

Why do the Japanese Hate to Separate Children?





A Comparative Study of Inclusive Education in Japan and the UK

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I. Purpose

① The purpose of this study is to examine why the Japanese inclusive education movement stubbornly refuses to separate children. Although the inclusive education movement in both the UK and Japan has called for all children to be able to study in local mainstream schools, Japan has tended to reject 'separating' more than the UK. This study uses the theoretical framework of Chie Nakane, a prominent figure in the field of 'Japanese Cultural Studies', to identify differences in the characteristics of inclusive education in Japan and the UK.

II. Is Separating Children Acceptable?

 *1 	<p>⇐ The child with severe disabilities is in a resource space, which is separated from a mainstream class.</p>	 *2 	<p>⇐ The child with severe disabilities is in a mainstream class and receives support from his TA. He stays in the mainstream class all day.</p>
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- ② Both the UK and Japanese pictures above show a child with severe disabilities studying in a mainstream school. However, in the UK school, the child with severe disabilities is in a separated resource space, whereas in the Japanese school, the child with severe disabilities is in a mainstream classroom.
- ③ In the UK, 'separating' children is a common practice even in what are called inclusive schools. In contrast, the Japanese inclusive education movement has long believed that the ideal inclusive education is for children with disabilities to learn together with other children in mainstream classes all day long.



III. Attribute and Frame

④ Chie Nakane (1926-2021) is a well-known and respected social anthropologist in Japan. She published 'Japanese Society: A Practical Guide to Understanding the Japanese Mindset and Culture (『タテ社会の人間関係——単一社会の理論』)' in 1967. The book was a bestseller and is still read by many people even today.

⑤ In this book, she set up two contrasting criteria – Attribute (資格 shikaku) and Frame (場ba) - to explain the mechanisms of social group formation. (Nakane [1967]1970: 13)



⑥ Taking industry as an example, 'lathe operator' or 'executive' refers to attribute, but 'members of Y Company' refers to frame. In the same way, 'professor,' 'office clerk,' and 'student' are attributes, whereas 'men of Z University' is a frame. (Nakane [1967]1970: 14)

 Frame 'I belong to S University.' 'I am from B Publishing Company.'		 Attribute 'I am a professor.' 'I am a clerk.'
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How to introduce yourself?


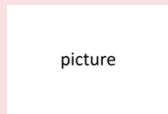
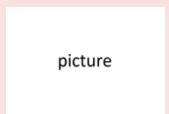
⑦ The group consciousness of the Japanese depends considerably on 'frame', whereas in the UK it lies in 'attribute'. For example, when a Japanese introduces himself to others, he is inclined to give precedence to institution over kind of occupation. Rather than saying, 'I am a professor' or 'I am a clerk', he is likely to say, 'I belong to S University' or 'I am from B Publishing Company'.

IV. 'Attribute' Based Inclusive Education



⑧ According to Nakane's theoretical framework, inclusive education in the UK places the highest priority on meeting the educational needs of each child.

⑨ In the UK, there are many children from different backgrounds in schools. For example, in addition to children with disabilities, there are children with EAL (English as an Additional Language), disadvantaged children, children with significantly low academic achievement and, conversely, children who are Gifted and Talented. These different social backgrounds are the 'attribute' of the children. According to 'Attribute' Based Inclusive Education in the UK, learning in the same space as other children might be sacrificed because meeting the needs of each child is most important (The child with severe disabilities, shown in II, is an example of this).

	<p>*1 ⇐ There was a poster with respect for diversity on the bulletin board.</p>		<p>*1 ⇐ The child with severe disabilities is receiving care from physical therapists.</p>		<p>*1 ⇐ Groups are determined by the children's abilities.</p>
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V. 'Frame' Based Inclusive Education



⑩ The most important aspect of inclusive education in Japan is the sharing of the 'frame' of their classroom among children (and their classroom teacher). The classroom is not only a place for children to study, but also a place where they live together.

⑪ In Japan, for example, children are responsible for cleaning classrooms and serving school lunch. (In contrast, in the UK, cleaning is done by adults employed by schools, and children eat school lunch in the cafeteria, and adults called 'dinner ladies' also serve school lunch for the children.)

⑫ In homeroom classes, for example, children discuss events they are working on. Each child is also assigned different tasks, such as taking a child who is unwell to the school nurse's office (保健係), or looking after creatures they keep (生き物係). In other words, the classroom is a living community.

	<p>⇐ Children themselves serve their school lunch.</p>		<p>⇐ Children carry school lunches from the kitchen to the classroom.</p>		<p>⇐ Children clean the classroom themselves.</p>		<p>⇐ Children feed their pets in the classroom.</p>
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VI. Conclusion: Refusal to Be Treated as Outsiders

⑬ In Japan, where 'Frame' is most important, a clear distinction is made between the inside (ウチuchi) and outside (ソトsoto) of the 'Frame'. In schools, close family-like relationships are expected among classmates (and their classroom teacher) inside the classroom, but indifference towards those outside the classroom. In light of this, children with disabilities in a special classroom which is separated from a mainstream classroom, are outsiders in the eyes of other children in the mainstream classroom and are not considered as part of the same peer group.

⑭ Why does the Japanese inclusive education movement stubbornly refuse to separate children? This is because excluding children with disabilities from the mainstream classroom means that the children are treated as outsiders. Therefore in Japan, children with disabilities must stay in the mainstream classroom in order to be considered peers.

Notes

1 Photographed by the author at a school in London in March 2023. 2TBS NEWS, April 23, 2022, *What Inclusive Education Changes* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BuUmZXK40s>)