

## BOOK REVIEWS

Tsutsui's *A Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar* or other such exhaustive examinations of the details and nuances of the structure and usage of Japanese. Nevertheless, in its own context, it is a thorough overview of the language. The reader can, in less than 200 pages, study the concepts the authors deem fundamental to a good understanding of beginning, intermediate, and even advanced Japanese, all rolled up into one package of steadily increasing complexity. The book doesn't cover everything, but it does give a manageable presentation of many grammatical structures and terminology in a manner that will keep the reader engaged and looking forward to coming back for more.

When pursuing fluency in Japanese and constructing one's own framework for coming to grips with the language's abstruse, unique—and even peculiar—aspects, one cannot have too many tools, and *Making Sense of Japanese Grammar* is one of the more useful and valuable I've come across in recent years. I highly recommend it for Japanese teachers at any level, and for excerpting at varying levels of comprehensiveness for intermediate and advanced students at the secondary level and above. ■

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## The Japanese Model of Schooling

### *Comparisons with the United States*

BY RYOKO TSUNEYOSHI

NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGEFALMER, 2001

190 PAGES + APPENDIX + BIBLIOGRAPHY + INDEX

HARDCOVER, ISBN: 0815336411



Since the American Occupation of Japan (1945–52), international recognition of Japanese education has grown tremendously. The academic success and discipline of Japanese students have warranted further investigation into the Japanese education system and deemed it a worthy model. Yet, as Ryoko Tsuneyoshi, author of *The Japanese Model of Schooling*, submits, Japanese education is not without problems, and in this sense, there are noticeable similarities between Japanese and American education. Both

countries are undergoing societal changes brought on by a globalizing economy, political shifts, and uncertainty about the future. These issues have translated into louder calls for educational reform, as these societies grapple with the best way to raise and socialize their members. Tsuneyoshi's book addresses the questions such conditions and attempted reform elicit, such as: What is the role of school? How are our children best educated? What should we teach our children? It is Tsuneyoshi's belief that cross-cultural comparisons will help illuminate the commonalities, alternatives, and future directions of education in Japan and the US.

Tsuneyoshi, an associate professor at the University of Tokyo's Graduate School of Education, has a unique perspective on the topic at hand: born in the United States, she moved to Japan with her parents when she was in the fifth grade. Thus, in her words, "[t]he fact that a society's education reflects its culture was a personal realization for me" (xi). As Volume 27 of the "Reference Books in International Education" series, edited by the renowned Edward Beauchamp, *The Japanese Model of Schooling* developed from Tsuneyoshi's earlier book entitled *Human Development in Japan and the United States: The Hidden Curriculum*, which was first published in 1992 and is now in its twelfth edition in

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Japan. The first three chapters—"Patterns of Childrearing: Legacy of Change," "The Basic American and Japanese Models of Schooling," "The Basic Patterns at Work"—are revised versions of this previous work. The remaining four chapters are titled "The Emergence of the Japanese School Model," "The Japanese Model under Siege," "Newcomers in the Japanese Classroom: Implications for Change," and "Parallel Issues and Concerns: Japan and the United States."

Although each chapter is necessary to Tsuneyoshi's overall objective—to provide context for the current educational system in Japan and elucidate the issues surrounding reform, the chapters can easily stand alone to highlight aspects of Japanese education. Indeed, some of the chapters are particularly good in thoroughly explicating their respective topics. Chapter 2 and the relatively brief Chapter 3 describe, in comparison to the United States, the present model of schooling in Japan. Using two Japanese elementary schools as case studies, Tsuneyoshi illustrates how the Japanese model emphasizes the whole child, stresses interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, organizes collective tasks and goals, and underscores equal treatment of all students. With these conclusions the author confirms the findings of others in the field, such as Catherine Lewis in *Educating Hearts and Minds: Reflections on Japanese Preschool and Elementary Education* (1995).

Chapter 4, "The Japanese Model under Siege," is especially effective in summarizing the emerging educational problems in Japan, where schools must adjust to changing students and parents. Tsuneyoshi begins the chapter by describing a change to the Chisamoto Elementary School pamphlet for entering students in 1997. The pamphlet, which, in part, explains that a pair of indoor shoes should be brought to school and that boys' shoes should have green linings and girls' shoes red, departed from past practices with this sentence, emphasized with bold letters: "The children are free to choose whether to have the green lining or not (note: this is different from previous years)" (1994). This change may seem trivial, but, as Tsuneyoshi argues, it has symbolic meaning. In simple terms, Japanese schools seem to be changing with the times. Parents, the Chisamoto School faculty agree, are "more vocal and child-focused but also more self-centered and uncooperative" (1996), and the relationship between the school and the students' families is becoming less important, and even

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questioned as a practice. Tsuneyoshi also describes a new generation of teachers and a more diverse student body as issues Japanese schools face. These trends, which challenge the Western stereotype of Japanese schools, vex teachers and administrators, but also, Tsuneyoshi maintains, open up new possibilities for practices and curricula.

In the final chapter, “Parallel Issues and Concerns,” Tsuneyoshi examines the social context of schools in Japan and the United States, whose societies, she concludes, share similarities. This chapter more than any other makes direct comparisons between the two countries, and despite the differences between the social environments of Japan and the US, Tsuneyoshi makes the case that both societies face difficult questions on issues such as cultural diversity and unity, the role of public education, and national competitiveness. This thought-provoking discussion of broad issues as they relate to Japanese schools reminds the reader that much of the book is based largely on primary education, which, even Tsuneyoshi admits, is distinct from secondary education in a variety of ways.

Despite this downside, *The Japanese Model of Schooling* is an excellent source to examine Japanese educational practices and concerns and can logically be integrated into units on Japan or comparative education at the graduate or undergraduate level. But because the book presents a great deal of information and does not provide for easy reading in the way that *Educating Hearts and Minds*, for instance, does, assigning chapters based on specific topics, such as Japanese socialization or whether Asian methods can work in US classrooms, is more practical. Including readings from the book with the video “Schools of Thought: Teaching Children in America and Japan” (Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1995) can be particularly useful, as the video illustrates and reinforces many of the points Tsuneyoshi makes throughout the book. Moreover, book chapters can be included with readings on other Asian nations to present a fuller picture of education in Asia.

Tsuneyoshi concludes by reiterating her statement that education in both Japan and the United States is undergoing an identity crisis, and even though both countries have been engaged in a heated debate over educational reform for many years, neither believes it has found the answer. One should not expect to find the answer in the book either, as it is not Tsuneyoshi's purpose. As Edward Beauchamp explains in the “Series Editor's Forward,” each book in the series “strives to provide accurate, relevant, and up-to-date information.” Tsuneyoshi has succeeded in this objective, leaving the reader curious about the future of education in Japan. ■

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