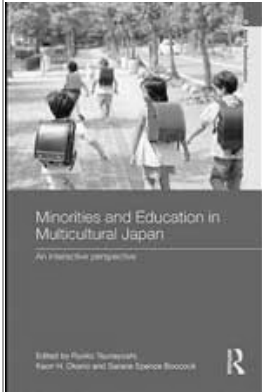


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Minorities and Education in Multicultural Japan		
Author:	Ryoko Tsuneyoshi, Kaori Okano, & Sarane Spence Boocock (Eds.) (2010)	
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Minorities and Education in Multicultural Japan is a fascinating look at the Japanese public education system and its response to several diverse groups of students whom it serves.

While Japan is often viewed as a monoethnic nation, the authors who contributed to this volume discuss many multicultural groups that coexist with those who they term “majority Japanese”. According to the authors, the long-embraced Japanese school goal of “education for international understanding” (*kokusai rikai kyōiku*) is insufficient because it implies that the Japanese are an ethnically and culturally homogeneous people and approaches multiculturalism as temporary intercourse with foreigners both inside and outside of Japan. A newer educational mission of *tabunka kyōsei kyōiku* (“education for multicultural coexistence”) or *dōwa kyōiku* (“equalitarian/assimilation education”), has begun to teach students that Japan itself is indeed a multicultural nation. This discussion may be of great interest to American educators who are looking for ways to promote multiculturalism or global education in their own schools.

Despite the obvious differences between U.S. and Japanese societies, many of the issues discussed in the book are shared concerns. In both countries, there are many children in danger of being underserved by the public school system, such as those of foreign ancestry, those with low socio-economic status, and recent immigrants. Additionally, all students must learn the skills necessary to succeed in a multicultural world. Learning about the ways in which Japan deals with these challenges can be very informative to American educators.

The book is divided into two parts, “Long-existing minorities”, which focuses on people whose ancestors have lived in Japan since before the 1970s, and “Newcomer groups”, which focuses on people who arrived in Japan in the 1970s-80s or more recently. The first part includes chapters on *buraku* (low caste), Okinawan & Amerasian, and ethnic Korean children. Since these students were born in Japan, they do not generally require Japanese language or cultural classes, and thus by American standards, they would not generally be classified as TESOL students. In many places in Japan, however, these students are provided with services rarely seen in U.S. public schools, such as instruction in the language of their ancestors and cultural study time, which teaches them about their ancestors’ native land and culture. One common approach shared by many U.S. schools is offering an extracurricular club for these purposes, similar to a club for Hispanic children that would celebrate their cultural and linguistic heritage. Other goals for these students discussed in the book are to increase school attendance rates, decrease bullying towards these students, and to increase high school graduation and college entrance rates amongst these populations.

The second part of the book presents information on “Newcomers”, including Brazilian, non-Japanese Asian, and ethnic Japanese children who were raised overseas, known as “returnees”. American and European children who live in Japan temporarily are not included in this volume, since according to the editors, they rarely attend public schools. The goals of the Japanese education system in regards to these populations are to provide Japanese language and culture classes and to help preserve the language and culture of the students’ home countries, as this is viewed as a crucial component of the students’ identities. These missions are very similar to the goals that most American TESOL teachers would have for their own students.

The editors’ concluding remarks also discuss the significant role of the individual teacher in encouraging other students to either embrace or shun diverse members of their classes. This is an important reminder to all educators that students take their cues on multicultural understanding and global education from us, and so we must practice what we preach in terms of inclusion and cross-cultural understanding. As a medium for considering issues of multiculturalism, global education, and TESOL challenges, this volume is a welcome addition to the existing literature.

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