Key Concepts for Understanding Global Citizenship Education in Japan

Thomas Fast

> "It is expected that citizens' perception of the world beyond Japan will always be refracted through the prism of their Japaneseness."
>
> UNESCO, 2017, page 112

A Need for Global Talent

SINCE THE 1990S, Japan has endured a slow and gradual decline in economic power and political influence in the world. Of course, this is the opinion of the nation's leaders. From an international perspective, Japan is still a global force with the world's fourth largest economy (only recently surpassed by Germany), a solid reputation for peace and stability (despite having dropped from 9th to 17th on the Global Peace Index between 2023 and 2024), and entrusted as a nation with the perhaps unique ability to safely and successfully host the Olympics during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In other words, Japan is in a position that is doubtless envied and admired by many other nations. Still, the March 11th triple disaster of 2011 was a major blow, both economically and psychologically. To recover, Japan's leaders realized that the population could not continue to turn inward, to be simply an island nation, as it had in the past, but to reach out to others and participate more in the global community.

Scholars have drawn parallels between the post 2011 period and the beginning of the Meiji Era. In both cases, Japan has been described as a "nation at risk" and in need of "catching up" with the outside world (Rappleye and Kariya, 2011). Initially this was in reference to the West. More recently, keeping up with neighboring China and Korea have become the political and economic imperative. To resolve the situation, the Japanese Business Federation (*Keidanren*) has called for 'global *jinzai*' (global human resourc-

es), urging the Ministry of Education (MEXT) to foster students with critical thinking, creative thinking (problem solving) and communication skills, particularly in English (Tsuneyoshi, 2019).

Japanese universities have their own interests for attracting and cultivating global students, chiefly as a means to improve their global rankings, as determined by organizations such as Times Higher Education (THE). Japanese institutions have responded to the call with the creation of new "global" programs offering increased study abroad opportunities, additional courses in English, and other approaches to internationalization. But, MEXT guidance on fostering global *jinzai* has been vague at best, which has led to a lack of unified vision on how to foster global graduates at Japanese universities (Hammond and Keating, 2017).

Additionally, while the pandemic expanded opportunities for virtual exchange via collaborative online international learning (COIL), it almost wiped out the study abroad. From 2020 to 2022 Japan's borders were all but closed, making it very hard for international students to come and for Japanese students to go. Since 2022, there has been a greatly increased desire for "revenge travel" however, the study abroad industry, which lost many of its hosting organizations, language schools, etc., has been slow to catch up with demand. Opportunities for intercultural interaction, whether virtual or real (preferably the latter), are vital if Japan is to foster the global talent it needs.

Top Global University (TGU) project

In an effort to reclaim its globally competitive edge, the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT) launched the Top Global University (TGU) project in 2014. Among its goals were to educate students to become global *jinzai* (global human resources), seen by leaders in government and the business community as essential for Japan to maintain its presence and leadership in the world. In response, TGUs and other Japanese institutions have opened new "global" faculties offering internationalized curricula and English Medium of Instruction (EMI) for local and international students.

Global human resource education can be seen within the larger field of global citizenship education (GCED). Scholars have proposed that global citizens have a particular set of competencies (cultural knowledge, communication skills, open-mindedness, etc.) that allow them to better understand

how the world works, and to take actions that bring benefits beyond the region where they were born or reside. By educating students in these "global competencies" they can become global citizens. But the global human resource model is often criticized by GCED scholars as being too nationalistic. As global human resources, their knowledge, traits and skills are to be used primarily for the benefit of their nation, not the global community. Researchers stress the need for GCED to foster more transformative global citizens who utilize their powers for the good of humanity and the planet.

An investigation of the literature of GCED and the ideologies of established education organizations such as UNESCO, Oxfam, International Baccalaureate (IB), the OECD, etc., as well as a thorough review of recent GCED literature from Japan, and a document review of global frameworks from Japanese universities, which participated in the Go Global Japan (GGJ) Project from 2012 to 2016, revealed a number of issues affecting GCED in Japanese universities.

According to the literature, uninformed attempts at fostering global human resources may actually perpetuate existing regional and global imbalances. Japanese universities should heed the advice of GCED researchers in Japan and overseas to train transformative global citizens who are equipped to address not only the concerns of their nation, but those of the planet as a whole.

Definitions, Key Concepts and Criticisms

Described and critiqued below are the key concepts of Japanese education that most factor into Japanese GCED, including global *jinzai*. Some are directly linked to GCED world-wide, others less so, but still influential in that they promote the development of what can be considered 21st century global competencies.

1. Zest for Life

"Zest for Life" (*ikiru chikara*) has been the driving concept behind Japanese education since 1998 (Kimura and Tatsuno, 2017). It is based on the Japanese principle of *chi-toku-tai* (academic prowess, moral, physical and mental health). The promotion of 21st century competencies such as: communication, collaborative thinking and problem solving have also been incorporated into the Zest for Life ideology, along with the promotion of

the "Japanese spirit" (*Nippon damashi*), and "the power of being human" (*ningen ryoku*).

Lacking a more detailed definition from MEXT, Sato criticizes these concepts as vague even in Japanese, claiming they are "empty but somehow nevertheless carry a clear implication that education should be implemented with a nationalistic mind. These confused and deceptive words have occupied a dominant place in the leading canon of educational reform for nearly two decades" (2011, p. 236).

Despite significant reforms to the Course of Study (指導要領) on the part of the government, and some local examples of successful implementations of Zest for Life, 21st century skills and other recent ideologies, Japanese education has changed little in the last twenty years, primarily due to entrenched policies focused on high stakes entrance exams, and teachers being overworked and under trained in how to teach new concepts to their students (Kimura and Tatsuno, 2017). This continues to be the case in post pandemic Japan, where teachers' work life balance has been further blurred by their increased ability to work from home.

2. Global Jinzai

A key concept at the university level is global *jinzai* or global human resources. The definition for 'global *jinzai*' originally appeared in a 2010 Report by the Global Human Resource Development Committee of the Industry-Academia Partnership for Global Human Resource Development, which
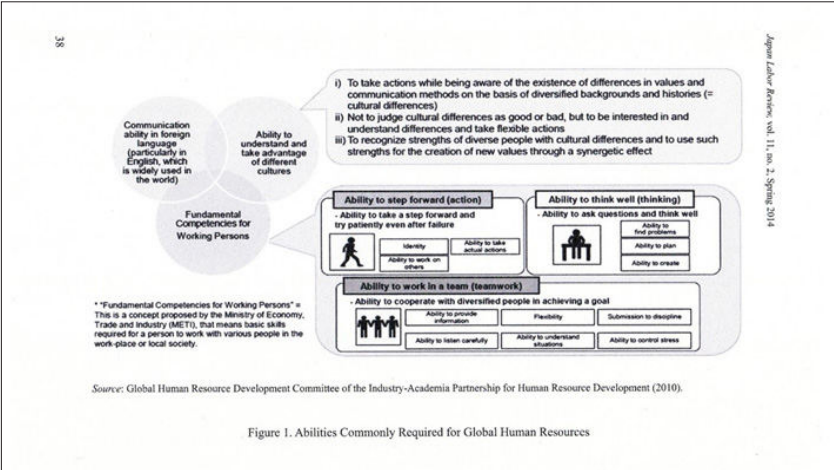

Figure 1. MEXT Global Human Resource Framework

was made up of members of both MEXT and the Ministry of Economics Trade and Industry (METI). The definition is summarized in terms of abilities: Communication ability in foreign language (particularly English); Fundamental Competencies for Working Persons; and Ability to understand and "take advantage" of different cultures.

The Japanese version of the report has since been taken down from the MEXT website, thus we are left with the English above. It is unclear whether it was just a poor translation or whether the authors actually meant that global *jinzai* should "take advantage of different cultures." A 2012 follow up report by the Council on the Promotion of Human Resources for Global Development updated the definition of global *jinzai* and the controversial phrase is no longer present. According to the 2012 document, global *jinzai* possess three factors:

> Factor I: Linguistic and communication skills. In particular the report noted communication skills for travel abroad, skills for interaction, business conversation and paperwork, linguistic skills for bilateral negotiation, and linguistic skills for multilateral negotiation.

> Factor II: Self-direction and positiveness, a spirit for challenge, cooperativeness and flexibility, as sense of responsibility and mission.

> Factor III: Understanding of other cultures and a sense of identity as a Japanese.

Below each of these factors is described in more detail with critiques from independent scholars and educational organizations such as the Asia Society, UNESCO and the OECD.

2.1. English Ability

Factor I above describes the need for Japanese university students to acquire English, particularly for business communication purposes. Scholars overwhelmingly agree with the policy of emphasizing English education in Japan, although its implementation has been criticized for decades. Since the 1960s there have been recurring attempts at promoting communicative language teaching (CLT) over grammar-based instruction, without much success. According to the EF English Proficiency Index of 2023, Japan was

ranked 87th of one hundred thirteen nations included in the survey. It was 53rd in 2019 (EF, n.d.). Now with the call for global human resources CLT is being encouraged again. As a former Spanish teacher from the US with over twenty-five years experience teaching English in Japan, I agree that major changes still need to be made to the education K-12 system to make Japanese students more communicative in English, particularly via pre-service English teacher education programs.

Tsuneyoshi describes the importance of English as "central to the definition of global talent in the Japanese context" (2019, p. 30). Indeed, for many in Japan, English ability is mistakenly seen as the primary, even *sole measure* of global competence (Shimizu, 2019). Still, some disagree with English being promoted as the *only* foreign language that matters:

> Skewing foreign or second language curricula almost exclusively towards English threatens to exacerbate rather than reconcile divisions both within and between societies. In practice, the spread of proficiency in English, while opening up a world of opportunity for the privileged, can widen the gulf in experience and sympathy that separates them from the mass of their compatriots. At the same time, promoting the learning of English while neglecting the study of Asian foreign languages (or those of domestic 'minorities') can foster amongst elites habits of invidious comparison with 'the West', while leaving them largely ignorant of the culture or outlook of their closest neighbours."
> UNESCO (authored by Mochizuki and Vickers), 2017, p. 26

UNESCO warns against English education practices that are accessible to elites only, and reminds us of the importance of learning other foreign languages, particularly those of neighboring countries. I agree that English is an important tool for my students, but it should not be the sole measure of their competence as global citizens. Nor should it be the only foreign language offered to them in lower and upper secondary schools. In order for Japanese to identify more with their neighbors, both at a national as well as at the community level (my next-door neighbor is Korean), more institutions need to offer languages such as Korean and Mandarin as electives at least. Korean pop culture has been continuously gaining in popularity in Japan over the past twenty years and would be a popular subject for young Japanese that could help to mend the past cultural divisions between

the two nations. And with China's growing influence in the region and the world, Mandarin could prove to be as useful as English.

2.2. Employability

Factor II describes the 'human resources' aspect of global *jinzai.* Listed are the Japanese business sector's most desirable qualities of a loyal employee (Yonezawa, 2014). In Figure 1 above we can see such "Fundamental Competencies for Workers" as abilities to think, take action, and work as a team -- the latter including such sub-skills as abilities "to listen carefully," "understand situations," "control stress" and "submit to discipline." The 2012 follow up report also articulates a "sense of responsibility and mission."

Many have argued that the MEXT global human resource model focuses too much on employability. Hammond and Keating (2017) see the policy as a "reflection of a widespread corporatization and co-option of higher education by a neoliberal agenda" on the part of the Japanese government (p. 17) and add that overemphasizing employability could detract from universities being able to develop "critical, socially engaged citizens" (p. 5).

While there are similarities, I do not agree that global *jinzai* are not an exact copy of western neo-liberal ideals. For example, "submitting to discipline" is a conservative Japanese requisite for workers. Western neo-liberals might actually encourage workers to think more critically, creatively and have opinions that differ from their superiors, if they ultimately benefit the company.

Yamamoto et al, observe both nationalist and internationalist agendas being brought together: "the concept of global *jinzai* prioritizes skills that are regarded as necessary in the global business environment. The standpoint is both economical and political. Japan needs globally competent human resources to ensure that the nation remains a leading economic power, especially next to its East Asian neighbours" (2016, 61-62). Ishikawa defends the competitive nature of Japan's global education ideology as being necessitated by the many domestic problems the country faces, e.g., aging population, declining birth rates and shrinking workforce (2011). In their 2017 Asia Society report, Kimura and Tatsuno acknowledge that employability is important for survival in a globalizing and uncertain world, but urge Japanese institutions to "think about students' freedom of choice, not only fostering students to contribute to Japanese society but at the same time… cultivate global citizens to 'act for a sustainable world'" (p. 34).

Like Yamamoto et al, I also see nationalist and globalist elements in the government's promotion of global *jinzai*. And I agree with Ishikawa, Kimura and Tatsuno that employability is a priority for my Japanese university students. Still, it would be in the nation's best interests to educate their global *jinzai* with skills that could be used not only to get good jobs but could also help Japan build relations with its neighbors. As Bregman claims in his critically acclaimed book, Humankind, we must "think in win win scenarios" because it is not in human nature to be "locked in competition with one another." (2021, p. 387)

2.3. Cultural Understanding and Japanese Identity

Factor III of the global human resource framework was initially described as the "ability to understand and take advantage of different cultures." Perhaps noting how this might be negatively interpreted, the Council on the Promotion of Global Human Resources 2012 follow up report describes Factor III as, "Understanding of other cultures and a sense of identity as a Japanese." Yonezawa and Shimmi (2019) observe that Factor III contains elements of similar international concepts, such as global leadership, intercultural or global competence and global citizenship. Global leadership emphasizes the power of individuals to influence people of different cultures. Intercultural/global competence refers to Deardorff's knowledge, traits and skills (2012) that allow a person to communicate effectively between cultures for the purpose of mutual understanding as opposed to power over others. Global competence also includes identity of self within a global context. And while having a strong sense of cultural identity is generally a positive, Yonezawa and Shimmi explain that

> social responsibility and global civic engagement, which are associated with international equity and sustainable development, are not directly relevant to the current discussion of global human resources in Japan. In addition, the current definition of Factor III stresses national identity as Japanese that may sometimes contradict identity as a global citizen. (2019, p. 46)

In other words, strongly identifying as a Japanese global *jinzai* may actually conflict with being a global citizen, particularly if you are seeking to "take advantage" of people of other cultures for the benefit of your own.

In 2020, Chen conducted a study of global citizenship education in the national curricula of Japan and China. The Japanese K-12 educational guidelines promoted the following: Communication, critical thinking, and sympathy for others (*omoiyari*). Loving the nation (land, history, customs and culture) was also clearly stated, as was the promotion of an awareness of "being Japanese." (*nihonjin toshite no jikaku*). According to Chen, "such clear and repeated expressions indicate that what the guidelines aim to develop is the loyal character rather than the reflexive attitude towards the nation, though the two do not necessarily stand against the other in theory" (p. 351). On a less critical note, Chen also observed that commitment to a just world order is taught in Japan via Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), i.e. developing a sustainable society "from local to international." But "the view of justice in an international context is completely lost." (Chen, 2020, p. 351).

Japan is not alone in its promotion of the nation before the planet. Chen found Japan and China's curricular guidelines to be similar in that respect, and other scholars have noted the strong nationalist ideologies of Asian neighbor nations (Haffner et al, 2009). According to a 2017 UNESCO Report on the state of GCED in Asia, all twenty-two countries covered in the study promoted an overwhelmingly nationalistic model of citizenship. The same can be said for many countries outside Asia as well. According to UNESCO, in Japan "from primary level, students are expected to acquire 'love' for 'their country' and a commitment to the development of state and society" (2017, p. 79). Hammond and Keating (2017) point out that teaching a love for the nation is nothing new in Japan. Prior to WWII, students were educated to become loyal *shinmin* (subjects) to the Emperor. In the post war years, they have been trained to become loyal *shimin* (citizens).

The UNESCO report also contained findings on Japanese school curricula, which had been examined for concepts associated with Sustainable Development Goal 4.7: gender equality, peace and global citizenship. They found that these SDG topics were "widely absent" from national education policies and documents analyzed. National identity was the most commonly identified concept in the curricula with relatively low emphasis on humanity as a whole. Japan was not alone in this regard:

> In most countries surveyed, an intense and often chauvinistic curricular emphasis on moulding national identity poses an acute challenge to a vision of citizenship education based

on 'universal values' (e.g. human rights and cultural diversity). SDG 4.7 envisages preparing learners to live together on a planet under pressure, promoting tolerance and understanding both within and between nation-states. However, curricula in many Asian countries uncritically endorse strongly ethno-nationalist identities, often effectively reducing minorities or migrants to second-class status. Narratives of foreign hostility or inferiority are widely used to bolster national loyalties. Despite scattered references to the desirability of a 'global' outlook, fostering a strong national 'selfhood' takes precedence — as curricula prepare students for an international arena seen as characterised by inveterate competition."

UNESCO, 2017, p. XX

Thus, it appears based on the research done by UNESCO and other scholars, that nationalism is alive and well in the curricula of not only Japan, but its neighbors and a growing number of countries in the world. As we see in the Olympics every four years, it is possible to promote national pride and celebrate being part of a global community at the same time. The two concepts are not mutually exclusive, although I agree with Yonezawa and Shimmi that stressing national identity can be in contradiction with being a global citizen. If Japan and its neighbors are serious about achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, then the government needs to make a greater effort at implementing SDG 4.7 and replace some of its nationalism with more universal values.

3. Japanese Exceptionalism

Japanese exceptionalism is another recurring theme in the literature of GCED in Japan. In fact there is an entire book on the subject, Globalization and Japanese "Exceptionalism" in Education (Edited by Tuseyoshi, 2019). It is a loaded term that can be associated with both Japan's unique successes and failures, as well as more questionable references to the so-called uniqueness of the Japanese themselves (Tsuneyoshi, 2019). In terms of successes, some scholars point to Japan as 'exceptional' for having developed a highly successful education system that serves as an example to non-Western and non-anglophone countries. On the other hand, Japanese institutions are also regarded by some as 'exceptional' failures in internationalization and English education.

Regarding the government's call for global human resources with a strong "Japanese identity," Roesgaard interprets this and other articulations (particularly those in Japan's Moral Education Guidelines) as defensive reactions on the part of educational policy makers who are seeking to bolster students' sense of self and *aikokushin* (patriotism). To Roesgaard this is a form of "cultural immunology" or an attempt at "preserving what are considered the fundamental cultural values for a Japanese citizen" in the face of mounting globalization (2011, p. 94).

Putting aside for now, the defensive, negative associations with Japanese exceptionalism, obviously, Japanese can be proud of aspects of their society and culture that *are* exceptional, such as the education system. Based on nationalized exams and other measures, such as PISA exam scores of Japan's fifteen year olds, or the global scientific contributions of Japan's universities, it is true that Japanese institutions could be seen as models and alternatives to better known Western (particularly English language) institutions.

Still, Japanese schools and universities need not be used to bolster patriotism or nationalism. Sato argues that the Japanese government's "neo conservative policies" have negatively influenced current understandings of global citizenship. The country's Fundamental Law of Education, which had been the cornerstone of democratic education since 1947, was revised in 2006. "The three canons of 'Education for World Peace, 'education for democracy' and 'education for equality,' were replaced by 'education for national interests,' 'education for competition' and 'education according to different abilities'" (Sato, 2011, p. 229).

How these mandates influenced local institutions varied, but in the private high school where I taught at the time, the effects were immediate. Japanese national flags went up in every classroom, and students and teachers were required to sing the national anthem at assemblies. Prior to 2006, patriotic displays like these had been much less systematically enforced. Curricular changes were also encouraged if not required. In the English course, I was advised to have students read and discuss Nitobe Inazo's <u>Bushido</u> (originally written in English) with all first year students before they studied abroad in Australia and Canada. The Principal thought it would be especially meaningful if an American taught them about the "beautiful" (*utsukushii*) aspects of Japanese culture in English. Ultimately, I declined mainly because the text was beyond their level, and it would have taken too much time out of their already busy schedules. I was also instructed to

teach them how to explain why whaling is important to Japanese culture in English to their future host families. I admit my situation might not have been the norm. Still, the Fundamental Law of Education reforms were welcomed by the more conservative Japanese educators at the time.

In the 2009 book, Japan's Open Future: An Agenda for Global Citizenship, Haffner et al argue that while Japan is surrounded by countries that also have quite strong nationalist ideologies, it is still in Japan's best interests to adopt more internationally open and friendly policies, especially with its neighbors. They argue that Japan should embrace a "global-is-Asian" approach, using its exceptional powers and close ties with the West, to become a champion of Asian interests with the goal of regional stability and prosperity. With Prime Minister Kishida, Japan has remarkably improved its ranking on the Commitment to Development Index to 15th out of 40 countries (up from 21st under Prime Minister Abe). So this is a sign of hope for the future.

With regard to Japanese exceptionalism within higher education, Japanese scholars such as Tsuneyoshi (2019) and Ishikawa (2011), take a somewhat defensive stance. They rightfully point out the difficulties of internationalization, particularly for non-Anglophone universities. In addition to the language barriers, institutions have to deal with the imposition of Western educational practices and ideals and standards (Shimizu, 2019, Tsuneyoshi, 2019).

Japanese exceptionalism is also a controversial topic in Japanese English language education. A 2017 MEXT report claimed that a primary reason to promote English is so that students will better understand traditional, Japanese culture and communicate it to foreigners. Aspinall writes, "the perceived problem is that Japanese people when they talk to foreigners are letting themselves and their country down in two main ways: They are failing to communicate effectively and clearly; and they are failing to present the proper `Japanese face` to the outside world" (2013, p.7).

Of course, there is a reasonable argument for why Japanese culture content should be taught in English: Topics relating to Japanese society, history, culture and religion are likely to come up when speaking to non-Japanese. However, the MEXT report also contains the underlying perception that Japanese students have a lack of interest or knowledge of their own culture, and need to have it reinforced before communication with foreigners should take place. And then there is the more sinister concern that exposure

to a foreign language and culture may tarnish young Japanese students' own sense of themselves as *Japanese*. This is reminiscent of Roesegaard's claims regarding "cultural immunology." As Aspinall writes, "the conundrum for education policy-makers is how to put in place mechanisms whereby Japanese students can become good at English while still remaining 'immune' to deeper cultural contagion" (Aspinall, 2011, p. 138).

This is a conundrum that I believe English teachers in Japan need not worry about. Japanese students should be exposed to new cultures in their English classes and they should also be given the chance to *reflect* on their own culture and values. After all, the ability to reflect on one's self is a global competency (IBO, n.d.). Of course, they may discover aspects of a foreign culture that they prefer over their own, for example my female students might be envious of the fact that women enjoy greater equity with men in the US than they do in Japan, which is currently ranked 118th in the world on the Gender Gap Index (nippon.com, June, 21st, 2024). But they might also be revolted to learn about American gun violence, making them greatly appreciate the safety and security of life in Japan. Thus, students should be allowed to learn about other cultures in English, as well as their own, but with a critical eye. And in so doing, perhaps even develop a stronger sense of their own cultural identity.

4. Multiculturalism

Another common GCED theme is multiculturalism or cultural diversity. Education in Japan promotes awareness of cultural diversity. But it is recognized as existing mostly outside the nation and not within. Cultural diversity "tends to be oversimplified as differences between foreign and national cultures, with the former being portrayed as heterogeneous to the presumably homogeneous latter" (Chen, 2020, p. 350). A failure to acknowledge the significant numbers of immigrants living in Japan, translates to even less perceived need to teach multiculturalism. According to UNESCO, multiculturalism is discussed in Japanese textbooks primarily in terms of regional differences among Japanese within Japan (e.g. traditions, food, festivals, etc.), although specific references to other cultures living in Japan (e.g., Brazilians, Chinese, Koreans, etc.) do receive mention in some secondary school civics texts.

UNESCO found that while respect for other countries is taught, respect for other cultures within Japan goes unmentioned. According to Shimizu,

a global education must "offer courses that prepare students to engage in successful, peaceful, and effective interactions with the people of diverse backgrounds. To achieve this ideal of coexistence within a multicultural environment, individuals must be equipped with the skills, knowledge, and a profound sense of understanding of world cultures and situations in order to respond in ways that are seen as appropriate, non-threatening, and respectful" (2019, p. 95). Making young Japanese more aware of the many cultural groups that are here contributing to Japanese society would be a good start.

5. Peace Education

Peace education, an important concept in global education, is given moderate attention in Japan (UNESCO, 2017). Advocates of transformative GCED might take comfort in this, but according to UNESCO, there are complications. In secondary school textbooks, Japan is presented as a "uniquely qualified messenger of world peace" due to having suffered the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Texts however, place far more attention on war-time suffering of the Japanese than on the suffering of others at the hands of the Japanese military (i.e., comfort women, prisoners of war, the Chinese population of Nanking, etc.). Also highlighted are individual stories of Japanese sacrifice and heroism against the vague enemy of war itself (UNESCO observes that Korea and China have similar approaches in their texts but paint Japan as the clear enemy).

Unesco warns not only Japan, but other Asian nations as well, that "the narratives of national identity that underpin societal cohesion in East Asia carry a potentially catastrophic long-term cost, in so far as they fuel nationalist chauvinism and condemn the peoples of the region forever to relive the conflicts of the past. That cost is also borne by domestic 'minorities' and migrants who fail to conform to dominant conceptions of nationhood… Without a shared sense of regional identity, global citizenship is meaningless" (UNESCO, 2017).

My own observations have been very similar to what UNESCO has revealed. During my fifteen years as a secondary school teacher in Japan, I was shocked to discover how little my students knew about WWII history. They would often come back from study abroad, telling stories of how they were at a loss for words when their Canadian host family or new Korean friend had asked them their thoughts about Japan's actions in WWII. When I discussed this with their social studies teacher, he responded somewhat guiltily

that every year he finished his Japanese History curriculum with the Taisho era, prior to the start of WWII. This was for two reasons: 1) It was simply not possible to dedicate enough time to Japan's long history during limited class time; 2) If something needed to be left out, the controversial WWII era was the "safe" choice. Instead, he told students to study up on modern and contemporary Japanese history "on their own" in preparation for university entrance exams.

Since becoming a university professor, I have discovered that this practice is not uncommon. Generally my students have little knowledge of WWII, and when asked they are usually only able to provide examples of Japan as a victim, never an aggressor. This is highly unfortunate as young Japanese are missing a vital part of their history, while their neighbors in Korea, China, and the Philippines are taught never to forget it.

On a final note, while my description of (official) peace education in Japan has been rather critical, I should also acknowledge the efforts of the peace education scholars (e.g., Nakamura, 2006) and organizations in Japan such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Hiroshima Organization for Global Peace, and Hiroshima Peace Center, among others. Their goals and methods for achieving them are applauded and have much in common with transformative GCED.

Concluding Thoughts

This article has described how GCED is conceived in Japan and how it has been criticized by both Japanese and international scholars for: 1) its nationalist leanings, 2) its overemphasis on English language education, and 3) producing employable graduates, as well as its 4) tendencies toward Japanese exceptionalism, and finally 5) it's blind spots with regard to multiculturalism and 6) peace education.

Still, efforts over the past decade to foster global human resources *have* been somewhat transformative. For example the growth of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and a nation-wide obsession with fulfilling the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Academic institutions paying more than lip service to the SDGs may actually be training their students to be more knowledgeable, open-minded, peaceful, multicultural and active global citizens in the process.

But there is still much that can be done through the education system to create truly transformative global citizens -- a much needed resource as the nation continues to globalize its economy, welcome a great deal more foreigners as tourists and residents, and grapple with global issues such as regional tensions and climate change. Maintaining the current nationalistic approach of creating global competitors will not help Japan to resolve these issues.

References

Aspinall R. W. 2011. "Globalization and the English Language Education Policy in Japan: external risk and internal inertia," in D. B. Willis & J. Rappleye, editors, *Reimagining Japanese Education: Borders, Transfers, Circulations, and the Comparative,* 127-146. Oxford: Symposium Books Ltd.

Aspinall, R. W. 2013. "Introduction: International Education Policy in Japan," in *International Education Policy in Japan in an Age of Globalisation and Risk,* 1-16. DOI:10.1163/9789004243729_002.

Bregman, R. 2021. *Humankind: A Hopeful History.* Bloomsbury Publishing, London.

Chen, S. 2020. "Advancing Global Citizenship Education in Japan and China: An Exploration and Comparison of the National Curricula," *Citizenship Teaching & Learning,* 15:3, 127-356, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1386/ctl_00038_1.

Deardorff, D., Jones, E. 2012. "Intercultural Competence: An Emerging Focus in International Education, in Deardorff, D., de Wit, H., Heyl, J., and Adams, T, editors, *The Sage Handbook of International Higher Education,* 283-304 . SAGE Publications, Inc. California.

EF (N.D.) English Proficiency Index. Retrieved from www.ef.com/wwen/epi/.

Center for Global Development. 2023. Global Development Index. Retrieved from www.cgdev.org/cdi#/?adjusted=true.

Haffner, J., Klett, T. C., & Lehmann, J. 2009. *Japan's Open Future: An Agenda for Global Citizenship.* London: Anthem Press.

Hammond, C. D., & Keating, A. 2017. "Global Citizens or Global Workers? Comparing University Programmes for Global Citizenship Education in Japan and the UK," *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 48*(6), 915-934. DOI:10.1080/03057925.2017.1369393.

Hiroshima Organization for Global Peace (n.d.) Retrieved from https://hiroshima-forpeace.com/en/.

Hiroshima Peace Center (2023) Retrieved from www.hiroshima-peace-center.jp/.

IB Diploma Programme. N.D. Retrieved from https://ibo.org/.

Institute for Economics & Peace (2024). Global Peace Index 2024. Retrieved from www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/GPI-2024-web.pdf.

Ishikawa, M. 2011. "Redefining Internationalization in Higher Education: Global 30 and the making of global universities in Japan," *Osaka University Knowledge Archive*, 193-223.

Japan International Cooperation Agency (n.d.). Retrieved from: www.jica.go.jp/english/.

Kimura, D. & Tatsuno, M. 2017. *Advancing 21st Century Competencies in Japan*. Asia Society. Retrieved from https://asiasociety.org/files/21st-century-competencies-japan.pdf.

MEXT, N.D. Selection for the FY2012 Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development. Retrieved from www.mext.go.jp/en/policy/education/highered/title02/detail02/sdetail02/sdetail02/1374093.htm.

MEXT. 2014. Abilities Commonly Required for Global Human Resources. Japan Labour Review Volume 11, Number 2, Spring.

Nakamura, K. 2006. "International education for peace in higher education: Promoting cultures of peace in Japan," *Language and Culture: The Journal of the Institute for Language and Culture*, *10*, 1-27.

nippon.com. 2024, June, 21. Japan rises slightly in Gender Gap Ranking, www.nippon.com/en/japan-data/h02024/.

Rappleye, J., & Kariya, T. 2011. "Reimagining Self/Other: 'catch-up' across Japan's three great education reforms," in D. B. Willis & J. Rappleye, editor, *Reimagining Japanese Education: Borders, Transfers, Circulations, and the Comparative*, 51-84. Oxford: Symposium Books Ltd.

Roesgaard, M. H. 2011. "'The Ideal Citizen', Globalization, and the Japanese Response: Risk, Gate-keeping, and Moral Education in Japan," in D. B. Willis & J. Rappleye, editors, *Reimagining Japanese Education: Borders, Transfers, Circulations, and the Comparative,* 85-106. Oxford: Symposium Books Ltd.

Sato, M. 2011. "Imagining Neo-Liberalism and the Hidden Realities of Politics of Reform: Teachers and Students in a Globalized Japan," in D. B. Willis & J. Rappleye, editors, *Reimagining Japanese Education: Borders, Transfers, Circulations, and the Comparative,* 225-246. Oxford: Symposium Books Ltd.

Shimizu, K. 2019. *The Internationalization of Higher Education in Japan: Shifting Interpretations and Notions of Kokusaika* (Doctoral Dissertation, Thesis / Dissertation ETD, 2019). The University of Arizona.

Tsuneyoshi, R. 2019. "'Exceptionalism' in Japanese education and its implications," in *Globalization and Japanese "exceptionalism" in education: Insider's views into a changing system*, 19-42. London: Routledge.

United Nations. 2015. *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.* Retrieved from https://sdg4education2030.org/

UNESCO. 2017. *Rethinking Schooling for the 21st Century: The State of Education for Peace, Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship in Asia*, New Delhi: UNESCO MEGIEP.

Yamamoto, B., Saito, T., Shibuya, M., Ishikura, Y., Gyenes, A., Kim, V., Mawer, K. & Kitano, C. 2016. *Implementation and Impact of the Dual Language International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (DP) in Japanese secondary schools.* Bethesda, MD, USA: The International Baccalaureate Organization.

Yonezawa, A. 2014. "Japan's Challenge of Fostering "Global Human Resources": Policy Debates and Practices," *Japan Labor Review,* Volume 11, 37-52.

Yonezawa, A., & Shimmi, Y. 2019. "Japan's Challenge in fostering global human resources: Policy debates and practices," in *Globalization and Japanese "Exceptionalism" in Education: Insider's Views into a Changing System,* 43-60. London: Routledge.