

# ASSIGNMENT AND GUIDELINES: GLOBALIZING THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS CLASSROOM: A COMPARISON OF PROBLEMS WITH THE JAPANESE AND THE U.S. EDUCATION SYSTEMS

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## SUGGESTED CITATION

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## Abstract

### Teaching Objectives

By using visual aids such as films, photographs, or both, this assignment helps students to conduct cross-cultural analysis between Japan and the United States about issues of education. There are four purposes of this activity:

- 1) Expand the discussion of social problems to a global level

- 2) Examine how school funding is unequally distributed in the American education system
- 3) Examine how Japan tries to equalize school funding
- 4) Discuss potential solutions to equalize school funding in the United States

## Details

**Subject Areas:** Introduction to Sociology/Social Problems

**Resource Types:** Assignment

**Class Levels:** College 200

## Resource Files

DOC

**Title:** ASSIGNMENT AND GUIDELINES: GLOBALIZING THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS CLASSROOM: A COMPARISON OF PROBLEMS WITH THE JAPANESE AND THE U.S. EDUCATION SYSTEMS

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**Type:** Assignment

**Subject:** Social Problems

**ASSIGNMENT AND GUIDELINES: GLOBALIZING THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS CLASSROOM: A COMPARISON OF PROBLEMS WITH THE JAPANESE AND THE U.S. EDUCATION SYSTEMS**

**Teaching Objectives**

By using visual aids such as films, photographs, or both, this assignment helps students to conduct cross-cultural analysis between Japan and the United States about issues of education. There are four purposes of this activity:

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**Materials Needed**

- We recommend instructors familiarize themselves with the Japanese education system before the class. Many websites explain characteristics of Japanese education system (e.g., funding system, educational goals). For example, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education\\_in\\_Japan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Japan) provides basic knowledge of Japanese education system, which is necessary for the activity.
- Films and/or websites (One for the American education system and the other for the Japanese education system)

**FILM ABOUT U.S. EDUCATION**

*Unequal Education* (60 minutes). 1991. A Presentation of Films for the Humanities and Sciences from WNET/Chicago. Directors, Joseph Camp and Robert Morris. Public Affairs Television, Inc.

In this film, the filmmakers visited two schools in New York City (one in an affluent neighborhood and the other in a poor neighborhood) to compare how students receive their education differently. The film shows how the American funding system creates an unequal distribution of education among students. Even though the film is dated, funding of schools in America has not changed in any substantial way so even if there have been changes in the communities highlighted in the film, schools like these still exist.

We recommend that the first 30 minutes of the film is the most useful for this assignment.

**FILM ABOUT JAPANESE EDUCATION**

*The Heart of the Nation* (58 minutes). 1994. Executive editor and correspondent, Hendrick Smith. Producers, Philip Burton, Kathleen McCleery, Steven York: Hendrick Smith Productions, Inc. and WETA.

This film compares three nations' (Japan, Germany, and the United States) education systems. We recommend that the first ten minutes of the film be shown. The beginning of the film illustrates the routines of Japanese elementary students at school, explains the quality of education, and touches on the topic of how the Japanese education system is funded.

**WEBSITES**

Links were last checked for accuracy on March 12, 2007

American website: [http://www.house.gov/fattah/education/ed\\_sbruneq.htm](http://www.house.gov/fattah/education/ed_sbruneq.htm)

This website is from Congressman Chaka Fattah's (D) website and is a compilation of facts about the inequalities in the American education system.

Japanese website: <http://www.amphi.com/~psteffen/fmf/elementary.html>

This website documents a day in a Japanese elementary school in Hamamatsu City. The photographs illustrate many of the ideas discussed in *The Heart of the Nation*. This is a good way to show students that even though the film is dated (1994) that the culture in the elementary schools has not changed very much since then.

**Estimated Time**

75 to 90 minutes. However, it depends on how much discussion time is allowed. Furthermore, if you have shorter class periods you could easily split the topics into two days.

**Step One**

Discuss issues about American education.

**Step Two**

Show the films/websites about American education and Japanese education. Also, pass out handouts (see appendix) so that students can take notes while watching the films/photographs.

Alternative: Discuss some of the points from the American website and view the photographs on the Japanese website.

**Step Three**

Discuss the films/websites based on the questions on the handouts. Although many students know about or have experienced an unequal distribution of education in the United States, they can be more critical and objectively see problems associated with the American education system after comparing it with the education system in Japan.

**Appendix**

Instructions: While watching the film, please try to be critical when answering the following questions.

**Unequal Education / Website of American Education**

**\*\*Race and Ethnicity\*\***

What kinds of racial or ethnic patterns do you see in the film?

**\*\*Gender\*\***

American society constructs gender roles. How do you analyze the film based on the social construction of gender roles?

**\*\*Class\*\***

Do you find any correlation between class and education? How? Explain.

The Heart of the Nation / Website of Japanese Education

**\*\*Race and Ethnicity\*\***

What kinds of racial and ethnic patterns do you see in the film?

**\*\*Gender\*\***

How do you analyze the film based on the social construction of gender roles?

**\*\*Class\*\***

Do you find any correlation between class and education? How? Explain.

**\*\*Cross-national comparison\*\***

What are similarities and differences in terms of education system between Japan and the United States? What do you like or dislike about Japanese education?