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A Comparative Analysis of the Educational System of Japan and the Philippines

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Abstract
This comparative study examines the educational systems of Japan and the Philippines, focusing on history, curriculum structure (including school-year length and grading), teaching approaches, student assessment, teacher preparation, and educational administration. Drawing on document analysis, it identifies shared commitments to basic education, national curriculum standards, and holistic learner development alongside key differences in organizational structure (Japan's 6-3-3 model versus the Philippine K–12 system), instructional emphases, and resource-related challenges. The analysis highlights transferable Japanese practices—particularly the cultivation of student responsibility, cooperation, and consistent learning routines—that can be adapted to the Philippine context while respecting cultural, economic, and institutional differences. Recommendations address strengthening positive discipline and student agency, continuous teacher professional development, equitable resource provision, and further empirical research.

Keywords: comparative education, Japan, Philippines, K–12 curriculum, student responsibility

Introduction

Background of the Study

Education can be called one of the key foundations of national development and human development in general. It equips people with knowledge, necessary skills, good qualities, and makes them productive citizens of society. Each country has its own educational system which depends on the culture, traditions, policy of the country and other factors. Japan and the Philippines both understand the significance of education; however, the countries are different in their school system, curriculum, classroom management and development of learners.

The Japanese educational system puts the stress on discipline, cooperation, respect, independence and continuous improvement of learners. Students are motivated to become responsible for their studies and involved in activities aimed at development of their social and moral qualities. The Filipino educational system pays much attention to provision of high-quality and accessible education and development of learners' intellectual, social, emotional and practical skills. While the Philippines strives to conduct educational reforms and increase efficiency of learning process, the country is still facing problems related to educational resources, classroom facilities, work load of teachers and academic performance of learners.

This analysis of research seeks to compare the educational systems of Japan and the Philippines to reveal similarities, differences, strengths, and areas for improvement. Some of the key components that will be examined in this comparison include curriculum, teaching methods, teacher preparation, evaluation of students, school discipline, and educational administration. Through an analysis of both educational systems, it is hoped that there can be an identification of good educational practices from Japan that can be applied in the Philippine setting taking into consideration the country's cultural and resource needs.

Education is an essential tool for transforming societies, developing economies, and building nations. It is important in helping develop the cognitive abilities, skills, moral character, and social responsibility of individuals. There are many things that affect the efficiency of an educational system, such as the policies of the government, curricula, teaching methods, teachers' training, resources, and culture in which education operates. In this respect, looking at the educational systems of other countries can help us learn about the different approaches taken to meet educational objectives.

There are many grounds on which Japan and the Philippines can be used for comparative educational studies. The reason for that is that both of these countries view education as one of the main tools for development; however, their educational systems, practices, and methods vary. First of all, Japan is usually viewed as an example of discipline, teamwork, respect for other people, improvement, and development of academic and social competencies. On the other hand, the education system in the Philippines is focused on accessible, inclusive, and quality education and aims at providing its citizens with the necessary knowledge, skills, and values. A systematic comparison of the educational systems of Japan and the Philippines is therefore essential to understanding how educational policies, curricular frameworks, instructional methodologies, assessment practices, teacher development, and school administration influence the quality of teaching and learning. Through a critical examination of these dimensions, this research seeks to identify the similarities and differences between the two systems, evaluate their respective strengths and limitations, and explore educational practices that may be relevant to improving Philippine education. Furthermore, the study recognizes that educational practices cannot be transferred directly from one country to another without considering differences in culture, institutional capacity, and available resources.

Overall, this analysis on comparative education is meant to help add to a better understanding of comparative education and the application of the knowledge gained through it towards the educational reforms that should be done in the Philippines. Through the use of Japan's educational experience to provide relevant insights to the current situation but considering the unique requirements of the Filipino students, the results could provide a basis in making recommendations that will enhance the quality, equity, effectiveness, and comprehensive development of the Filipino learners.

The building of education is dependent on qualified organizations; in other words, education administration is vital for educational quality (Drucker, 1983), referenced in oban, (2011). Education is extremely important in the Philippines since it is the major means of social advancement and economic mobility (Roeung Daro). While the Japanese educational system tries towards worldwide trends in order to produce people who are aware of current development.

One of the Southeast Asian countries expanding its science education program is the Philippines (Gardner, 2000). The Japanese educational systems believes that all students, regardless of age, ethnicity, or gender, should benefit from it. Generality and equality, meeting, the needs of the individual and society, orientation, continuity, and Ataturk's nationalism are among of the system's key concepts (Ozmusul, 2012).

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this comparative research is to investigate and compare the educational systems of the Philippines and Japan. This study aim to compare the;

1. History
2. Curriculum
- Length of the school year
- Medium of instruction
- Grading system.

Methodology

This research will undertake a series of comparisons between variables specified in the purpose statement. The results of this study might lead to a more in-depth comparative examination of both nations or possibly other countries. In the early phases of the formation of an area of research, the comparative technique is frequently utilized. It can assist the researcher in progressing from exploratory case studies to a more advanced level of general theoretical models, invariances, such as causation or evolution (Penti Routio, 2007).

First, each country's history was discussed. Following that the comparing variables: Curriculum, Length of School Year, Grading System, are described and debated based on factual information. Finally, beneficial characteristics of Japan's education system from which the Philippine's education system may learn were enumerated and debated, as well as vice versa. This study included qualitative (descriptive) data.

Findings

A brief history of both nations was reviewed to begin this section of a comparative study, followed by the purposed comparison factors and the good qualities of both countries.

A. History

Philippine Educational System

The education system in the Philippines has been greatly impacted by the country's colonial past, which has included periods of Spanish, American, and Japanese authority and occupation.

Prior to the arrival of the Spanish, education in the Philippines was unstructured, informal, and developed of methodologies, with greater focus on vocational education and less on academic success. The colonization of the Spanish resulted in a shift in the unstructured education system, with a shift from vocation-oriented to religion-oriented schooling. However education was not for everyone, but rather for the elites; this restriction was eliminated with the introduction of public education by the Educational Decree of 1863. Following the Americans' conquest of the Spaniards, the school system was changed by the Schurman Commission, which adopted English as the medium of teaching. The Japanese occupiers in the Philippines emphasized work-love during World War II (Historical Perspective of the Philippine Educational System, n.d.). This means that education in the Philippines evolved throughout time as colonists changed, as did the emphasis of education. The United States has left the greatest impression on the educational system, with many professors at the country's institutions having got their training at U.S. universities (LC.B. San Pedro, *et al*).

Japan is regarded for having the world's greatest educational system, hence it has more strengths than drawbacks. According to international standards, a country's educational system should address the rapport between the persons engaged in order to improve the learning processes. Japan has adopted this technique, in which the learning and teaching processes are participatory rather than lecture-based (Dautenhahn & Saunders, 2011). International educational standards call for parents and teachers to be involved in all parts of a student's life. As a result,

Japan's second strength is the encouraging attitude instilled in kids by their parents and instructors. Teachers may help to

promote this by allowing their pupils to express themselves via learning. Parents also play an important role by consistently pushing their children to do well in school and to be physically and intellectually interested in their studies. As a result, Japan claims exceptionally low levels of student absenteeism, tardiness, and poor performance.

Ideology of Education

The importance of education in developing one's personality distinctively, enhancing ability, independence, and seeking a happy life; at the same time, it starts on a mission to nurture the people who create the country and society.

Filipinos have a strong perspective on education, viewing it as the major road to greater social and economic mobility. This was realized by the Americans as a result of their colonial authority, when the ideal of a democratic society in which individuals could advance via excellent educational attainment was realized. In Japan, students are supposed to take break times between school terms in order to rest and interact with their family and friends away from books, in accordance with globally accepted educational system norms (Brooks, 2011). In Japan, however, children are constantly in contact with literature; for example, on weekends, they are required to attend schools that teach them life skills, such as knitting and cooking. In addition, throughout the summer and spring breaks, students are required to complete a number of tasks that will be due when the new term begins. As a result, a student may get psychologically and intellectually exhausted, compromising their academic performance. It may be deduced that Japan and the Philippines have the same viewpoint, namely that education is the path to a country's further mobility.

B. Curriculum

Philippines

The Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority are in charge of education in the Philippines (TESDA). DepEd is in charge of K–12 basic education; it has complete and exclusive authority over public schools and nominal oversight over private schools, and it also enforces the national curriculum, which was implemented in 2013. CHED and TESDA, on the other hand, are in charge of higher education; CHED manages the growth of the country's academically focused 26 universities and colleges, while TESDA monitors the development of technical and vocational education institutions and programs.

1. Curriculum for grades K-12

Major changes have been done to extend formal education to 12 years on a 6+4+2 basis. A year of kindergarten has also been added, with children commencing official schooling at the age of 5 (rather than 7 before) beginning with the 2011-2012 academic year. The two extra years of the 12-year basic education program have been introduced at the senior high school level, which is an entirely new layer of the education system aimed to better prepare pupils for further education or the labor market. It is intended that the extra two years would relieve some of the strain on academic institutions' remedial education programs.

a. **Primary Education:** Elementary education is obligatory and lasts six years. The year of obligatory kindergarten implemented as part of the K-12 reforms corresponds to the structure formerly employed by private primary schools prior to 2011, which have historically run a seven-year curriculum beginning a year earlier than public schools. In 2012-13, the redesigned K-12 curriculum for grades 1–7 was implemented. Language arts (Filipino, English, and local dialect); mathematics; science (grades 3-6); social studies; civics; music, art, and PE; health; technology (4-6); history/geography are all included in the basic curriculum (grades 4-6). 27
b. **Junior High:** In Japan, secondary education is divided into junior high schools (chgakk), which cover grades seven through nine, and senior high schools (ktgakk, shortened to kk), which typically include grades ten through twelve.
c. **Curriculum:** The mandatory courses for junior high school include Japanese language, social studies, mathematics, science, a foreign language elective (usually always English), music, fine arts, health and physical education, and industrial arts or homemaking."
d. **Vocational Schools:** Generally, educational courses at vocational schools last two years or longer. Students who have completed more than 1,700 class hours may graduate from vocational school with an original Academic Degree known as a Diploma.

Curriculum: A vocational school's curriculum comprises of disciplines connected to specialized knowledge and skills for taking employment and professions of your choosing. There is a strong emphasis on practical classes to learn practical skills through moving the body, and numerous lesson periods are allotted.

e. **Science Schools:** Japan is well-known for providing students with a competitive and high-quality education. With its renowned colleges and resources, Japan is an excellent environment for aspiring biologists interested in studying biology and developing a profession moving ahead.

Curriculum: Instead, each prefecture's board of education provides in-service training courses. Some training is required, but many science instructors participate in voluntary study groups sponsored by school districts or private organizations.

2. School Year Duration

The school year in Japan begins in April. The first term lasts until around the 20th of July, when summer vacation begins. Children return to school in early September for the second term, which lasts until approximately December 25. The last term starts in early January and lasts until late March. The school year begins in April and last in March. Japanese nationals must attend elementary school for six years and junior high school for three years (for a total of nine years).

3. System of Grading

Grade A (Very Good): 80% or 89.99%
Grade B (Good) 70 to 79.99 %
Grade C (Satisfactory) 60-69.99 %
Grade F (Fail) 0.00- 59.99%

Result

The document analysis identified several similarities and differences between the educational systems of Japan and the Philippines. The major findings are summarized below.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of the Educational Systems of Japan and the Philippines

Dimension	Japan	Philippines
Educational structure	Follows the 6-3-3 structure for elementary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education.	Provides kindergarten, six years of elementary education, four years of junior high school, and two years of senior high school under the K–12 structure.
Curriculum	Uses national curriculum standards known as the Courses of Study.	Uses national curriculum frameworks and DepEd policies, including the phased implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum.
Teaching methodologies	Commonly emphasizes structured instruction, collaborative learning, classroom participation, and responsibility.	Uses varied instructional approaches, including teacher-guided instruction, collaborative activities, and learner-centered strategies.
Student assessment	Uses classroom assessments and examinations, with additional entrance examinations playing a role in educational progression.	Uses classroom-based assessments and other evaluation methods to monitor learning and achievement.
Teacher preparation	Teacher certification and preparation are regulated within a national framework, with professional development opportunities.	Teacher education, licensure, and professional development operate within national regulatory and professional frameworks.
Educational administration	National standards are established by MEXT, while local boards and schools have defined administrative responsibilities.	DepEd establishes national policies and standards, while regional, division, and school offices carry out educational programs and administration.

Analysis of Results

1. Structure of Education

The findings show that both countries provide elementary and secondary education before higher education. However, the Philippines includes kindergarten and has four years of Senior High School. Japan has six years of elementary school, three years of lower secondary school, and three years of upper secondary school.

This comparison shows that both countries organize education into progressive stages, but they differ in the distribution of years across those stages.

2. Curriculum and Teaching Practices

Both countries establish curriculum standards to guide teachers in delivering lessons. Japan places importance on foundational learning, cooperation, and the development of responsibility. The Philippine educational system also aims to develop academic competences, critical thinking, practical skills, and values.

The comparison suggests that effective education requires not only an appropriate curriculum but also teaching strategies that respond to learners' needs.

3. Student Discipline and Responsibility

Japanese schools commonly incorporate routines and activities that encourage students to take responsibility for their learning and shared school environment. Philippine schools also promote discipline, cooperation, and respect through classroom rules, school activities, and values education.

These similarities indicate that student responsibility can be strengthened through consistent expectations, teacher guidance, and opportunities for learners to participate in school life.

4. Educational Challenges

Both countries need to respond to changing educational demands. In the Philippines, differences in resources, school facilities, and learning opportunities can affect the delivery of education. Japan also faces challenges such as teacher workload and staffing needs.

The findings suggest that educational improvement requires adequate resources, teacher support, effective school leadership of educational programs.

Discussion

The findings indicate that Japan and the Philippines share the goal of providing quality education, but their educational systems differ in structure and in the ways school practices are organized.

One important lesson the Philippines can learn from Japan is the value of developing student responsibility, cooperation, and consistent learning routines. These practices can be adapted to Philippine schools through classroom responsibilities, group activities, peer support, and programs that encourage learner to care for their school environment.

However, the Japanese educational system should not be copied entirely because the two copied entirely because the two countries have different cultural, economic, and institutional conditions. Educational practices should be adapted to the needs and resources of Filipino learners and schools,

The Philippine educational system can also benefit from strengthening teacher development, improving access to learning materials, supporting school leaders, and providing appropriate interventions for learners who experience difficulties. These improvements may help reduce learning gaps and promote more inclusive education.

From an educational leadership perspective, this comparison highlights the importance of evidence-based planning. School administrators should examine their school's needs, identify effective practices, allocate resources fairly, and monitor whether educational programs improve learner outcomes.

Conclusion

The educational systems of Japan and the Philippines have similarities in their commitment to basic education, curriculum standards, and student development. However, they differ in the organization of school levels and in certain educational practices and challenges.

Japan provides useful examples of how school can promote responsibility, cooperation, and consistent learning routines. The Philippines can adapt these practices while addressing its own challenges involving learning resources, teacher support, and educational access.

Ultimately, improving education requires effectively leadership, capable teachers, appropriate learning materials, and cooperation among schools, families, and communities.

Recommendations

1. Philippine schools should strengthen programs that promote student responsibility, cooperation, and positive discipline.
2. School administrators should continuous professional development for teachers and encourage the sharing of effective teaching practices.
3. The government should continue improving access to learning resources and adequate school facilities, particularly in underserved communities.
4. Future researchers should conduct interviews, surveys, or school visit in both countries to validate and expand the findings of document-based comparison.

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