

**Contextual Issues Impacting on Teacher Education:
A Comparative Study between Japan and Egypt**

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by:
Prof. Mohamad Abdel-Dayem
Head, Comparative Education
and Educational Administration Dept.
Zagazig University, Egypt

&
Dr. Ali S. Ibrahim
Faculty of Education, Zagazig University, Egypt

Introduction

- The cultural context has a considerable impact on education at any society.
- The cultural context may have a positive or a negative influence, it depends.
- Japanese model was studied by many to derive some lessons but did not have such interest in the Arab region.
- Japanese model is not newborn and did not come by accident.

Focus of the Study:

- explore some contextual issues that have left their imprints upon education and teacher education in Japan and Egypt
- compare the Japanese model to its Egyptian counterpart

Methodology

- National Character Approach
- It provides a thickly descriptive and analytical picture of the web of relationships between education and culture in both societies

Culture: a key concept

- The overall complex context of a society that includes shared ideas, beliefs, habits, customs, attitudes, values, ways of thinking, work behavioral patterns, and every innovation thereof built on these roots or is developed in light of current life

The socio-cultural context of Japan

- Two issues from the historical review of Japan:
 - (a) two cultures of Japan
 - (b) the historical cultural transformation did not mean total conversion

Religion

- Shinto is the oldest religion in Japan. Shinto/the way to God is a set of old beliefs that do not have a heavenly basis or a holy book.
- It calls for living in harmony with all creatures on earth

- Cultural influences of Shinto: respect for the other(s) and self-denial for the sake of the group
- Other religions exist. The issue with religion in Japan is how all religions produced collective agreed-upon values and behaviors
- Examples: greeting someone, hard work, respect for the family, obedience of the elders (e.g. parents and teachers) and commitment to the group

History:

- The Pre-Meiji eras: society was strictly stratified
- The socio-cultural results are obedience of the social system, adherence to moral commitment, and association with group behavior
- The Meiji rule (1868-1912) enlightenment period: the Japanese mentality has changed but not totally
- The society replaced feudal traditionalism and dogmatism with elements of western modernity however with Japanese flavor

- Japanization: a process of digesting imported elements of cultures, melting them in the traditional culture bowl, and then reproducing new elements that are purely Japanese.
- In the post War era, the U.S. and its allies tried to cultivate new ideas such as individualism and competition and at the same time weaken others such as collective spirit, loyalty to group, patriarchy, and obsolete obedience to political figures.
- During the 1950s – 1960s Japanese rebelled. They reengineered ideas and behaviors to meet their inherited culture.
- Nationalism was at the peak and they wanted to give an example of how they can modernize based on their inherited values and culture.

Teachers and Teaching on Japan's Cultural Map

- Teaching is at the top in the ranks of professions in Japan.
- Teachers perform their jobs with enthusiasm (it is a mission they are carrying on for their nation).
- This mission is equal to those accomplished by religious leaders as teachers in Japan believe.
- Teaching is a very attractive and competitive
- To get a teaching license a novice teacher has to have superior physical, mental, cognitive, as well as moral qualities.
- Four exams set by different Ministry of Education authorities; one of which is conducted at the school

- The Ministry of Education requires all colleges and universities wishing to offer courses to make a submission to the Ministry
- Teaching is a life-long position
- Teachers participate in a lifelong training program.
- First-year teachers receive substantial assistance and guidance from senior teachers
- Teacher induction in Japan facilitates collegiality
- Professional development beyond the induction year include: self-training, system-wide training, and university-based training

- Japanese teachers spend more time outside classrooms.
- They work for long hours from dawn till nightfall at school.
- During summer vacation they coach.
- The job description of a teacher includes coach, leader, mentor, counselor and friend.
- Schools have 'open houses' where teachers invite parents, other teachers as well as other members of the school community to visit their classrooms.

The socio-cultural context of Egypt: An historical overview

- Location of Egypt, its nature, its people
- For Egyptians education is important for social mobility

Religion

- Islam is the dominant religion.
- Islam strongly supports seeking knowledge. It calls for respecting teachers and education leaders.
- Religious values have had positive influence on teachers and teaching
- However, this situation has changed during the last few decades... open-door policy and its consequences was the reason behind this

History

- Education has been the main driving force of progress.
- Mohammad Ali (1805-1846) and modern education in Egypt (missions, schools), replicated the French model.
- Fascinated by the French, he created a highly centralized system which began to deteriorate after his defeat in 1841.
- Isma'il tried to follow his grandfather's footsteps.

British Occupation:

- Two negative impacts are: fostering centralization and introducing rigid examination. These do still have negative consequences on teaching and teachers [see Boktor]
- Following the 1952 revolution, education expanded and became free from primary through university.
- Teaching became a highly desirable profession. But the situation deteriorated in the 1970s.

- In recent decades, population explosion, increased social demand on education, lack of resources, and lack of cause have left Egypt lost in its pursuit to reform education and teaching.

Teachers and Teaching on Egypt's Cultural Map

- Teachers have been suffering from low payments
- It is not surprising to hear complaints about the low salaries whenever you talk with an Egyptian teacher
- Very recently the Egyptian Parliament endorsed a new bill to improve teachers' remuneration
- Teaching in public schools in Egypt is not a desirable job
- However many people go into it to secure a living or because they failed to go into other more prestigious professions.

- As for professional development: it is hard to find sustainable or genuine teacher training programs.
- Teachers get formal training when it is time for their promotion.
- Induction is still under study and USAID has recently partnered with the Ministry of Education to initiate and pilot induction projects for novice teachers.

Conclusion

- The Japanese continues to modify Western pedagogical concepts to meet the needs of their own society.
- Egyptian education project has faced challenges (the many wars, internal and external conflicts, and economic troubles), but the cultural issues are at the core of the regression happening to teaching in Egypt.

Lessons to be learned:

1. Education should come from the womb of the socio-cultural context
2. There is no Zero civilization
3. Moral education has a high priority
4. Human beings are at the fore
5. Teachers should come first if a nation wants to create a civilization

Teachers can change Africa