

# An Attempt to See How the Views of Japanese People Are Formed around Japanese Schools Overseas

by Hitoshi Mabuchi

## I. Introduction

### I. 1. Background

With the rapid economic growth of Japan, the number of Japanese companies which have made inroads into foreign countries, has increased dramatically. The average period of their employees stay overseas is between 3 and 5 years. The occurrence of some Japanese men taking their families with them to their overseas post has led to the famous *kikokushijo*, *kaigaishijo mondai* which means the problems of children returning to Japan after spending time overseas as well as those of children currently living overseas. In 1971 the total number of Japanese children overseas was less than ten thousand, but this number had increased five fold by 1990. There were 49,336 children (between year 1 and year 9) staying abroad in that year (Ryoji-ijubu, Ryoji-daiichika, 1990).

Since this issue has been raised, there have been two main features in the education of these children. The first is that *kaigaishijo kyoiku*, education for children overseas is expected to support Japanese men and their families overseas so that they can concentrate on their work in unfamiliar countries and provide sufficient educational conditions for Japanese children abroad. A total of 102 full-day Japanese schools and 150 supplementary schools, where children usually study on weekends, have been built to date (Kaigaishijo Kyoikushi, 1991). Teachers are recruited and schools are provided with finances mostly by the *Monbusho*. The second feature of this issue is how to help children returning from

overseas successfully settle down in domestic schools in Japan upon their return. The number of schools accepting children who have returned from overseas and which treat these children favorably, has increased. *Kikokushijo kyoiku* and *kaigaishijo kyoiku* have contributed to the reduction in anxiety of returning overseas families and have helped with their children's adaption to school life in Japan. However, the situation as it is at the present time is still far from satisfactory.

As the position of Japan as an economic power in the world has become more important, despite occasional conflicts between Japan and other countries, the view towards returning children has gradually changed. Once they were simply looked on as victims who were thrown out of the Japanese education system. Now they are seen as children who possess wonderful resources and experiences and as such as pioneers in the so-called internationalization of Japanese people (Domoto, 1987). They have become the hope of Japan's future.

Of course *kaigaishijo kyoiku* is not only the problem. The catch phrase "*kakusaika*" is shouted everywhere in Japan. However, how do the voices of mass communication, industrial circles and educational circle relate to every day education. I consider also a statement which has recently been made by many people: "If an individual wants to be a real international person, then he or she must develop a Japanese identity first." The question here is what is the Japanese identity? What is a true Japanese? Personally I believe internationalized persons should be able to accept diversity among the people from different classes, areas, countries and so on. Is *kaigaishijo kyoiku* carried out in order to fulfill this target? I would like to seek the clue to these questions below.

## I. 2. Methodology

The problems of the *kaigaishijo kyoiku* issue need to be seen more clearly. An analysis of the literature and documents which have appeared in books, magazines, newspapers and research papers is the first part of

this paper. Although I shall not be able to study all of them in detail in the body of this paper, I would like to find common tendencies among them which can be divided into four categories: How the government regards this *kaigaishijo* issue; what is the point of view of the industrial circle; what is the parental attitudes; and what is the general view in research including works by Japanese teachers.

The second part of this paper will discuss and qualitatively analyze a survey which I conducted at the Japanese school in Morwell, Australia, in light of the issues raised above. This survey can be considered a pilot survey for further research into this issue.

## II. Views toward *Kaigaishijo Kyoiku*

### II. 1. Governmental Views

Administratively, *kaigaishijo kyoiku* is supported financially by two governmental departments: the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education. When *kaigaishijo kyoiku* started, the proportion in the budget from each Ministry was almost the same.

However, since 1981 more than 90% of the whole budget has come from *Monbusho* because it has started to supply almost all costs for teachers who are sent to overseas Japanese schools. As a result *Monbusho* is the governmental organization which now administers *kaigaishijo kyoiku*.

When one of its bureaucrats in charge of *kaigaishijo kyoiku* was asked if three years were a bit too short for the position of Japanese teachers overseas, he replied "I am afraid these voices are just from the parents in the developed western countries. Three years is the proper length because the average length of the period of stay in the underdeveloped countries of Japanese business men is usually just two or three years. Also the purpose of these teachers is to transfer the education in Japan to the children overseas. Thus three years is the right length" (Nakanishi, 1987). He denies the benefits of longer periods of stay for the teachers. In a report

entitled "problem in *kaigaishijo kyoiku* from an administrative position", another *Monbusho* bureaucrat said that *kaigaishijo kyoiku* in U.S.A. had produced many pro American children (Sato, 1983). He said "In the U.S.A. there are only two Japanese schools at the moment, so the majority of Japanese children (which is more than ten thousand) go to local schools during the week and Japanese schools on the weekend."

In contrast, at the same time, *Monbusho* has taken the initiative in promoting internationalized education in policies. There is a feeling of contradiction though when *Monbusho* says more internationalization is necessary but only to the extent that it brings some benefit for Japan and Japanese people. It seems that government still has a negative attitude towards Japanese schools overseas who try to develop firm roots in the area. It also has fears about the adoption by Japanese children overseas, of non Japanese views.

## II. 2. Japanese Companies

What do the people in Japanese firms think about *kaigaishijo* is the next question. As they have experienced the conflict between Japan and other countries, they have a pressing feeling that Japan can't survive alone in the world. Consequently they are making more of an effort to ensure that their employees and their families assimilate into local communities overseas than governmental organizations. We can see the frustrations and struggles of business men and parents in the books such as "Shin Kokusai Jin" (Mainichi Shinbunsha, 1984). In a sense they are the people who have put pressure on Japanese government to tackle the issue.

However, we must not overlook the following: *kaigaishijo kyoiku* should not only be for those children whose parents work in big companies although their number is great and these companies contribute so much to these issues. Some children's parents are working individually. There are also Japanese children of permanent residents abroad. At the same time, the more the problems of those returning to Japan has closed up by the

people in large companies, the more the cost of their education has increased. For instance, JAL's family letters, which are circulated very widely among Japanese people overseas, frequently advertise "jukus" for returning students (Nihonkoku, 1989). Most of the Japanese private high schools have been established only in Britain and North America. Sometimes only children from such a major company can afford to go to juku schools overseas. Now the children from the large companies have much more access than before although it is natural for the administration of such large firms to think that they must reduce any obstacles when they send their employees and their families abroad (Shimada et al., 1988).

However, one of the important purposes of *kaigaishijo kyoiku* is to give the children an insight into the diversity of people and especially to be able to realize in the existence of minorities in society, like they themselves will be minorities upon returning to Japan. An elitist attitude and the fewer chances given to children not from major companies should be realized as one of the main problems in *kaigaishijo kyoiku*.

### II. 3. Parents

When we come to think of what parents think of this issue, it is necessary to take into consideration the sex of the parents, the kinds of husbands jobs, their position in the companies, and their academic and educational backgrounds. On the other hand there are commonly such mixed feelings as anxiety, frustration, expectation and irritation towards the limited education at each of the places where they lived. Also there has been a controversial question raised: which is better - full day Japanese schools or weekend schools? It is a common occurrence among children returning from overseas to be faced with discrimination such as teasing and bullying from their peers. Therefore it is natural, of course, for the parents of these children to be anxious that their children not be subjected to this kind of treatment on their return to Japan (Efuchi, 1986).

At the same time the *Monbusho* and the industrial circles were saying that real internationalized persons should always strive to keep their Japanese identity (Mabuchi, 1989). Stereotyped views of Japanese people have been published and talked (Matsubara, 1987; Sugimoto, 1988). When we see these ideas are particularly accepted among Japanese business men overseas and how easily they tend to label Japanese and other people, it is easy to see how Japanese children are influenced by their parents and adopt the same views.

Recently more jukus have been established in major cities where Japanese children are (Kawaijuku, 1990), and these are mostly welcomed by the parents. We must be very careful to examine whether their children appreciate and understand the pain of other people which could be one of the most important qualification to become *kokusaijin* ?

#### II. 4. Researchers

People who research the *kaigaishijo kyoiku* issue can not escape mentioning their attitude or views toward the society where the Japanese children live. Also they usually make some comparison between the Japanese society and the other society. The problem is that such comparisons are made primarily only between American society and Japanese society, or even broader between the developed Western society and Japanese society. Of course I do not deny the existence of many Japanese children in America, but we can not ignore the existence of Japanese children in South East Asian countries and in other areas. Although most of them in these countries go to big full-day Japanese schools and have few chance to make contact with the local children or society, why don't they attract the same type of research under the theme of internationalization?

Next there is a bit too much generalization about the societies and the people, even when they just compare between Japanese and Western societies. Statements such as "Japan is a very homogeneous country and

strong group oriented and contrastively the returners are much more individual because of the way they are educated overseas and so on” are found often. These things have also been said for a long time among the teachers who have taught children returning from overseas (The Center for Education of Children Overseas, 1979-1992), but aren't they sometimes biased, stereotypical views put forward by journalists or Japanologists? We must be very careful to check with the returnees and their families just as they are without preconceptions.

When we do research we also have to be careful not to always focus of the differences between the society, people and schools where the children stay and these institutions in Japan. Otherwise we will fall into the trap of saying such things like “Japanese are like this and this but Westerners are like that and that.” I am worried about these things because children are very sensitive and sometimes easily to accept and believe what parents, teachers and other adults say. If they are informed of all these stereotypical images before they really experience them, I wonder whether they can build healthy relationships with the people where they live.

I am also concerned with the preference in Japanese schools. It is widely said that weekend schools are good for the long-term foreign residents, those who stay abroad more than three years, while full-day Japanese schools are good for short-term residents and less talented children. Again I understand how the children and parents struggle with studying in the local schools on week days and going to the weekend Japanese schools. However, this sort of theory or advice can not be applied to the children in underdeveloped countries where most of the children simply choose to go to full-day Japanese school. Also these views express the concern of many people as to just how quickly the returners adjust to Japanese society.

Finally I would like to describe the general views of these people towards Japanese education, although I am not suggesting whether they are correct or not. Some of the views expressed are;

“Strict standardization according to the grade system”

“Systematically organized subjects in a vertical structure”

“Altogether education where the teachers are always centerized”

“Education reflects the society which doesn’t accept the individual growth”

Again, these opinions might be true of some returnees and their schools, but may not be true of others.

### III. The Current Study

#### III. 1. The Japanese School in Morwell

Another way to examine the issue is to survey those involved the Japanese children who lived Morwell, Australia. Before I discuss the survey itself, it may be good to introduce the school’s brief background.

Morwell, which has a population of about 17,000, is located in the center of the Latrobe Valley in Gippsland and is about 150 kilometers east of Melbourne. The main industry in the area is based on the brown coal. The S.E.C. (State Electricity Commission) is the largest company, using the unlimited coal. In 1982, a joint venture between Japan and Australia was established in Morwell to build a pilot plant in order to examine the process and availability of converting coal to oil. From 1983 onwards about 200 Japanese people have continually stayed in Morwell.

From that very early stage, the education for the Japanese children who have to come to Morwell with their parents has been one of the main concerns among the companies’ administration. Firstly, five companies, which form B.C.L.V.(Brown Coal Liquefaction Victoria) in Morwell, tried to establish a full-day Japanese school in Morwell. However, they faced two main difficulties. The number of Japanese children were not enough to built a full-day Japanese school and the regulations in Victoria did not allow any foreign countries’ school in the state at that time. Concerned parties have had to reach a compromise. The Victorian Education Department supplies three classrooms on the grounds of the local primary school in Morwell. *Kaigaishijo Kyoiku Shinko Zaidan* found suitable



teachers. Finally the Japanese companies provide the salary of the teachers and also various teaching materials. Since the school was opened, it has been called a school-within-a-school, in comparison to a full-day Japanese school and weekend school. What this means is that there is a small Japanese school section in the normal Australian school. Only the Japanese school in Wellington in New Zealand had attempted this form before. Because of the unique nature of this set-up, the school has been inundated with visitors from Japan and Australia and articles about its education have appeared in many magazines and newspapers.

At the school there are 5 one-hour sessions (three in the morning and two in the afternoon) from Monday to Friday. Japanese children study in the so-called Japanese Centre with the Japanese teachers for two sessions out of five each day. The rest of the hours, children spend in the Australian classrooms. At the same time the Australian children have part Japanese language part Japanese culture lessons from the Japanese staff. They also share various other school activities with the Japanese children, such as Japanese sport's day, food nights, music evenings and so on. Approximately 150 Japanese children have studied at the school. The average length of the period of their stay there is from 3 to 5 years. All of the Japanese children are children of B.C.L.V.'s employees, which is different from other Japanese schools. There are about 150 Australian children in the school, with 15 full-time teachers including three Japanese staff.

A distinguishing characteristic of the school is that this is not a total Japanese school yet the Japanese children have a chance to learn from the Japanese teachers on an every day basis. Since the beginning it has been said that the school can be seen as a new model for future Japanese schools.

### III. 2. Findings from the Survey

The survey was administered in the 3rd week of March in 1991. All 30

Japanese students, from year 4 upwards, were given the survey sheets and answered the questions read by the teachers. The results of the survey appear in the Table at the end of this paper. The main question was how well the Japanese children in Morwell have blended in with the Australian people and their society. For that purpose I asked how many Australian and Japanese friends they have and how often they play with each other. The result were quite revealing. Out of 30 Japanese children, 13 children said they have more Australian friends than Japanese ones, but when they were asked how often they played with their Australian friends after school, only 4 of these 13 spent more time with them than the Japanese friends. Among the high school students we can see the result more easily, because they were spread into 3 different schools, which means they have fewer Japanese friends at their school than the primary school children do, they naturally have more Australian friends. Despite that, however, they seldom play with their Australian friends after school, while they frequently play with their Japanese friends.

Before conducting the survey, I hypothesized that if the children's ability in Japanese school was good, they would be able to speak English better, which in turn would lead to their making more Australian friends. The results showed no correlation between the two. The reason for this may be that most Japanese children in Morwell show quite a good standard in Japanese school with little difference academically among them. I also hypothesized that many children would prefer the Japanese school classes in Morwell than the Australian classes. Generally speaking, this hypothesis was supported. Only seven children rated the Australian school higher than the Japanese school, even though the children spend more time in the Australian classrooms than in the Japanese classrooms. These seven children cited as reasons; not having Japanese friends at their school, not having children of the same sex in the same grade, and pupil and teacher conflict in the Japanese school.

Further focus on two primary school children, numbers 12 and 14 is necessary, because they are the only two children who have been in

Morwell more than 5 years. They are also the only children who play with Australian friends more than with Japanese children. Apart from 12's father, the children's parents had more contact with Japanese people than Australians in the community. In addition, 12's mother was the only mother with more Australian than Japanese friends. Here I can point out that compared to the children's abilities or the attitude of their family, the length of stay in the community in foreign countries is one of the important factors as to how well they assimilate with the local people. This is a very simple fact. Also, age on arrival is important. These two children came to Morwell when they were pre-school aged. A survey conducted in Boston supported the result here and said that the younger the children were when they came to Boston, the more friends they obtained while they were there (Nakanishi, 1985).

The next point is the attitude of the parents to the Australian people and the Japanese people in the local community. As I said above, most of the parents had more Japanese friends than Australian friends and spent more time among the Japanese community. What do they do with their friends? There are three main pursuits. Among the fathers, these pursuits are drinking, golf and mah-jong. Among the mothers, meeting each other and talking on the phone are definitely number one. Others are playing sports, like tennis and volleyball, cooking and learning English together. The other feature is that, except for three families, the parents spend more time with their children than while they were in Japan. Perhaps this is natural because the father comes home much earlier than in Japan and they don't have to go to work on Saturdays. Among the activities they spent more time outside of the house, camping, fishing, shopping, going for drives and playing sports such as golf, baseball and so on. Perhaps they can play them much easier there than in Japan. They also play cards, board games and computer games at home as well.

How do these activities affect their children's behavior? I expected to see that the parents who spent more time with their children were more positive to the Australian people, too. But no correlation was found

between them. I did, however, find that among the 30 Japanese children there were several brother and sister sets. (No.19 and no.11, and no.23 and no.6). In both cases the elder ones have fewer Japanese friends in their grade and showed a much more positive attitude toward the Australian people. Only two examples is insufficient to claim any correlation, but a similar results were reported in a survey conducted in New York (Iwasaki, 1982). She said that the Japanese children who lived in the area where fewer Japanese live, developed their English skills more quickly than those who lived in the areas where many Japanese families live together. These findings fit the Morwell case. The children, who came there earlier, when there were fewer Japanese, progressed in the Australian classes much more quickly than the children who came later.

Lastly, I wanted to see what images the Japanese children have had towards Australia and Japan, and how these images were formed. There was no positive correlation between the children's images and the facts discussed above. I thought the children who have more Australian friends would have a more favorable feeling towards the Australian people, be more satisfied with the life in Australia, feel that Australia is a better country to live in than Japan, and would not feel there was much difference between Australians and Japanese. The result did not indicate this. The children were asked: "Do you think there is not much difference between the characters, customs and the ways of thinking between Japanese people and Australian people?" and "Do you think Japan is wealthier than Australia?" To these questions most of the children took a neutral stance and the number of favorable and unfavorable responses to the questions were almost the same. When the children were asked "Are you happy living in Australia?" most of them answered, "Yes." Finally, the children were asked how they made a judgment concerning these questions and how they formed these images. The highest rated answer was that they answered from their experiences, and the second highest was because they had heard something from their parents. This matter should be pursued in further detail.

#### IV. Conclusion

As I said at the beginning, this paper is the starting point towards understanding the *kaigaishijo kyoiku* issue and further research is necessary. The results of the survey should be analyzed more carefully and in greater depth. In the first half, however, I pointed out that the attitudes of *Monbusho*, Japanese companies, the parents and the researchers of this issue need to be taken into consideration. Of course, we must realize there are many conscious people who are working very hard to improve the situation. As Kobayashi (1983) says, we must not forget the children who are in the vortex of this issue. What we do is not for the Japanese government, the companies, or even for the parents. Everything must be done for the children.

In regard to the second half, the attitudes of children in Morwell may help to understand the attitudes towards the local people and Japanese people overseas. According to the survey reported here the children who have been overseas for longer period of time and have fewer chance to make contact with other Japanese people have some advantage over other Japanese children. If it is true, I wonder whether or not building more full-day Japanese schools and short periods of stay for Japanese teachers overseas are good ways to make children more internationalized? In addition, children are struggling with different cultures, the *Monbusho*, the companies, and their parents, even after coming back to Japan. Once again, we must come back to the question: What is best for the children?

Table

No.	Gender	① Academic Ability of Japanese	① Ability of English	Years of Staying	② Activities after school	Numbers of Japanese Friends Times③		Numbers of Australian Friends Times③		③ In Family	④ Father	④ Mother
1	M	4	3	2	2	9	4	4	0	3	N/A	J=A
2	F	5	4	6	3	2	2	2	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	F	3	5	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	J<A	N/A
4	M	3	3	2	2	4	4	4	0	3	N/A	J>A
5	F	3	4	6	3	8	2	4	0	6	J>A	J>A
6	M	4	3	2	1	9	7	3	0	3	J>A	J>A
7	M	4	2	1	4	9	4	6	0	3	N/A	J<A
8	M	4	3	2	4	8	3	5	0	5	J=A	J>A
9	F	4	2	1	2	40	0	15	7	2	J>A	J>A
10	F	4	3	3	5	8	1	11	0	0	J>A	J=A
11	F	4	3	2	2	5	1	1	0.5	0	J>A	J=A
12	F	5	5	6	4	5	1	7	3	5	J>A	J<<A
13	M	4	4	2	5	5	1	8	1	1	J>A	J<A
14	M	5	4	6	3	8	4	7	4	4	J>A	J>A
15	M	4	3	3	0	9	3	5	2	3	J=A	J>A
16	F	4	4	3	6	9	2	15	0	4	N/A	N/A
17	M	4	3	3	2	5	5	2	0	3	J=A	J=A
18	M	5	4	3	4	9	3	2	1	2	J>A	J>A
19	F	4	4	2	2	3	1	1	0	1	J>A	J=A
20	M	4	4	6	2	20	7	40	N/A	0	J>A	J>A
21	F	4	4	3	0	4	1	7	0	3	N/A	N/A
22	F	4	4	3	3	10	2	7	0	2	N/A	J>A
23	F	5	4	2	3	3	1	6	0	3	N/A	N/A
24	M	4	4	2	2	5	2	3	0	1	N/A	N/A
25	M	4	3	2	1	3	3	5	0	1	N/A	N/A
26	M	4	4	3	3	3	4	5	0	3	J<A	N/A
27	M	4	4	2	2	3	1	10	3	1	N/A	N/A
28	M	5	5	6	1	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
29	F	4	4	2	1	1	0.5	10	0	2	J>A	J>A
30	M	3	3	2	0	0	1	5	4	3	J>A	J>A

①5 indicates  
excellent  
4 very good  
3 average

②How many times  
they play a week

③Numbers of times  
they participate in  
family a week

④> or <  
indicate having  
more or less  
Australian friends  
than Japanese  
friends

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