

Education in Japan: A Comparative View

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Course background:

Japan is regarded as a high quality country, accordance with an image of high tech products, and its education system has contributed to the development of the society and technology. This course covers the whole picture of education in Japan by particularly focusing on recent domestic trends and international comparison with other education systems. The course introduces the education system from early childhood to adults and discovers domestic and international issues, relating to recent social change. Two field trips to an elementary school and Ministry of Education are planned during the course. The students are expected to participate in class discussions based on their own education experiences.

The strengths of the Japanese education system are quality assurance in teachers, teaching materials, and school equipment. For example, Teacher development and training are well organized officially and the teachers have many opportunities for self-development. Their salary and allocation system are also insured for their lifetime employment. The curriculum is nationally standardized and textbook has been developed for three years at least. School is a center of local community and functions as a shelter in case of emergency.

The weak points of the system are also shown. For example, each school stands alone and education practice is hard to build networks among schools. Students and teachers do not use ICT less frequently than those in other systems. The high-level quality assurance pushes rigid forms of learning and create less flexibility in learning process.

The recent education reforms are illustrated. One of the largest changes will be an ongoing entrance examination reform to start in 2020/21. Globalization certainly influences the society for a rush in the early childhood selection, multi-path schoolings, moral education as a nationalism, and international authorization such as International Baccalaureate.

Course objective:

To know the basic structure of education system in Japan

To be able to compare an education issue, relating with the student's backgrounds

Course format:

Each class starts with lecture, followed by discussions. The students are expected to make a presentation at the last days of the course.

Course references:

The information come mainly from the below site:

<http://www.nier.go.jp/English/educationjapan/>

The additional information is available at the following sites:

<http://library.criced.tsukuba.ac.jp/en/>

http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/hakusho/html/others/detail/1317220.htm

Grading:

25% - A short essay after the study visit

25% - Class attendance and participation

50% - Final presentations (5-10 min. oral presentation. Original focus with own experience and logical analysis will be highly evaluated.)

Course schedule (as of Aug. 16, 2018):

1. Introduction
2. Early childhood education and care: *for parents, children or ministries?*
3. Primary education: *contents, teacher's professional development, English*
4. Secondary education: *learning outcomes and quality control*
5. Tertiary education: *competition, autonomy, gaps*
6. Technical and vocational education: *skills or innovation*
7. "Social Education" as lifelong learning and community: *rich resource, rich chance?*
8. Governance and management: *centralized system and top-down approach in local*
9. Law, administration, and budget: *Who pays for education?*
10. Study visit to MEXT/NIER (TBC): *the oldest textbook, research roles, negotiations*
11. International surveys and comparative studies: *Where is the best country?*
12. Alternative schools: *new opportunities*
13. Education issues in Japan: *enlarging disparities, gender in science education*
14. Presentations and discussions (1): *What did you find out?*
15. Presentations and discussions (2): *What did you find out?*