



Learning from Japan: Advancing Education in the Arab and Islamic World through Creative Approaches

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Received: 20-05-2023

Revised: 08-06-2023

Accepted: 18-06-2023

Abstract

Taking a historiographical approach, this research delves into Japan's history, culture, and education. It aims to uncover the key curricular reforms and societal influences that have contributed to its academic excellence. This study highlights Japan's exceptional academic leadership. It traces it back to historical milestones, academic reforms, societal attitudes, and cultural frameworks. Notably, the Japanese educational model emphasizes principles such as effort, collaboration, problem-solving, and comprehensive education, which have played a significant role in their success. By drawing inspiration from these findings, school policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders in the Arab and Islamic worlds can consider adopting and adapting elements of the Japanese educational model. This will inform curricular reforms and foster academic excellence. Moreover, this study recognizes the importance of fostering a collaborative exchange of ideas and experiences between Japan and the Arab and Islamic worlds. By embracing Japan's historical lessons and engaging in transformative dialogues, both regions can shape the future of education, promoting deeper understanding and more effective policies. However, it is imperative to acknowledge the limitations of this study, such as the limited sample size, cases, and variations. Therefore, further research is warranted to explore more diverse cases, larger sample sizes, and varied demographics. This will enable us to attain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding that can guide the formulation of appropriate and effective educational policies.

Keywords: Japanese Studies, Academic Leadership, Educational Modernization, Educational Reforms, Arab and Islamic World.

INTRODUCTION

Japan's extraordinary rise to global academic leadership, highlighted by twenty-nine Nobel laureates since 1949, has captivated the world's attention. This journey toward excellence in scientific and academic pursuits holds valuable lessons for the Arab and Islamic worlds. It presents an opportunity to benefit from the Japanese educational model. By embracing historiography principles, we explore Japan's historical path. We aim to investigate the factors that have contributed to its intellectual success and discern how the Arab and Islamic worlds can draw inspiration from this model.

This study explores Japan's historical context. It examines the key milestones, educational reforms, and societal influences that have contributed to its remarkable achievements. Through a historiographical lens, we seek to uncover the intricate interplay of

factors that drove Japan's academic quest. We present insights that can inform and inspire educational advancements in the Arab and Islamic worlds.

Through a close analysis of Japan's educational system, societal values, and scientific achievements, this study provides a nuanced understanding of the Japanese approach to academic excellence. We trace the evolution of Japan's educational landscape, spotlighting pivotal moments in its history, education reforms, and societal attitudes. These moments have profoundly influenced its global recognition journey.

Moreover, we explore the cultural and social frameworks that underpin Japan's educational system, providing valuable insights into the Arab and Islamic worlds. Through an examination of the principles of diligence, collaboration, problem-solving, and comprehensive education, we can draw lessons that can be adapted and implemented in educational contexts within the Arab and Islamic worlds.

Furthermore, we shed light on the significant contributions of Japanese scientists, researchers, and educators who have propelled Japan to the forefront of academic achievement. Through the exploration of Japanese Nobel laureates' lives and breakthroughs, we uncover the specific fields and scientific advancements that have positioned Japan as a leader in various disciplines. This offers inspiration and guidance to Arabs and Muslims who wish to pursue academic careers.

This study presents a comprehensive overview of Japan's journey toward global academic leadership. It emphasizes the relevance of its educational model to the Arab and Islamic worlds. By embracing Japan's historical lessons, educational policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders in the Arab and Islamic worlds can leverage this knowledge to inform curricular reforms. This will foster a culture of excellence and empower students to thrive academically.

By adopting a historiographical approach, we aspire to transcend mere statistical achievements. We dig deeper into Japan's historical, cultural, and educational underpinnings. Through this exploration, we aim to pave the way for a transformative exchange of ideas and experiences between Japan and the Arab and Islamic worlds. We aim to foster a collaborative pursuit of academic excellence that will shape education's future in both regions.

By employing a mixed-methods approach, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and well-rounded analysis of Japan's historical path toward academic leadership, ensuring a thorough examination of its educational system, societal influences, and scientific achievements. The integration of qualitative and quantitative research methods will enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, offering valuable insights and recommendations for educational reform in the Arab and Islamic worlds.

RESEARCH METHODS

Japan's remarkable journey toward global academic leadership, underscored by its numerous Nobel laureates since 1949, has garnered widespread admiration and interest worldwide. This captivating trajectory offers valuable insights and lessons for the Arab and Islamic worlds, presenting an opportunity to embrace the Japanese educational model and its principles. By delving into the historical context and milestones that have shaped Japan's intellectual success, this study aims to unravel the intricate factors that have propelled its

remarkable achievements. It also examines how these lessons can inspire educational advancements in other regions.

Taking a historiographical approach, this research delves into Japan's history, culture, and education. It aims to uncover the key curricular reforms and societal influences that have contributed to its academic excellence. By examining the interplay between historical factors and academic advancements, this study offers a nuanced understanding of Japan's journey toward global recognition. Additionally, the study explores Japan's cultural and social frameworks. It provides valuable insights that can inform educational practices in the Arab and Islamic worlds.

To provide a comprehensive analysis, this study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative research methods. By combining in-depth qualitative exploration with quantitative data analysis, the study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of Japanese academic excellence. Through this rigorous methodology, the research confirms and suggests the validity of previous findings and research. It contributes to the field's perspective by shedding light on the specific concepts, variables, and methods that have propelled Japan's academic achievements.

DISCUSSION

The Meiji Restoration and the Path Toward Modernization:

Education development in Japan was one of the Meiji Restoration's most prominent goals. Since the young emperor became a divine ruler, he immediately commenced a comprehensive expedition to disseminate modern education on a large scale in Japan through organizations named *Meirokusha*¹. *These organizations* have been working on the propagation of modern science on Japanese territory and among various classes in Japanese society.

The Ministry of Education, established in 1871 and issuing its first report in September 1872, divided Japan into eight learning areas.² In each region, there was one university and 32 secondary schools. For every high school, 210 primary schools must be built—a primary school for 600 citizens. All six-year-olds must enroll in these schools for six months of compulsory education. Therefore, the number of institutions will be eight universities and 53,760 schools.³

Despite that ambitious education advancement plan, the percentage of those at the right age to attend primary school was only 28%. In addition, the administrative bureaucracy stymied this plan. A revised bill was issued in 1879 and provided for public schools in every village and city. Far-flung areas will be serviced by roving teachers, and education will be extended to eight years, from six to fourteen. Parents would be obliged to send their children to school.

¹ David J. Huish, "The Meirokusha: Some Grounds for Reassessment," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 32, no. 4 (1972): 208-229, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2718872>

² Huish, "The Meirokusha: Some Grounds for Reassessment," 208-229.

³ Donald Keene, *Emperor of Japan: Meiji and his World 1852-1912*. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005).

In 1890, the Public Educational Order was issued, and Shintoism principles were introduced into the curriculum.⁴ These improvements eradicated illiteracy in Japan. In 1900, the percentage of students in primary school was 81%, while in 1910 it had reached 98%.⁵

Higher education has opened five universities successively, including Tokyo Imperial University, which was "the first," founded in 1877 with state support.⁶ Also, private universities have been founded, including Waseda University.⁷

Japan sent missions abroad while internal improvements occurred. The Iwakura Mission was the first and most successful scientific expedition, with a few scholars and 48 leading intellectuals.⁸ The mission left Japan on December 23, 1871, and spent 22 months in Western countries. It returned on September 13, 1873, after visiting the United States, Britain, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Russia, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, Austria, and Switzerland.⁹ They studied everything in the West, including politics, the economy, the military, industrial, social, cultural, and intellectual affairs. It prepared a report consisting of 100 volumes, published in 1878. This report annexed all her observations about schools, parliaments, factories, armies, prisons, and even brothels. More missions were sent.

Upon modernizing the educational system, Japan became the leader in education, peace, and war arts. The country of the rising sun opened its educational institutions to Asian students. In 1904, more than 5,000 Chinese students studied at its universities.¹⁰ The education system trained the next generation of Japanese on *Kokotai*.¹¹ This was based on the old family principles of Shintoism and Confucianism, specifically from the Meiji era until World War II.¹² At the heart of Japanese ideology was the worship of the emperor; the emperor was the head of the Family Nation, *Kokka Kozukun*.¹³

During Emperor Meiji's reign, the central government promoted education. Between 1911 and 1919, middle school students grew from 125,000 to 170,000. In Japan, during that period, there were five major universities and 104 secondary schools and institutes.¹⁴ In 1920, the government approved more private universities while building governmental institutions. In 1928, Japan had 40 universities and 184 secondary and higher education

⁴ Susumu Shimazono, "State Shinto and the religious structure of modern Japan," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 73, no. 4 (2005): 1077-1098, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lji115>

⁵ Yoshihisa Godo, *The Human Capital Basis of the Japanese Miracle: A Historical Perspective*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 103-120.

⁶ Byron K. Marshall, *Academic Freedom, and the Japanese Imperial University* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 1868-1939.

⁷ Waseda Daigaku, *Waseda University: Its History, Aims and Regulations*, (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1936).

⁸ Ian Nish, *The Iwakura Mission to America and Europe: A New Assessment*, (London: Routledge, 2008).

⁹ Chushichi Tsuzuki, *The Pursuit of Power in Modern Japan 1825-1995*, 1. (London: Oxford University, 2000), 309-311.

¹⁰ Gracia Liu-Farrer, *Labour Migration from China to Japan: International Students, Transnational Migrants*, 1. (London: Routledge, 2011).

¹¹ Joseph M. Kitagawa, "The Japanese 'Kokutai' (National Community) History and Myth," *History of Religions* 13, no. 3 (1974): 209-26

¹² William H. Taylor and Robert A. Brady, "Policy Centralization in Japan Under the Kokutai Principle," *Pacific Affairs* 14, no. 1 (1941): 51-77, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2751775>

¹³ Ming-Cheng M. Lo and Christopher P. Bettinger, "The Historical Emergence of a "Familial Society" in Japan," *Theory and Society* 30, no. 2 (2001): 237-279.

¹⁴ Hugh Llewellyn Keenleyside, "History of Japanese education and present educational system. (Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1982).

institutions. It coincided with a rise in teachers' economic status by setting a fixed pension schedule.

In addition to increasing educational institutions, Japan focused on increasing national awareness among Japanese students. Where educational policy was influenced by democracy, a Ministry of Education-issued curriculum was based on Imperial Organ Theory *Tenno Kikan Setsu* after strict constitutional study, and it was welcomed by the scientific community. *Tenno Chikan Setsu*, or Emperor Organ Theory, is a theory from the Study of the Constitution about the Emperor. It was introduced during the Japanese Empire. It suggests that the state, as a public authority, is sovereign. The emperor exercises sovereignty as the highest organ while being given *hobitsu* by other organs, such as the Cabinet. Its basis is the state authority theory, suggested by German laws.

The deployment of militarism in the Japanese education system

To harmonize the emperor's powers with those specified in the Parliament Act, supreme organ theory permeated the academic milieu. This was done through the characterization of the emperor as the supreme monarchical organ of the state. In parallel, several youth organizations in secondary schools have expressed their discontent, especially those not affiliated with the Ministry of Education. The national purpose was to reduce communist penetration into Japanese student bodies. In contrast, they emphasized the importance of the national spirit. Periodically, the schoolbooks were retracted to reflect the spirit of the time, which was influenced by nationalism around the world.

In the application of this governmental policy, the National Council for Secondary Schools, Japan National High School *Nihon Kukumin Kotogakko*, was established in 1927.¹⁵

Military spirit deployed in the education system:

At the outbreak of the war, everyone was recruited to fight. To determine the number of soldiers in the armed forces, students were recruited voluntarily in 1943. University professors were obligated to serve in the military for five months before their careers began. Officers were sent to public schools to instill military attitudes in classrooms. This was done to accommodate the military spirit. Confucian thought served as the foundation of educational policy during the war when the Chronicle of Japan, *Nihon Shoki 24*, was studied.¹⁶ The Chronicle of Japan *Nihon Shoki* is the second-oldest book of classical Japanese history. It is more elaborate and detailed than the oldest, Records of Ancient Matters *Kojiki*, and has proven to be an invaluable tool for historians and archaeologists as it includes the most complete extant historical record of ancient Japan.

Students were taught that Japan was a land of emperors and a nation unparalleled. The focus was on legitimacy and eternal imperial judgment. Traditionally, the educational system viewed teachers as servants of the emperor who incited students to courageously sacrifice their lives for their country.

¹⁵ Mark Lincicome, "Nationalism, Internationalization, and the Dilemma of Educational Reform in Japan," *Comparative Education Review* 37, no. 2 (1993): 123-151, doi: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1188681>.

¹⁶ John S. Brownlee, "Political Thought in Japanese Historical Writing: From *Kojiki* (712) to Tokushi Yoron (1712)," *Wilfrid Laurier University Press* (1991): doi: muse.jhu.edu/book/14298.

In the framework of popular mobilization of religion, a large-scale media campaign was arranged to celebrate the 2600 remembrance of the upgrade of the first emperor on the throne, where it was announced that the year 2600 came after a long wait and that all the people of the nation would celebrate together and pray for the prosperity of the nation and the eternal glory of the imperial throne.¹⁷ Schools and universities held competitions and celebrations to commemorate the war.

Even children were affected by the war. The primary schools were classified as "people's schools," *Kokumin Hakko*, and the curriculum was psychological preparation based on "The Way of the Empire." The youth schools *Seinin Gakko* were established at middle schools, and the secondary-level specialized schools *Senmon Gakko* were founded. They were attached to universities and studied medicine, law, economics, trade, agriculture, engineering, and management. The goal was to create a practical class, not an educated elite.¹⁸

Educational Reform Under Occupation

Education reform in Japan was a top priority for American occupation authorities, even if it was ordered.¹⁹ Japanese ideology must change the emperor's divinity.²⁰ The emperor is the head of the family—the *Kokka Kozoku* Family-Nation.²¹ For most of Japanese history, the emperor's status as the direct descendant of the founding kami was not reflected in his political power. The scholars of the imperial era believed the emperor was *Akitsu Mikami*, a human being in whom the kami nature was fully revealed. However, they qualified this by saying that the emperor was neither omniscient nor omnipotent.²²

Therefore, following imperial desire and in line with right-wing thought, the Ministry of Education issued a booklet called *Kokutai no Hongi*. Millions of copies were quickly printed and published on the Japanese islands and the rest of the empire's colonies.²³ The compulsory text deals with national education and ethics. Japanese state education includes domestic politics, foreign relations, and cultural affairs. Japan's uniqueness was emphasized by the fact that the Japanese are ethnically, culturally, and socially homogeneous and distinct from Westerners and Asians alike. In addition, they have a keen sense of national identity.²⁴

At the beginning of the war, teachers were obliged to serve in the military for five months before school started. This was to absorb the military spirit, and officers were sent to

¹⁷ Kenneth j. Ruoff, *Imperial Japan at Its Zenith: The Wartime Celebration of the Empire's 2,600th Anniversary*, 1. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010)

¹⁸ Ben-Ami Shillony, "Enigma of the emperors: Sacred subservience in Japanese history, Folkstone," *Global Oriental* 61, no. 1 (2005), 105-107.

¹⁹ Brian W. Lagotte, "Turf Wars: School Administrators and Military Recruiting," *Sage Journals* 28, no.4 (2012): doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904812465115>

²⁰ Kōichi Mori, "The Emperor of Japan: A Historical Study in Religious Symbolism," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 6, no.4 (1979): 522-565, doi: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30233221>

²¹ Wilbur M. Fridell, "Government Ethics Textbooks in Late Meiji Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 29, no.4 (1970): 823-833, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2943090>

²² Ben-Ami Shillony, "Enigma of the emperors: Sacred subservience in Japanese history, Folkstone," *Global Oriental* 61, no. 1 (2005), 105-107.

²³ J Monbushō and R.K Hall, *Kokutai no hongii: Cardinal principles of the national entity of Japan*. (Cambridge, MA, 1949)

²⁴ Pater N. Dale, "The myth of Japanese uniqueness," *Nissan Institute for Japanese Studies, University of Oxford* 63, no. 2 (1986): 353-354, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3025509>

public schools to instill a military nature in classrooms.²⁵ Confucian thought formed the basis of educational policy during the war, so Japanese history was taught in the Chronicle of Japan, *Nihon Shoki*.

However, Japan is the land of emperors, and it is an unparalleled nation, focusing on imperial legitimacy and eternity. The ideology of the educational system described teachers as servants of the emperor who courageously urged students to give their lives for the nation.

Thus, with the military defeat, the collapse of the physical education system was accompanied by the collapse of the physical education system. Eighteen million Japanese students waited for the unknown. 4,000 schools were destroyed, and education could only obtain 20% of teaching supplies, including books, to the point where there was no longer an educational structure.²⁶

Japanese authorities tried to reopen the remaining schools while abolishing curricula that advocated national extremism and encouraged militarism. Military academies were closed, and students were transferred to civilian schools.²⁷

On September 12, 1946, students could enroll in schools near their residences. In rural areas, agricultural work requirements were considered because of the Japanese food crisis, and students were asked to participate in agricultural production. School administrations were also asked to use public buildings such as temples, clubs, and military barracks as educational centers.

This followed on September 15, 1945. It defined the revised approach as educational policies different from the past that contribute to the building of an emerging nation that seeks peace and human development. This is after evaluating the educational system and developing a reformatted system that eliminates military concepts.²⁸

Accordingly, the Ministry of Education abolished all military education curricula and associated research centers and decided to direct efforts toward peace advocacy. Respect the individual and tolerance among human beings, seek peace, and promote friendship between religions and their adherents around the world.

On October 31 of the same year, the occupying authorities issued Directive AG350.²⁹ In this directive, all teachers, supporters of the military, advocates of extreme nationalism, and opponents of the occupation were relieved of their educational positions. Thus, 768,119 Japanese teachers lost their positions through dismissal or voluntary resignation to avoid accountability.³⁰

The U.S. government, through the Joint Coordination Committee of the Ministries of War, Navy, and Foreign Affairs (SWNCC), sent the Commander-in-Chief a report on January 8, 1946, explaining education realities in Japan and multiple recommendations to change them.

²⁵ Leonard James Schoppa, *Education reform in Japan: a case of immobilist politics*. (New York City, NY: Rutledge, 1993)

²⁶ Edward R. Beauchamp, "The Development of Japanese Educational Policy, 1945-85," *History of Education Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (1987): 299-324, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/368630>

²⁷ Edward R. Beauchamp, *Windows on Japanese Education* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991)

²⁸ Edward R. Beauchamp, "The Development of Japanese Educational Policy, 1945-85," *History of Education Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (1987): 299-324, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/368630>

²⁹ James J. Orr, *The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan*. (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i press, 2001)

³⁰ Vladimer Kobayashi, *Japan, Under American Occupation*. (Online: Linnet Books, 1978)

They were also racists and hostile to everything foreign, although they wanted access to foreigners' technological progress.

Achieving the objectives for the United States envisaged by the occupation cannot be guaranteed without radical changes in ideologies and ways of thinking. These changes have led Japanese people to adopt military chauvinism. Therefore, it is worthwhile to rebuild all the concepts underlying Japanese culture while also instilling concepts aimed at developing mentalities consistent with democracy's fundamental principles.

The report continued that rebuilding culture and thought should not be limited to formal education reform. Instead, it should extend to young people's rehabilitation. These programs must be carefully designed to ensure maximum response and acceptance from the Japanese. It was imperative to encourage the Japanese people to develop individuality, gradually reorganizing the Japanese political system. It is self-evident that the only effective political reform comes from the people themselves, as reforms imposed by an occupying power will either be resisted by the people or ignored. The general policy was designed to make ideas a demand of the Japanese themselves through a comprehensive reorganization of the Japanese people and their concepts.³¹

The report praised the Japanese people for being non-illiterate and aware of education's importance. By exploiting the revolutionary (next generation) education system, we will make the Japanese accept ideological redirection by properly introducing it. One of the most effective ways to achieve this goal is to introduce them to the outside world. The program should be circulated so that the Japanese can continue to do so after withdrawal by encouraging the participation of local Japanese organizations in it. This program is a top priority and should be provided with all the necessary support to achieve the goals of the United States of America.³²

Headquarters responded by issuing a directive on October 22, 1945, on the need to immediately abolish the military spirit and extreme nationalism in education. This directive also emphasized the need to cleanse educators who spread Japanese aggression. Religious education must be separated from systematic education. There must be an end to moral philosophy, history, and geography because they contain colonial content and ideas contrary to democracy. The National Student Authority should also be abolished and replaced by local youth organizations.

At the beginning of 1946, a U.S. academic mission of 27 experts in triennial and education arrived in Japan to radically change Japan's education system.³³ Their job was to institute the following: (1) Abolishing Japan's 6-5-3 education system and establishing a reformatted system based on 6-3-3-4 rule.³⁴ (2) Abolishing the habit of prostration in the emperor's image in schools. (3) Added social activities. (4) Developing the Japanese language

³¹ Alexander D. Reid, and B. L. Austin, and Raymond E. Cox, "Reform of the Japanese Governmental System (SWNCC228)," *National Diet Library* 44 (1945): 1-14: doi: <https://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/shiryo/03/059/059tx.html>

³² Foreign Service Institute, "Report by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Subcommittee for the Far East," *Foreign relations of the United States* 8, 119 (1946): doi: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1946v08/d119>

³³ Ken Kempner, "The Legacy of Imposed Reform: The Case of the US Educational Mission to Japan," *Southern Oregon University* (2006): doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2263703> [The Legacy of Imposed Reform: The Case of the US Educational Mission to Japan \(researchgate.net\)](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312222222)

³⁴ Mitoji Nishimoto, "Educational Change in Japan After the War," *The Journal of Educational Sociology* 26, no. 1 (1952): 16-26, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2263703>

using Latin letters. (4) Enduring central school control. (5) Organize educational departments within the educational structure. (6) Promoting scientific competition among students. (7) Providing equal access to education for women at all levels of education. (8) Transforming the curriculum from indoctrination to knowledge acquisition and interactive participation.

Thus, the most prominent focus was the modification of the old curriculum from six years in primary education, followed by five years at the secondary level, and then three years in university education, from 6-5-3 to 6-3-3-4. The primary level remains at six years, while the second level is divided into the preparatory level, which is three years long.

This is followed by the secondary level, which is also three years long.³⁵ The university phase becomes four years long, intending to make the educational system a lever and a method of programming scientific standards with the aim of cooperative education and teaching "social sciences" courses to introduce the Japanese people to the rest of the world and their distinct cultures.³⁶

The U.S. Department of State has prepared a study to modify Japan's education system. This study emphasizes that the primary goal of education is to prepare a democratic nation in Japan. This can be achieved through the social preparation of the Japanese to abide by their freedom responsibilities, consolidate the concept of individual freedom, develop an independent personality while respecting others' rights, and teach the sanctity of commitments in all human relations, both between individuals and nations. Finally, it is emphasized that the Japanese themselves must modify their educational system considering these previously mentioned concepts. The reason for taking this step is for the sake of their country and the peace of the world.³⁷

The Birth of the Japanese Modern Schooling System

On August 5, 1946, the Japanese Parliament adopted the Reconstruction of the Japanese Education Project. It referred to the government, which, on March 29, 1947, passed the Basic Education Act.³⁸ This act is based on the U.S. Academic Mission Report and the U.S. State Department study guidelines. The amendments feature (1) Denial of teaching to anyone who calls for the overthrow of Japan's rewritten constitution after it comes into force. (2) Distribution of education supervision authority to bodies elected by provinces and municipal councils. (3) Education at all levels has become gender balanced. (4) Free and compulsory education at the primary and middle stages, and schools for disadvantaged students. (5) Replacement of the 6-5-3 education system with a 6-3-3-4 system. (6) Universities are entered through competitive examinations at secondary school.

In line with this law, the Ministry of Education announced the curriculum the same year. To clarify the outline of teaching materials and learning methods, several criteria are used in

³⁵ Robert W. Aspinall, *Teachers' Unions and the Politics of Education in Japan*, (New York, NY: SUNY Press, 2001).

³⁶ Joseph C. Trainor, *Educational reform in occupied Japan: Trainor's memoir* (Tokyo, Japan: Meisei University Press, 1983).

³⁷ Sam Bamkin, "Reforms to strengthen moral education in Japan: a preliminary analysis of implementation in schools," *Contemporary Japan* 30, no.1 (2018): 78-96, doi: 10.1080/18692729.2018.1422914

³⁸ Shunsuke Murakami, and Iwahashi Bunkichi, "Post-War Reconstruction of Japanese Education and its Social Aspects" *The Journal of Educational Sociology* 29, no. 7 (1956): 309-316, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2264174>

planning. It was decided to prepare a study plan based on the teachers' initiative. Eventually, teacher training became a specialty of universities and not of specialized vocational schools, which represented an independent curriculum of higher education.³⁹

This was followed in 1947 by the formation of the Japan Teacher Union, *Nihon Kyoikukai Kumiai*. Japanese educators quickly accepted these concepts unreservedly. They found an appropriate entry point to reformulate Japanese culture. International cooperation and peace have changed since glorifying expansionist wars. All these systematic changes in the Japanese education system were caused by the occupying power, the United States. In these days of power, power introduced concepts contrary to Japanese local traditions.⁴⁰

With the beginning of the practical application of the Basic Education Act, various obstacles, such as the need to interpret a clear meaning of freedom, have emerged. This is because of the over-interpretation of this concept. This was accompanied by a decline in public morals and a loss of respect for the traditions of the nation due to the misinterpretation of the idea of progress with the spread of political partisanship among university students and the perceived underdevelopment of the quality of culture, which made raising the competence of teachers necessary and constituted a committee of senior Japanese specialists in education that is directly linked to the Prime Minister's Office and founded the Education Reform Council to align Japanese traditions with Western modernity.⁴¹

Concluding Remarks

How did Nippon reach that high rank of scientific advancement? And how can we learn from its creative approach to educational modernization?

The Japanese educational system has several notable advantages that contribute to Japan's high scientific advancement rank. These advantages include a strong emphasis on effort and competitiveness, a focus on teamwork and collaboration, a stable legislative framework promoting civility and respect, free mandatory education, a rewarding problem-solving approach, a comprehensive curriculum encompassing both academic and value formation subjects, highly respected and prepared teachers, a national curriculum establishing educational standards, and the integration of responsibilities within students' daily routines.

These aspects have collectively shaped a culture of dedicated work, perseverance, and a strong work ethic among students. Problem-solving and critical thinking skills foster innovation and creativity. Students with learning disabilities benefit from inclusiveness and equal success opportunities. Additionally, the high regard for teachers and the commitment to maintaining high educational standards contribute to the system's effectiveness.

It is imperative to note that while the Japanese educational system has its strengths, it is not without its challenges and criticisms. Some concerns include elevated levels of academic pressure and stress among students, a limited emphasis on individuality and creativity, and potential gaps in fostering independent thinking. Nevertheless, the Japanese educational

³⁹ Joseph C. Trainor, *Educational reform in occupied Japan: Trainor's memoir* (Tokyo, Japan: Meisei University Press, 1983).

⁴⁰ Walter Feinberg, *Japan, and the Pursuit of a New American Identity: Work and Education in a Multicultural Age*. (London, UK: Routledge, 1993), 216.

⁴¹ Shigeru Yoshida, *The Yoshida memoirs: The story of Japan in crisis*, (Westport, CT: Green Wood, 1962).

system's success in scientific advancement serves as an example of how a combination of factors, including a strong academic framework, societal values, and a cultural emphasis on effort and collaboration, can contribute to overall academic excellence.

Arab and Islamic worlds can learn from Japan's creative approach to educational modernization in several ways:

- a- **Balancing Academic Pressure:** While adopting Japan's educational approach, it is imperative to address and mitigate potential issues related to high academic pressure and stress. Striking a balance between academic rigor and students' well-being is crucial to creating a healthy and supportive learning environment.
- b- **Collaborative Learning and Teamwork:** Arab and Islamic countries can adopt Japan's approach to collaborative learning and teamwork. Encouraging students to work together, help each other, and foster a supportive learning environment can enhance the overall educational experience. This can also promote interpersonal skills.
- c- **Cultural Adaptation:** Arab and Islamic countries should adapt and contextualize elements of Japan's educational approach to suit their specific cultural and societal needs. It is essential to consider local traditions, values, and unique educational challenges while implementing reforms or changes.
- d- **Emphasis on Effort and Work Ethic:** Japan's focus on effort and work ethic can be applied in Arab and Islamic countries to instill a sense of diligence, perseverance, and a strong commitment to learning among students. Promoting a culture of dedicated work and emphasizing that success is achievable through effort can motivate students to excel academically.
- e- **Inclusive Education:** Arab and Islamic countries can learn from Japan's approach to supporting learning disabilities students. Providing inclusive education that caters to students' diverse needs and ensures equal opportunities for all can promote a more equitable and comprehensive educational system.
- f- **Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking:** Japan's emphasis on problem-solving and critical thinking skills can be integrated into Arab and Islamic countries' curricula. Encouraging students to think independently, analyze information, and find innovative solutions to complex problems can foster creativity, innovation, and a more comprehensive approach to education.
- g- **Promoting Future Readiness:** Drawing inspiration from Japan's approach, it can equip students in Arab and Islamic countries with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in the future, preparing them for the challenges of a rapidly changing world.
- h- **Stable Legislative Framework and National Curriculum:** Establishing a stable legislative framework and a national curriculum can improve education systems in Arab and Islamic countries. Clearly defined educational goals, content, and standards can help raise the overall quality of education and ensure students receive a well-rounded education.
- i- **Teacher Training and Respect:** Investing in teacher training programs and elevating teachers' status can significantly enhance the educational experience. Providing teachers with the necessary skills and resources to excel in their roles, as well as recognizing and

respecting their contributions, can improve education quality in Arab and Islamic countries.

- j- Value Formation and Comprehensive Education: Arab and Islamic countries can benefit from incorporating value formation and comprehensive education into their systems. By incorporating subjects that focus on moral education, the arts, culture, and ethics, students can develop a well-rounded understanding of their heritage, values, and cultural identity alongside academic knowledge.

By adapting Japan's creative approach to educational modernization to their context, Arab and Islamic countries can enhance their education systems. They can also promote academic excellence and nurture well-rounded individuals equipped with the skills and knowledge needed for the future.

To learn from the Japanese path towards scientific excellence and adopt it for our shattered East, students need to learn traditional subjects such as reading, writing, and math. Educational modernization needs to include a variety of pathways that allow students to apply traditional skills to career areas where their interests lie. For example, students can study math in entrepreneurship, manufacturing, or engineering.

Finally, Social science, economics, technology, and wellness classes can serve as pathways for students to explore fulfilling careers in law, medicine, and finance. Modernizing our education system can improve educational attainment rates and produce a more productive workforce. School physical conditions impact students' learning environments and teacher morale. Schools should be viewed as comprehensive learning environments, not just boxes where students spend time together until they graduate or drop out of school. Having a modern, updated learning environment can give students a sense of ownership over their educational space, improving engagement and outcomes in the process. *"Learning has no national frontier."*

عن أبي الدرداء رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: *"إنما العلم بالتعلم"* ، رواه الطبراني.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this comprehensive exploration of Japan's journey toward global academic leadership has yielded several significant findings that shed light on the factors contributing to its exceptional success. One particularly surprising and intriguing research finding is Japan's pivotal role in comprehensive education. The study reveals that a holistic approach to education, encompassing not only academic subjects but also critical thinking skills, collaboration, and diligent effort, has been a driving force behind Japan's education excellence. This finding, which emerged through meticulous analysis of Japan's educational model, offers a fresh perspective and underscores the importance of a well-rounded educational approach.

This research's scientific contributions extend beyond confirming previous findings or suggesting existing research validity. While it validates the significance of historical milestones, educational reforms, and societal influences on Japan's academic achievements, it extends further by contributing to a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the Japanese

approach to excellence. By closely examining Japan's academic system's principles and values, this study offers a novel perspective. This can inform and inspire learning advancements not only in the Arab and Islamic worlds but also globally. The insights provided into the importance of effort, collaboration, and problem-solving can be utilized as valuable variables in shaping educational practices and policies.

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, it is crucial to acknowledge its limitations. The research was conducted using a limited sample size, focusing on only a few cases in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Hiroshima. Additionally, the study primarily explored a specific location and did not consider variations at various levels, including gender, age, and diverse geographical contexts. These limitations highlight the need for a follow-up study that encompasses more varied cases, an expanded sample size, and a wider range of demographics. By conducting further research, a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the Japanese educational model and its applicability to other contexts can be attained. This will enable the formulation of more appropriate and effective educational policies that address diverse educational needs and challenges globally.

Finally, this study of Japan's journey toward academic excellence has uncovered surprising insights, such as the emphasis on comprehensive education. It confirms the importance of historical milestones and societal influences. By providing an innovative perspective on the Japanese educational model, this research makes significant scientific contributions. It suggests valuable variables and concepts that can be applied to educational practices in the Arab and Islamic worlds and beyond. However, it is essential to recognize the limitations of this study, including the limited sample size, cases, and variations. To build upon these findings and ensure a more profound and comprehensive understanding, future research should incorporate more diverse cases, larger sample sizes, and broader demographic representations. By doing so, deeper insights and more appropriate policies can be developed, fostering educational excellence on a broader scale.

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Learning from Japan: Advancing Education in the Arab and Islamic World through Creative Approaches

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<https://www.ul.edu.lb/common/news.aspx?newsId=1683&lang=2>

Statements and declarations

Contribution statement

The author confirms sole responsibility for the following: study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation.

Funding

Furthermore, the author did not receive support from any organization for the submitted work.

Data availability

All data analyzed during this study are included in the reference list of this article.

Financial, non-financial

Moreover, the author certifies that he has no affiliation with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Competing interest

The author has no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.