive learning environment, which includes effective school discipline;
- Using time productively for educational purposes in and out of school;
- Sustaining attention to developing character and desirable attitudes and behavior (according to Japanese norms) throughout the elementary and secondary years;
- Developing a professional teaching force that is competent and committed, well respected and well remunerated; and
- Providing effective employment services for secondary school leavers and graduates.

These accomplishments result from several interwoven factors, including:

- A preschool experience (much of it parent financed) for more than 90 percent of children;

- An effective public school system, particularly during the compulsory attendance period, supplemented at elementary and secondary levels by
- An informal, but symbiotic set of private (parent financed) education programs responsive to the needs of individual students.

The objective of the author is to sketch some implications for improving American education and also intend to stimulate the reader to examine the values, performances, and potential of American education that affect Japanese education.

First education in Japan is along with Buddhism during the sixth century A.D. which come the Chinese system of writing and its literary tradition. So, too, come Confucianism, its respect for learning, the Confucian classics, and its philosophical traditions. Mid of sixteenth century, Japan experienced an intense of contact with the Western world. During the Edo era, Japanese education was considered to be important for the samurai that was base on both military and literal studies. The Meiji leaders realized from the outset that education had a major role to play in nation building and modernization that it was quite different from the old. After war defeat WW II, Japan began to modify some of the education changes introduced during the Occupation period. These modifications more clearly reflected Japanese ideas about education and educational structure even today.

Japanese emphasizes their core of commonly held beliefs and values in terms of importance and purpose of education, harmonious relations and central role of the group, hard work, diligence, perseverance and motivation.

The structure of the education system in Japan is organized along the lines of the common American 6-3-3 model. Education system in Japanese provides

all children with a high quality, well-balanced basic education in the science, music, and art through 9 years of compulsory schooling. The average level of student achievement is high by international standards. The structure of education system is summarized following:

Compulsory Education	Non-Compulsory Education
<p>1. Elementary School – have 6 years period. The two important education philosophy of Japanese elementary, one is that virtually all children have the ability to learn well and to master to the regular school curriculum and second is that certain habits and characteristics. Some of students at this grade go to <i>juku</i> students for receiving additional educational and social benefits in a supervised environment after school hours.</p>	<p>3. Upper-Secondary School – have 3 years period. During the 3-year upper-secondary school period, the program is virtually identical for all students, whether they are in the academic or the vocational program that require core subjects of Japanese language, mathematics, science, English, and social studies. After students finish the upper-secondary school, university entrance examination process is rigorous national competitions among many students contending for a limited number of places in the more prestigious institutions.</p>
<p>2. Lower-Secondary School – have 3 years period. Instruction is based heavily on lectures which adhere closely to the textbook and course content specified by Ministry of Education. At the end of lower-secondary school, students have to take the entrance examination for attending to privilege upper-secondary school. From this reason, students necessarily attend</p>	<p>4. Higher Education – are of five major types: universities (undergraduate and graduate), junior colleges, technical colleges, special training colleges, and miscellaneous schools. National universities are generally more prestigious and, because of greater resources, usually provide a better quality education at lower cost to students.</p>

cram school to prepare themselves for the entrance examination.	5. Juku – or cram schools operate after school hours and on weekends. Juku are a response to help students review and prepare for regular school lessons as well as advance to the next level through preparation for entrance examinations
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Reflection

From this book reviewed, I recognized that the education development of most modern nation, even US, have been the beneficiaries of education ideas and concepts from other countries, but especially Japanese education has been more active in using idea from abroad to be useful and to help solve its education problems.

Many details of Japanese education were contained in this book. Most of contents concern the education system. The subject of education system is appropriate to use for learning, but some of education policies were varied from the past, so I will explain later. In the author critical aspect, author mentioned many factors related to achievement of Japanese education, but I would like to add the factor that the author did not mention and I believe it should be important.

In terms of culture foundations concerning Japanese education, the author mentioned about the importance of education, harmonious relation and central role of the group, hard work and motivation, but I think the author should mention about role of the mother. Along with this role, Japanese mothers have more expectations and participations in their children achievement in the school tasks that all could encourage children to study hard.

Concerning school schedule in Japan, it, currently, was changed from 6 days school work to be 5 days school work system. The new system started in April 2002. It aims at letting the students spend more time free from pressure with their parents and engage in social contribution activities and experience the abilities to learn and think by themselves. I also believe some of students will not do that, because they think they will have more time than the past to study in cram school for preparing their entrance examination.