

EDUCATION IN JAPAN

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INTRODUCTION:

Education in the sense of reading and writing began in Japan after the introduction of the Chinese writing system in the 6th century or before. The aristocracy was educated in Confusion thought and Buddhism in the Nara (710-794) and Hein¹, (794-1185) periods. Buddhist priests were the first teachers in ancient Japan and temples became the centers of learning Education spread to the military class during the Kama Kura period², (1185-1333) at the same time the peasantry was also increasingly exposed to education. During the Edo period (1660-1868) both the shogunal and dominal governments established schools, the official system was supplemented by private schools at shrines and temples. Education was widely diffused by the time of the Meiji Restoration of 1868.

When Japan opened herself to the world in 1868, one of the government's high priority was adopting western standards in science and education. The Japanese education system was reformed mainly according to the German and French model which experts regarded as most suitable and advantageous³.

Japan's greatest educational achievement is the high quality basic education most young students receive by the time they complete high school. Over 95 percent of Japanese also graduate from high school compared to 88 percent of American students. Some Japanese education experts estimate that the average Japanese high school graduate has attained about the same level of education as the average American after two years of college. The most well educated employees are working in large companies and getting high level places in ministries in Japan⁴.

The Japanese believe school should teach not only academic skills but good character traits as well. e.g all Japanese students and teachers clean school buildings every week. Japanese students are give instructions by their teachers to practice good societal character such as showing their

efforts on any task and giving good response to greet by their teachers in a lively manner⁵.

Japanese higher education approximately three million men and women enrolled in¹ 200 universities and junior colleges, has the second largest higher education system in the developed world. In Japan, public universities usually enjoy more prestige than their private counterparts and only about 25 percent of all university bound student's manage to gain admission to public universities. Even so, Japanese universities are considered to be the weakest component in the nation's educational system. Many Japanese students have traditionally considered their university time to be more social than academic and usually professors and teachers demand little of their charges. Graduate education in Japan is under developed compared to European countries and the United States with only more than 7 percent of Japanese undergraduate going on to graduate school as compared to 13 percent of American undergraduates⁶.

In Japan, the majority of students are admitted to both high school and university, based upon entrance examination performance. The best Japanese high schools and universities require high entrance examination scores. Many Japanese employees hire decisions with the high level educationalists; ambitious students attend private cram schools, a juku (private tutoring schools) and study for long hours to enter in the examination. The futures of most Japanese high school students depend upon the high school they attended to enter in the universities and colleges⁷.

As far as the educational reforms of Japan are concerned the performance of the Japanese students as compared to their peers or their spiritual lords in other developed nations are not satisfied in the educational system. Many Japanese believe that the examination system is very stressful and that the schools are too rigid and to show the little interest in studying and that the educational system needs to produce more creative and flexible citizens for the twenty first century. A large number of the Japanese blame the schools for misbehaving of the children particularly in junior schools.

Beginning with the 2002 school year, major curricular reform occur to make schools more flexible and responsible according to the needs of the students. Nearly one-third of the elementary and junior high school curricula will be cancelled in all major subjects. The educational reforms provided teachers and students the freedom to study what ever interests them whether the topic is religion, the environment or foreign affairs⁸.

English is the most widely studied foreign language in Japan. The study of English considered essential for importing the western technology necessary for modernization⁷.

In Japan all elementary, middle and high schools are obliged to use government approved text books. These text books are compiled by private publishers, who are given full priority or freedom to present the books, but are also required to confirm to government issued school course guidelines⁹. A broad cast college started the courses by radio and television for the overseas Japanese to promote business education. The United Nations University maintains head quarters in Tokyo, a symbol of the increasing Internationalization of Japan.

The Japanese school year starts in April and consists of three terms, separated by short holidays in spring and winter, and a one month long summer break. The most famous universities of Japan are the National Universities of Tokyo and University of Kyoto followed by the best private universities.

CONCLUSION

In the end we can conclude that Japan is one of the few countries in the world that provide a complete and thorough education for almost all the people. Although neither Kindergarten nor high schools are compulsory, attendance at both is fast becoming universal, higher education is also becoming popular. Education administration is decentralized with the Ministry of education planning a coordinating role. Responsibilities for the budget, curriculum, teacher appointments and the supervision of elementary and middle schools are in the hands of local education boards.

At present Japan is in the process of modernization. The people of Japan put education at the top priority in order to speed up the country's modernization. Without education, there will be no builders of modernization.

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