

**GLOBALIZATION AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM  
IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN**

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## **GLOBALIZATION AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN**

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**Abstracter** This study explores the notions of globalization as embodied in Japanese educational reforms. Modern institutional discourses of educational reform in Japan have shifted over time and all of these reform movements have been constructed by particular social and historical trajectories. Generally speaking, it has been taken for granted that the educational reform in Japan has been turning gradually toward globalization. However, this paper is trying to interrupt the notion that such globalization has constructed various notions of citizenship and nationalism. Firstly, we argue that the Japanese version of globalization is associated with Westernization, especially Americanization economically and philosophically. Secondly, nationalism is a counter-reaction to globalization. Making contribution to the world society actually is to have a political influence in the world and even to spread the Japanese culture to the rest of the world. Thirdly, although it is common that Japanese companies make inroads into foreign markets, and foreign companies make inroads into Japanese markets, nationalism has become more intense in Japan. This paper concludes by pointing out that the Japanese globalization is an organizational-institutional globalization.

**Keywords** Globalization, citizenship, educational reform

### **Introduction**

Learning from the West and building up the nation of Japan were the slogan when the Meiji Restoration occurred. During the 1950's and 1960's adopting American standards and exporting Japanese products to the US were the motif of the globalization. What meant to be globalization in 1970's and 1980's was to get natural resources from overseas.

Nationalism is a counter-reaction to globalization. The Japanese government's effort to make contribution to the world society can be seen as the strategies to have political and cultural influence in the world. The official educational reform discourses on

internationalization are thought of terms of being “good Japanese” and introducing Japanese language and culture to other countries. Embodied in official Japanese discourse is the individual who actively participates in a world economically, politically and culturally. Such internationalization is merely a slogan which fosters the idea of nationalism. Beck (2000) considers this type of internationalization a “cultural globalization” that “is not to build factories everywhere in the world, but to become part of the respective culture.” (p. 46)

Although it is common that Japanese companies make inroads into foreign markets and foreign companies make inroads into Japanese markets, the nationalism has become more intense in the Japan. The House of Councilors of Japan passed the New Fundamental Law of Education in 2006 which states that the foundation of education provided at school is to educate students to love Japan and to value Japanese traditions and culture. Paying respect to Japanese national flag and anthem, i.e. hoisting the national flag and singing the national anthem at the entrance ceremony and graduation ceremony, standing up and singing the national anthem, etc., has become obligation to teachers. Recently, there are nearly 100 teachers are subjected to disciplinary action due to the refusal to stand up and sing the national anthem in Japan every year.

This paper concludes by pointing out that the Japanese globalization is an organizational-institutional globalization. This type of globalization is not for the rest of the world but for Japan. Skepticism is what we need when we read these institutional discourses. It is dangerous to be deluded by the literal sense of the words. We have to read the documents historically, and not only rhetorically. Instead of what kind of knowledge is good or bad, we have to be aware that any knowledge can be dangerous; providing a new way or knowledge to make Japanese educational systems better can be also dangerous.

### **Theoretical Perceives and Methodology**

The theoretical orientation of this study is Michel Foucault’s conception of power. The consideration of Foucault’s theory in this study was a political strategy. We use Foucault as one of multiple poststructural theorists to open up new possibilities for rethinking systems of reasoning related to educational reforms in Japan. For Foucault, power is neither an ideological concern, nor a domain dominated by one social group over others, but exists as it is exercised. Foucault asserts that one should analyze power not by its location, as

regulated and legitimated forms, but at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes. For Foucault, power cannot be possessed but is something that exists in action. A multiplicity of actions engenders power, and power operates through discourse associated with the construction of knowledge. Discourse is an exercise of power, power produces knowledge, and power is a productive network all over the society. Knowledge is always reshaped and reconstructed when power relations change.

The methodology we apply to this study is Foucault's notion of genealogy. Although genealogical analyses may not be described as one specific technical method, they are interrelated multiple techniques. The essential features of Foucault's notion of history are genealogy, history of the present, etc. A history of the present, generally speaking, intended to demonstrate that there is nothing necessary or inevitable about the present circumstances. The objective of genealogy is to historicize the subject, that is, to demonstrate that events and circumstances are historically contingent.

The major archives for this study are official and semi-official documents on educational reform. The official documents are issued by the Ministry of Education, and the semi-official documents include the ones proposed by educational reform consultative bodies. We consider all of them discursive technologies that constitute educational reform in Japan.

### **Curriculum Reform in 1980's and 1990's**

Early in the 1980's, the Provisional National Council on Educational Reform (*Rinji Kyoiku Shingikai*, hereafter NCER), as an advisory body to Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, was established. The members of the NCER were industrial leaders, university professors, researchers, novelists, etc. About half of the members were not from the business or industrial sector. This was the first time people from broader cultural arenas were officially designated to speak on curriculum reform. By then, it was already the privilege of the industrial leaders to officially advise the Ministry of Education on curriculum policy.

The officially announced purpose of the Council was: “. . . to propose relevant reforms of government policies and practices related to education to enable the educational system to respond to recent social changes and cultural developments and thereby to achieve the aim of education as defined in the Fundamental Law of Education of 1947” (NCER, 1987, p. v).

By 1987, the NCER proposed four reports on basic points of view for educational reform. The NCER has summarized the substance of the four reports which were:

- a) the principle of putting emphasis on individuality;
- b) transition to a lifelong learning system;
- c) coping with various changes
  - i. coping with internationalization trends;
  - ii. coping with an information-oriented society.

The educational reform proposals were considered to have laid the foundation for the education system in the present because the NCER employed very modern rhetorical phrases such as individuality and internationalization.

Generally speaking, it has been taken for granted that educational reform in Japan has gradually turned toward individualization and internationalization since the 1980s. However, my purpose here is to interrupt the idea that individualization and internationalization have held essentially the same meaning throughout this time. As I have demonstrated, the notion of citizenship has mutated quite markedly over the period studied here, while appeal to concepts such as *democracy*, the *individual*, and *individuality* have not only been unreliable/unstable, but different inscriptions of those terms have themselves been produced. In the following two sections, I examine how the notions of individualization and internationalization are reframed in contemporary curriculum policy. I assert that individualization and internationalization as linked slogans used repeatedly by the NCER have reconstructed the meaning of citizenship and of nationalism, in ways of becoming and being Japanese.

### **The Notion of Internationalization as Embodied in Educational Reforms: Nationalism**

*Internationalization* is a major catchphrase of NCER reform policy. Internationalization is to “make the development of Japanese competent to live as members of the world community and to enable Japanese to contribute to the world community in various fields including the arts, research, culture, sports, science, technology and the economy” (NCER, 1987, p. 93). Further, the NCER describes what Japanese need to acquire in order to make such a contribution to the world community:

1. Relevant knowledge and abilities which make it possible to think with an international and global perspective;
2. The language ability to communicate with members of other cultures, power of expression, cosmopolitan etiquette and knowledge; and
3. Broad and profound knowledge about Japan with which one can explain persuasively about Japan's history, traditions, culture, society and other aspects.  
(NCER, 1987, p. 94)

For the NCER, the purpose of emphasizing such internationalization is as much to build up the nation as it is to make a contribution to the world community. Such appeal to internationalization operates in that sense merely as a slogan in service to fostering the idea of a new form of nationalism.

The new nationalism has several dimensions. Firstly, the NCER asserts that in order to actualize such internationalization it is very important for the Japanese to be Japanese first:

If Japanese people are to be accepted in the international community, they are to be requested to have the identity of being a Japanese and, at the same time, to have the attitude and ability to regard themselves as a relative being. More specifically, they are required to have a profound knowledge about Japanese culture, to regard Japanese values as relative ones, and to enrich and enlighten themselves spirally.  
(NCER, 1987, pp. 407-408)

What the NCER considers as “the identity of being a Japanese” is: a) have a deep understanding of culture and traditions that are claimed as distinctively Japanese; b) love the nation of Japan; c) respect the unofficial national anthem (*kimigayo*) and unofficial national flag (*hinomaru*) (NCER, 1987). The emphasis on respect for *kimigayo* and *hinomaru* is especially controversial within Japan and also more broadly within Asia. *Kimigayo* and *hinomaru* were the Japanese national anthem and flag until the end of WWII. They were abolished after the War since they were considered symbols of aggression. Thereafter, Japan did not have an official national flag and anthem for more than fifty years. The Japanese Constitution did not include any provision for a Japanese flag and anthem until 1999. It can be said that the call for *kimigayo* and *hinomaru* is to promote a new kind of nationalism.

In time, in the *Course of Study* issued in 1990, the Ministry of Education decided

that the use of *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo* at school entrance and graduation ceremonies was compulsory. The logic espoused by the Ministry of Education was that Japanese have to respect other countries' national flags and anthems while they are abroad, therefore, Japanese have to respect their own national flag and anthem first. In 1999, the Japanese Diet modified the Japanese Constitution and *hinomaru* and *kinomaru* became the official national flag and anthem. Here, the institutional discourses of educational reform have incited and led other processes that are now tied to a new notion of nationalism in the guise of internationalism.

Secondly, the new nationalism entails attention to linguistic policy. Enhancement of Japanese language education both in Japan and abroad is another major issue inhering the NCER's reform discourse.<sup>7</sup> In the Fourth Report announced in August 1987, the NCER emphasizes:

With regard to Japanese language instruction for foreigners, it is urgently required to carry out scientific research on the Japanese language as a lingua franca and to develop appropriate teaching methods and materials. The training of teachers of Japanese as a foreign language should be accelerated, and efforts should be made to ensure that the Japanese language be more widely learned and used in foreign countries. (NCER, 1987, p. 405)

The NCER further stresses that:

It is necessary to carry out scientific research on the Japanese language as an international language and to develop appropriate teaching methods and materials. In particular, it is necessary to establish undergraduate and graduate courses for the teaching of Japanese as a foreign language. It is also necessary to ensure that the Japanese language be more widely learned and used in foreign countries, for example, by sending Japanese teachers of the Japanese language, as well as teaching materials, and aids, to foreign university, upon their request, under exchange programs between Japanese and foreign universities. (NCER, 1987, p. 407)

Much more emphasis is placed on distributing Japanese language to the rest of the world than fostering foreign language education for the Japanese. Making Japanese as a "lingua franca" is what the NCER intended. Generally, it was believed that the Japanese had already

contributed to the world economically, therefore, the Japanese language has to permeate the whole world, too. It can be argued that the NCER's discourse on internationalization tends toward a "Japanization." That is, the purpose of advocating internationalization in terms of spreading the Japanese language has imperialist undertones – "the rest of the world" exists implicitly as a classroom awaiting instruction in Japanese language.

Thirdly and related, the NCER underlines the importance of distributing other elements of Japanese culture to the rest of the world:

Japan efforts have so far been focused on importing and transplanting science and technology from advanced industrialized countries in Europe and North America. It has not always made adequate efforts with regard to the international exchange and contribution in the fields of education, research, culture and sports . . . . It will also become important for Japan to make international contributions in respective fields . . . . The increased exchange of persons may cause what is called "cultural frictions." Such friction, however, should be considered as normal phenomena in the international community . . . the distinctive characteristics, as well as the universality, of the Japanese tradition and culture will be rediscovered and recognized anew, and the Japanese culture will be able to contribute to the creation of the peaceful and prosperous international community based on coexistence and cooperation among diverse cultures and among pluralistic systems. (NCER, 1987, pp. 465-466)

In the NCER's context, the key of how to overcome cultural frictions for Japanese is not to try to have better understanding of other cultures, but is to spread understanding of Japanese culture throughout the world. Striving to introduce Japanese culture into foreign countries is one aspect of the NCER's technologies of internationalization.

The Ministry of Education has further taken over the order of reasoning here in the NCER. In the *Course of Study* issued in 1989, the Ministry of Education placed emphasis on how schools should teach "Japan's magnificent culture and traditions" and how they should "seek to enhance educational content to focus on cultivating understanding and affection for the Japanese nation and its history and fostering the attributes of Japanese people living independently in the international community" (MESSC, 2000, p. 174).

It seems clear, then, from the three aspects discussed here that built within official contemporary discourses of individualization and internationalization are the possibilities



and limits of past political science and present theories of governance. The “anti-individualization” and “nationalistic” dimensions of current curriculum reform rhetoric are couched in terms of an individuality and internationalization which is, in turn, an instrumental orientation to the maximization of human capacities as a form of biopower. Ulrich Beck (2000) considers this type of internationalization a “cultural globalization” that “is not to build factories everywhere in the world, but to become part of the respective culture” (p. 46). In the new nationalism, one knows one is Japanese not by simply recognizing one’s interpenetration with a group in the same bounded geopolitical territory, but by seeing one’s language, cultural traditions, and artifacts replicated and discussed beyond the borders of home.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Modern institutional discourses of educational reform in Japan have shifted over time and all of these reform movements have constructed by particular social and historical trajectories. From the construction of the notion of “democracy” in the end of the World War II through the production of the *internationalization* and *Japanization* in the contemporary society, there are many ruptures emerging in the discourses. Also, different historical discourse conceptualizes different notion of what to be meant “education.” We have drawn upon Foucault’s notions of power and history to trace the path of past notions of globalization as embodied in Japanese educational reforms. The consideration of Foucault’s theory in this study was a political strategy. We use Foucault, as one of multiple theorists, who opens up new possibilities for rethinking systems of reasoning related to educational reforms in Japan. Using Foucault’s notion of power in this study enabled us to focus on the construction of Japanese globalization citizenship in Japanese educational reform discourses involving convoluted networks of power relations and allowed us to open up new spaces in conceptualizing how the production of reason occurred and how we think of educational reform movements as effects of power. Moreover, Foucault’s notion of “a history of the present” is to historicize the subject and to illustrate that there is nothing necessary or inevitable about present ways of thinking or being. This approach stands in sharp contrast to descriptive or narrative educational history that has been considered “scientific” and “authentic” among many Japanese historians and this approach also provides us with a method of problematizing the “nature” of what the Japanese follower, citizen, etc.

It is ironic that the more stress on *internationalization* the more emphases on *Japanization*. As in many other countries, in Japan as well, the term *globalization* has replaced *internationalization*. The use of term *globalization* has come into fashion in the world. Although there are many debates on what *globalization* is, the influential contemporary political and social theorists, somehow have similar views. Robertson (1992) has said: “[Globalization is the] compression of world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole . . . concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global in the twentieth century” (p.8). Another theorist, Ritzer (2007), has indicated: “. . . basic definition of *globalization* as ‘the world diffusion of practices, expansion of relations across continents, organization of social life on a global scale, and growth of a shared global consciousness’” (p. 4).

What is the Japanese version of the *globalization*? First, we argue that it associated with Westernization, especially Americanization economically and philosophically. Learning from the West and building up the nation of Japan was the slogan when the Meiji Restoration occurred. During 1950’s and 1960’s adopting American standards and exporting Japanese products to the US were the motif of the globalization. What meant to be globalization in 1970’s and 1980’s was to get natural resources from overseas. Second, nationalism is a count-reaction to globalization. Making contribution to the world society actually is to have a political influence in the world and even to spread the Japanese culture to the rest of the world..

We argue that the Japanese globalization is an organizational-institutional globalization. This type of globalization is not for the rest of the world but for Japan. Skepticism is what we need when we read these institutional discourses. Through careful textural analysis, we are able to perceive that “individualization” and “internationalization” employed by the National Council on Education Reform and the Ministry of Education in 1980’s and 1990’s have conceptualized the notions of “anti-individualization” and “nationalism.” It is dangerous to be deluded by the literal sense of the words. We have to read the documents historically, and not only rhetorically.

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