The Divergence of Multicultural Education between the US and Japan

OGAWA Shuhei

1. Introduction

In the US, more than four decades have passed since multicultural education appeared in the wake of the ethnic studies movements of the late 1960s. In Japan since the early 1990s, the term "*ta-bunka-kyouiku* (meaning multicultural education)" has been widely used. However, the focuses of multicultural education in the two countries have been considerably different, and there seems almost no consensus on a conceptual definitive framework.

Recognizing the current divergence between the US and Japan, this paper tries to clarify what kinds of differences exist between the two countries, through summarizing and comparing the historical developments and characteristics of multicultural education in the two countries. Especially focusing on the fact that Japanese people have developed their unique but rather obscure definition of multicultural education, it is important to pay special attention to how Japan's unique multicultural education is different from the American perception, because Japan initially learned the notion and framework of multicultural education from the US.

This comparative study could offer readers a chance to rethink the present paradigm of multicultural education in Japan, and to come up with a more practical approach to the issues related to Japan's growing multiculturalism in its population. This is an expected benefit of this paper, and during the process of clarifying the differences, the research is also intended to provide readers with brief but comparative overviews of developments of multicultural education in both countries.

2. The comparative overviews of multicultural education in the US and Japan

The paper discusses the historical developments of multicultural education in the US and Japan, respectively. Through the process, this part of the study summarizes characteristics of multicultural education in the two countries.

2.1. The historical development of multicultural education in the United States

Here, an overview and some characteristics of multicultural education in the US are briefly discussed. Basically, it is generally believed that one of the most important and direct roots of multicultural education lies in the civil rights movement of the 1960s in which many historically oppressed groups, such as African Americans and other people of color, challenged various discriminatory practices in US society. Hence, it is very natural that multicultural education

initially focused on creating equal educational opportunities for "minority students" through a set of strategic practices and instructions in conjunction with curriculum reforms and pedagogical equity (Ogawa 52-64).

However, this initial focus since the late 1960s also encouraged many other socially oppressed groups, such as women, poor whites, and handicapped people, to claim their rights to opportunities of equal education, eventually making multicultural education a cause for "all students" including those from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups. In short, the multicultural education movement has been a developmental process in which some small educational movements of a few minority groups have embroiled the majority and developed into a huge swell. Today, it is rather unusual for educators and researchers to regard multicultural education as a cause only for ethnic minorities (Ramsey, Vold and Williams 24).

Since the 1980s, however, some proponents of multicultural education have expressed concern about expanding the scope of multicultural education, because the expansion might diffuse the original purpose of multicultural education and distract students and teachers from the deep-seated racism that still permeates US society. Thus, some researchers argued that the focal points should always include the socio-economic and political issues connected to "minority students (Ladson-Billings and Tate)." This is because they believe that the depoliticized and non-collective approach of multicultural education is unlikely to provide any solutions to the lingering problem of educational disparity between the minority and the majority, or more specifically, people of color and white people. Here, the academic field of multicultural education has come to face a controversy of whether the focus should be on the minority or the majority, and this controversy still continues and sees no theoretical solutions (Ogawa 71-110).

As a whole, the evolution of multicultural education began with the African American movement for their educational equality during the era of the civil rights movement, and it has encouraged all other historically oppressed groups. Thus, we can even interpret the evolution of the multicultural education movement as a social process in which the minority influences the majority in Serge Moscovici's sense of socio-psychological phenomenon of minority influence.

2.2. Characteristics of the field

In addition to the overview of the multicultural education movement, we can clarify what multicultural education in the US looks like through providing some remarkable characteristics of the educational movement. Basically, there are five major characteristics.

1) Reform in education for the benefit of people of color

In their most comprehensive typology of multicultural education, Sleeter and Grant claim as follows :

Clearly, the term multicultural education means different things to different people. The only common meaning is that it refers to changes in education that are supposed to benefit people of color (Sleeter and Grant 436).

From this comment, we can assume that although multicultural education is defined and considered quite variously, one of the most common and obvious characteristics of multicultural

education is that its educational groundwork aims to achieve reformative efforts designated to help increase educational equity for a range of historically oppressed races and ethnic minorities such as African American, Latino and native Americans. This reform-oriented characteristic seems to be consistent with the interpretation of the multicultural education movement as a social phenomenon of minority influence and innovation.

2) Multidisciplinary nature

The second characteristic of multicultural education as an academic field is its multidisciplinary approach. While since the early days of its evolution, there have been various definitions and approaches of multicultural education, researchers in the field have tried to build a consensus about its conceptual framework through a series of typology studies. Among many prominent typology studies, two researchers' efforts are especially helpful for us to understand the multidisciplinary nature of the field. These studies are Bennet 2001 and Banks 2004. According to Bennet's typology, there are four major clusters of multicultural education research including Curriculum Reform, Equity Pedagogy, Multicultural Competence and Societal Equity (Bennet 174). By showing these four clusters with its twelve genres in total, Bennet clarifies that multicultural education is essentially interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary, because these clusters include various academic fields such as pedagogy, psychology, sociology, philosophy and more.

In a similar way, Banks categorizes five dimensions of multicultural education, which are Content Integration, the Knowledge Construction Process, Prejudice Reduction, an Equity Pedagogy, and an Empowering School Culture and Social Structure (Banks 2004 : 4). Through arguing his own typology, Banks tries to incorporate and include various scholarly works into the paradigm of multicultural education. In the typology, some of the leading scholars from various academic disciplines include Theodor W. Adorno, Louis Wirth, Gordon W. Allport, Allison Davis, Carter G. Woodson and W. E. B. Du Bois. These various examples clearly show the multidisciplinary nature of the field. Banks deliberately conceptualizes the paradigm of multicultural education as multidisciplinary, because he believes that if it is narrowly conceptualized, it tends to be confined to activities related to social studies and language arts (Banks 2004 : 22).

3) Pursuit of balance between theory and practice

The third characteristic of multicultural education is that the field includes both theory and practice. Banks (Banks 2004 : 3) and Gay (Gay 41-63) clearly recognize that multicultural education has had continuous development in both theory and practice, and historically speaking, practice seems to be one of the more remarkable parts of its development. This is because the movements of multicultural education derive from strong activism in the civil rights movement, and multicultural education has naturally emphasized the changes in educational systems and institutions. In actuality, as Bennet describes, the field of multicultural education includes the aspects of curriculum reform and equity pedagogy, both of which are closely linked to educational practice (Bennet 171-217). In fact, curriculum reform is one of the outstanding practical achievements of the multicultural education movement, and Banks even describes that in many school districts, as well as in popular writings, multicultural education is viewed primarily as curriculum reform (Banks 2004 : 4). Also, because the goal of multicultural education is to provide equal educational opportunities, academic achievement of minority students is a

practical challenge, and the researchers in the field clearly recognize the importance of "equity pedagogy" in which teachers are required to modify their teaching in ways that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, and social class groups.

On the other hand, multicultural education has seen significant changes and developments in theory since the 1990s, when it experienced the explicit incorporation of critical pedagogy, a philosophy of education that combines education with critical theory, though, the field continuously pays attention to the developments of practice. In fact, in her analysis of the state of multicultural education until the early 1990s, Gay points out that there is a tremendous gap between theory and practice, stating that theory development has outpaced development in practice (Gay 41-65).

Although such a comment shows the slow development of practice, it is also an indication that these researchers clearly recognize the need for the emphasis on practice. Unlike critical pedagogy, which experienced profound theoretical development in the US, multicultural education inherits the spirit of activism of the 1950s and 60s, and aims to adjust the balance between theory and practice.

4) Scholars with minority backgrounds as a driving force

The fourth feature is that African-American, female and Latino scholars have played a central role in creating the academic framework that we can see today in the US. Some such prominent scholars include James Banks, Carl Grant, Geneva Gay, Christine Sleeter, Sonia Nieto, and Gloria Ladson-Billings. First of all, James Banks has been generally recognized as the "father of multicultural education," and actually has continuously helped create the academic discipline. He himself grew up as an African-American during the Jim Crow years, and thus learned a commitment to social justice and equal educational opportunities.[1]

In a similar way, as African-American professors in the field, Carl Grant and Geneva Gay have played active roles in creating an academic framework of multicultural education through writing many articles, chapters, and books in the field. In particular, Grant's publications of the History of Multicultural Education volumes was pivotal, because, by collecting key publications spanning the past 30-40 years, this benchmark 6-volume set documents and provides a means of understanding the development, implementation, and interpretation of multicultural education in the US (Grant and Chapman).

Christine Sleeter and Sonia Nieto have approached multicultural education in a similar way from their different perspectives. Both have helped multicultural education's incorporation of critical pedagogy. Sleeter, with her Caucasian, female and strong academic perspectives, achieved a "merger" between multicultural education and critical pedagogy through her collaboration with Peter McLaren, one of the leading architects of critical pedagogy. Nieto has also helped incorporate the issues and theories of critical pedagogy into multicultural education, but her arguments provide the more practical perspectives of an educational practitioner. In addition, Nieto provides the viewpoints of bilingual education because she herself has a Latino background, and such viewpoints seem very rare among multicultural researchers in the United States.

Finally, Gloria Ladson-Billings, with her African-American perspectives, has been helpful in stimulating multicultural educators to devote more attention to racism, power relationships and

structural inequity by publishing her groundbreaking works of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings and Tate 47-63). While her arguments sometimes sound controversial during the era of "multicultural education for all," they describe the reality of the educational problems in the US, and help us look back upon the very important identity of multicultural education. With respect to the importance of minority viewpoints, Banks comments as follows :

Scholars and public intellectuals in marginalized communities create knowledge that challenges the status quo and the dominant paradigms and explanations within a society…The knowledge that emanates from marginalized epistemological communities often contests existing political, economic, and educational practices and calls for fundamental change and reform. It often reveals the inconsistency between the democratic ideals within a society and its social arrangements and educational practices. By revealing and articulating the inconsistency between the democratic ideals within a society and its practices, transformative knowledge becomes a potential source for substantial change…(Banks 2002 : 29-30).

Here, Banks clearly stresses the value of perspectives of scholars with minority backgrounds, and makes clear that their perspectives could become a driving force for substantial changes in the paradigm of multicultural education. Simply, without these important multicultural researchers, we could not see the framework for multicultural education today.

5) Weak focus on language issues

The fifth and the most interesting characteristic of multicultural education in the US is that unlike in other countries, multicultural education in the US does not primarily address the language problem, which is practically regarded as a major obstacle immigrant students have to overcome at school. For example, in her comprehensive typology study, Bennet excludes bilingual education from the conceptual framework of multicultural education, because she believes that the field of bilingual education has its own extensive body of theory and research, which should be outside the scope of multicultural education typology (Bennet 174).

Patricia Ramsey and Leslie Williams describe the historical evolution of multicultural education, and introduce a part of the historical development of bilingual education, because it shares some common roots and viewpoints with multicultural education. However, they clearly state that multicultural education and bilingual education developed separately as different academic disciplines, saying as follows :

Multicultural education grew out of the Civil Rights Movement and the failures of desegregation. Bilingual education, on the other hand, rose out of the needs of increasing numbers of immigrants after 1965. In some communities the new arrivals and people who had been marginalized for generations had to compete for jobs and housing, creating tensions between groups allied with bilingual education and those favoring multicultural education. Moreover, the goals of the two movements were incompatible in some respects. Multicultural education was oriented to bringing together people from different groups, whereas bilingual education often meant keeping specific language groups separated from the mainstream and from other racial and ethnic minorities (Ramsey, Vold and Williams 23).

This comment shows that although language issues are closely related to the field of multicultural education, they are still regarded as separate from the issues of multicultural

education. In his book about multicultural education, Banks generally discusses language issues in conjunction with multicultural education (Banks 1994 : 260-282). He covers some of the relevant arguments, such as the conflict between English-only vs English-plus, the problems of academic language proficiency among Latino students, the problems or disadvantages that African-American students experience through their use of Black English, and so on. However, Banks does not clearly show how these language problems could be solved through implementing multicultural education, or even how these issues impact the practice of multicultural education.

In this respect, due to her own ethnic background, Nieto is more articulate about how these language issues should be approached, but, generally speaking, she seems quite exceptional among multicultural researchers. Therefore, it is fair to say that researchers in the field have a weak focus on language issues.

2-3. The historical development of "*ta-bunka-kyouiku*" in Japan

After discussing the overview and some characteristics of multicultural education in the US, it would be interesting to summarize the historical development of "*ta-bunka-kyouiku*" (multicultural education) in Japan. Basically, there are not many previous studies done about the historical overview of Japan's multicultural education, simply because, unlike the movement in the US, the multicultural education movement in Japan has been quite fragmented, and has had a small impact on the general public. Also, in the academic field, there have not been collective efforts to reach a consensus about the conceptual framework of Japan's multicultural education.

Hence, it is quite difficult to describe the historical overview of Japan's multicultural movement. However, among the articles describing the fragmented evolution of multicultural education, Yasumasa Hirasawa provides a rather comprehensive overview (Hirasawa 159-168). Thus, by taking advantage of Hirasawa's argument, this paper describes the brief history of multicultural education in Japan. Hirasawa discusses the beginning of Japan's own development of multicultural education as follows :

It was after a large number of newcomer foreigners (or Newcomers) settled in Japan in the 1990s that terms such as multicultural and multicultural education became popular…Multicultural education in Japan has been "discovered" and constructed as an independent genre of educational practice and research in the wake of the "massive emergence" of Newcomer students (Hirasawa 159-161).

This statement clearly shows that the beginning of Japan's multicultural education movement was in the 1990s, although the theories, practices, and historical developments of multicultural education in other countries including the US had already been introduced to Japan by the late 1980s (Kobayashi and Ebuchi 1985).

Compared with the emergence of multicultural education in the United States in the 1970s, the Japanese movement of multicultural education seems quite a new phenomenon. According to Hirasawa's analysis, this is because Japan has long identified itself as a homogeneous nation with one ethnicity, one language, and one culture (Hirasawa 159).

His analysis seems to hold true, given the percentage of foreign nationals or immigrants in the country compared with those of other multicultural countries like the United States

and Canada. Indeed, for instance, the US population consists of many more various races and ethnicities. These different populations literally constitute a multiracial, multiethnic and multicultural society.

In contrast, the recent national census shows that Japan has approximately 2.12 million foreign nationals, accounting for about 1.67% of the total population of approximately 127 million[2]. Also, although, there are minority people such as the Buraku (a caste-like Japanese population), the Ainu (an indigenous minority population that used to inhabit Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido) and Okinawans, in addition to the foreign groups, most Japanese people have long thought themselves as ethnically homogeneous.

Therefore, it is fair to say that multicultural education in Japan "emerged" as its own academic and pedagogical field after the influx of newcomer foreigners in the 1990s. During that period, the number of foreigners actually doubled between 1984 and 1994 from 0.83 million to 1.64 million. The number of Brazilians and Peruvians of Japanese descent especially increased significantly, because based upon the principle of "blood connection," the Japanese government revised its immigration law and allowed them to work in Japan due to the strong demand for labor forces in the Japanese economy. In fact, the number of Japanese Brazilians and Japanese Peruvians increased 68-fold and 55-fold respectively, during the period between 1986 and 1992 (Hirasawa 160). Most of these "Newcomers" settled in Japan as factory workers, whose place of residence was concentrated in urban prefectures such as Tokyo, Aichi, Osaka, Kanagawa, and Saitama, where big businesses, especially those related to the automobile industry, employ a large number of these newcomer immigrants.

In this way, during the massive trend of globalization since the 1990s, Japan experienced a vast influx of foreign immigrants for the first time in its long history of over 1500 years. In fact, although the overall size of the foreign population accounted for only a little over 1 percent as of 1993, the fact of its exceeding 1 percent of the total population attracted a lot of attention from the media. Then, in the wake of the influx of new immigrants, the growing problems of education for newcomer students appeared in the 1990s. Since these non-Japanese students' mother tongues were mostly Portuguese, Chinese or Spanish, they could not sufficiently receive support at public schools, and eventually stopped attending schools.

As the number of schooling problems of such students rapidly increased during the 1990s, Japan came to face a massive trend of globalization as well as a multicultural reality, and this became a momentum by which researchers and educational practitioners started to pay attention to the term 'multicultural,' and to theories and practices of multicultural education in other countries, especially in the United States. As Hirasawa indicates, this was practically the beginning of Japan's multicultural education.

2-4. Three "de facto" approaches to multicultural education before the 1990s

Although the development of Japan's multicultural education effectively started in the 1990s, there had been three important educational movements before then which could be regarded as the equivalents to multicultural education in the US. According to Hirasawa, these "de facto" approaches to multicultural education include 1) education of Japanese returnee students, 2)

Dowa education (an educational movement against Buraku discrimination, and 3) education of resident Korean students (Hirasawa 161-163). It could be useful to briefly review each of these educational movements, because they include the essential elements of multicultural education in the US, such as the perspectives of cultural competency, language issues, discrimination against minorities, and needs of social justice, equal opportunities in education, and democracy.

1) Education of Japanese returnee students

As Japan emerged as a global economic power from the 1970s through the 1980s, education for international understanding became popular in Japan. This is because during this period, an increasing number of Japanese children went abroad when their parents were temporarily transferred to branch offices or subsidiary companies in foreign countries. After experiencing a lengthy stay in other countries, these children were supposed to come back to Japan with their parents, and thus became "returnee students." In the early days, these returnee students often faced bullying and harassment, and actually experienced great difficulties in "readjusting" themselves to the homogeneous Japanese school culture, where students were subject to strong pressures for assimilation and group conformity. As these returnees had learned different ways of thinking from those of most Japanese people, they were perceived and treated as "heterogeneous elements" at school.

While it is said that due to massive globalization, the general perception of these returnee students has changed from negative to positive in recent years, the returnees have long been forced to conceal the fact of their being "westernized" and to make every effort to become part of the homogenous society. Thus, education of these returnee students has attracted the attention of researchers in the field of education and pedagogy. These researchers continue to discuss the issues related to multicultural education, such as how to understand and overcome cultural differences, cultural competency, dominant school culture, second language acquisition, assimilation and marginalization of minorities at school, and so forth.

Since this education of returnee students is about helping members of Japanese society, it is more like the topic of multicultural education than that of global education. Therefore, quite obviously, the education of returnees has been one of the "de facto" approaches to multicultural education in Japan. However, due to its relevance to language acquisition, the issue of returnee students seems to be discussed more in the context of bilingual education than in that of multicultural education.

2) Dowa (meaning harmony in Japanese) education

In a sense, one of the most significant Japanese counterparts of American multicultural education could be the so-called Dowa[3] education, because it is an educational cause for helping the historically oppressed Buraku people who have continuously suffered from discrimination in Japanese society. According to Hirasawa's description, the Buraku people are a caste-like minority (based on descent or social origin), and they are the largest minority population in Japan (Hirasawa 162). Excluded from mainstream economic and social relations for centuries, Buraku people have suffered from various forms of inequalities.

It has actually been said that Buraku children have continuously experienced lower academic achievements despite the central and local governments' efforts to improve the social status of Buraku people since the 1960s. Hirasawa indicates that it is generally believed that

Buraku people have often been regarded as "filthy" or as people of different blood. They have experienced marriage and employment-related discrimination, and non-Buraku people have tried to avoid associating with Buraku people (Hirasawa 162).

Dowa education for helping the Buraku people seems quite similar to multicultural education for helping people of color, who have traditionally experienced various kinds of discrimination in US society. When introducing multicultural education to Japan, some Japanese researchers such as Hirasawa and Eika Tai tried to link Dowa education with multicultural education. However, many Japanese researchers and educators now do not associate Dowa education with multicultural education in the United States.

Basically, there are three reasons. First, due to the dominant culture of egalitarianism, most Japanese educators and researchers dislike dealing with such controversial and political issues as discrimination, social injustice and unequal educational opportunities. In fact, it is sometimes said that in Japanese schools, educators have been obsessed with the so-called "egalitarian ideology," in which everyone must be the same and students have to be treated equally (Usui 35). In such an overall mood of egalitarianism, the sheer fact of discrimination against the Buraku people is something that is incompatible with the ideology. Also such a socio-political problem itself is thought to go beyond the context of school or education. Thus, in general, most teachers and researchers tend to avoid dealing with the issues of discrimination in every aspect of education including multicultural education.

Secondly, discrimination against the Buraku people is rather tacit and invisible to most Japanese citizens. Unlike the issue of racism in the United States, the issue of the Buraku people does not entail the identity politics of "skin color," but that of blood relations or family ties. Although discrimination against "skin color" is quite explicit in many social contexts, discrimination against the Buraku people seems more implicit, because their appearance does not differ from those of most Japanese, and their identity in the general population is still unknown to the general public. Except the rare confessions by those concerned, very little can reveal the experiences and difficulties of the Buraku people, and it is difficult for most Japanese teachers and educators to generally discuss Dowa education in conjunction with American multicultural education with sufficient evidence.

Finally, the issues of the Buraku people have long been relatively small-scale, and in recent years, discrimination against them has been gradually declining. So, except in some cities in Kansai, such as Osaka, the Buraku liberation movement has not been so strong, and thus, as a whole, the impact of Dowa education has been quite small. Also, in recent years, more Buraku people have successfully entered mainstream society through their own academic achievements, and, thus, their population, as well as discrimination against them, is gradually declining (Hirasawa 162).

However, at any rate, given the common elements between Dowa education and multicultural education in the US, it is reasonable for Hirasawa to regard Dowa education as one of the "de facto" approaches to multicultural education.

3) Education of resident Korean students

According to Hirasawa, the third "de facto" approach to multicultural education is the education of students with a Korean background. Basically, Koreans have made up the largest

population of foreign nationals in Japan, and most of them are descendants of people who were forcibly brought to Japan due to the Japanese occupation of Korea in the early 20th century. Under Japan's rule, these Koreans were forced to speak Japanese, use Japanese names, and learn Japanese customs. After World WarⅡ, they were deprived of Japanese citizenship, but they had no choice but to remain in Japan. Since then, resident Koreans have been treated as second-class citizens, and have experienced various types of discrimination in Japanese society (Hirasawa 159).

In the 1970s, an anti-discrimination movement started, and some educators encouraged these Korean students to be proud of their cultural heritage and to use their Korean names. This was, practically speaking, the beginning of the educational movement for helping resident Koreans in Japan. Due to their relatively large population around the Kansai area, the movement has become a driving force for the municipal and grassroots initiative to fight discrimination against socially oppressed people, and to help achieve educational equality for their children.

During the 1990s, due to the growing attention to the issue of Newcomers, education of Korean students also began to be discussed in conjunction with multicultural education. These Koreans, along with long-term Chinese residents, have come to be called "Oldcomers," in contrast to "Newcomers," who came to Japan after the 1980s. Like Dowa education, the education of resident Korean students seems a close parallel with US multicultural education, and the movement might have practically the biggest impact on the local initiatives to fight against discrimination in the Kansai area. Unfortunately, however, it is not so usual for multicultural educators and researchers to discuss this "de facto" approach in conjunction with multicultural education in Japan because of nearly the same reasons as the case of Dowa education.

4) Current focus : moral slogan of *ta-bunka-kyousei* and education of Newcomers

In addition to the three "de facto" approaches, there are two major current focuses of multicultural education in Japan to be considered. These are the moral slogan of *ta-bunka-kyousei* (meaning "multicultural living-together" or "symbiosis"), and education of newcomer students. Frankly speaking, the spread and impact of the multicultural education movement has been quite small in Japan, and the general public does not know what multicultural education is about ―it is frequently misunderstood to mean literally "teaching about many different cultures."

However, in the academic world of education as well as among teachers in Japan, multicultural education has been discussed to some degree, and up until now, there have been two major focuses of multicultural education in Japan. First of all, the most obvious trend in the context of multicultural education is the widespread use of the term *ta-bunka-kyousei*. According to Hirasawa, Kawasaki City was the first local government in Japan to use the term, "multicultural living-together" in its official publication in 1993 (Hirasawa 165). Since then, local governments and grassroots organizations have been undertaking initiatives to promote policies for "multicultural living-together" for almost two decades.

Thus, "multicultural living-together" has often been an official term used by government authorities. As a result, some researchers prefer using the term "education for multicultural living-together" in place of multicultural education, because the term "multicultural living-together" conveys a clearer image of peaceful coexistence between differences and social harmony. However, while the term sounds like a strong moral slogan and creates the ideal

image of multicultural society, it rather causes multicultural education to exclude and ignore the harsh realities of discrimination against minorities and educational inequity. However, the term continues to be popular among policy makers, educators and researchers in Japan.

Another important focus of the field has continuously been helping newcomer students. As already described, multicultural education in Japan basically started in the 1990s, when Japan experienced the "massive emergence" of newcomer students. Naturally, the most significant issue of multicultural education in Japan has been how educators can help these foreign students at school. Because returnee students are the focus of bilingual education, and the issues of Buraku and resident Korean students are too political and incompatible with egalitarian ideology, Japan's multicultural education currently does not actively address the issues of these students. Thus, schooling and education of newcomer students is the sole focus of Japan's multicultural education.

Currently, there is some sociological research and observation about these newcomer students, which is broadly thought to belong to the field of multicultural education in Japan. However, while this research sometimes attempts to link itself to the theories and practices of US multicultural education, there is no consensus among multicultural researchers on the definition and conceptual framework of multicultural education. This means that although the researchers frequently use the term multicultural education, they conduct their sociological or pedagogical research without being conscious of the overall academic framework of the field.

3. How different is Japan's multicultural education from the original?

Here, this paper discusses how different Japan's multicultural education is from the United States. This is because by doing so, we can clearly understand the characteristics of Japan's multicultural education movement as well as the problems and prospects of the field. Through the analysis of the multicultural developments in both the US and Japan, the following five major differences can be recognized.

1) Multicultural education as an educational cause for foreigners

First, one of the most obvious differences is that, unlike that found in the US, Japan's multicultural education is practically an educational cause for helping foreign students. In the case of the US, multicultural education is basically not for foreigners, but for its citizens. For example, when talking about the link between multicultural education and global education, Banks talks about the problems of regarding them as identical, as follows :

Other teachers ignore domestic ethnic groups and teach only about their original homelands. Some U.S. teachers are more comfortable teaching about Mexicans who live in Mexico or about Africans than they are teaching about Mexican Americans or African Americans who live in their own communities. They will therefore teach about Mexico and Africa but will rarely teach content related to Mexican Americans and African Americans. Teaching about distant lands is apparently less threatening to some teachers than is teaching about ethnic cultures, problems, and conflicts within their own community (Banks 1994 : 53).

This kind of problem also applies to Japan's multicultural educators, because they also feel more comfortable discussing the issues of newcomer foreigners to those of the Buraku people, Ainu people, or "Oldcomers," who are official or long-term members of the Japanese nation-state. As a result, in Japan the distinction between multicultural education and global education has been blurred. Although multicultural education in the United States is rather more for its citizens, Japan's multicultural education is for its foreigners. In actuality, in Japan, multicultural education is often discussed in the context of education for international understanding or intercultural education.

2) No attention to academic achievement

The second characteristic that makes Japan's multicultural education different from the original is that it does not mainly deal with academic achievements of minority students. In America multicultural education actively discusses the facts and reasons for poor academic performance among minority students. However, it is very rare for Japanese researchers to pay attention to scholastic achievement in conjunction with multicultural education.

Japan's multicultural education stresses the moral importance of getting along with foreigners, or deals with the problems of foreign students. Since the important practical challenges in the field are language problems, cultural adjustments or the understanding of different cultures, it is almost impossible to explore the issues of academic achievement, because the academic achievement of foreigners involves various elements of the educational system including, subjects of study, grading system, certification or accreditation system, language used, and school culture. To put it simply, academic achievement of foreigners is too complex to discuss in the context of multicultural education in Japan at present.

3) Lack of a driving force and identity politics

The third difference is that Japan's multicultural education movement has not had any driving force. In the case of the United States, African-Americans have played a leading role in the development of multicultural education, and their claims and activities have significantly influenced other oppressed people, creating a massive collective movement, which has even had a big impact on the general public. It is not too much to say that without the efforts of African-Americans, multicultural education would not exist now. In other words, multicultural education in the United States has developed through the identity politics of ethnic minorities, and without the impact of severe political conflicts between the minority and the majority, the multicultural education movement could not have played a major part in American society.

However, there is no Japanese equivalent to the plight of African-American people, and multicultural education has also excluded identity politics of oppressed people. To some extent, the Buraku people and resident Koreans are similar to African-Americans and other people of color in the United States. However, their population size is too small to become a driving force of such a movement.

4) No consensus on conceptual framework

The fourth difference exists in the academic world. Basically, researchers in Japan have not made collective efforts to reach a consensus on the academic framework of multicultural education. In the US, researchers have tried to clarify the common conceptual framework of multicultural education through their typology studies as well as various publications. As a

result, although there are many different definitions of multicultural education, researchers in the field have developed a high level of consensus on the nature, aims, and scope of the field. However, in Japan, there have been no such collective efforts among researchers. Thus, while the term multicultural education or education for multicultural co-living is quite popular, researchers tend to use the term in their own ways, without taking a common academic paradigm into account. Also, in Japan, until recently, there have not been comprehensive academic reviews or analyses of the historical development of American multicultural education. So, for a long time most Japanese people have not been introduced to what multicultural education is about.

5) On the verge of disappearance

Finally, the academic field of multicultural education in Japan is on the verge of disappearance. In the United States, over the decades after its conception, multicultural education as an academic field has become established as a result of researchers' collective efforts and publications, though the field has experienced its ups and downs. On the other hand, due to the small impact of the general public and the lack of active academic research, Japan's multicultural education is on the verge of disappearance. In fact, Tomoko Nakajima, one of the influential researchers in the field, describes the term multicultural education as being on its way out, when criticizing Japan's extremely de-politicized version of multicultural education (Nakajima 86-89).

Also, education for international understanding and intercultural education are more popular in the Japanese academic world, and there are no academic societies devoted to multicultural education. Clearly, this indicates the low priority of multicultural education in Japan. Thus, it is possible that the field will probably disappear in the future.

4. Conclusion

This paper is basically a comparative study of multicultural education between the United States and Japan, and first of all, the research summarizes the comprehensive overview of multicultural education in the United States in an attempt to provide readers with a broader understanding of the field. Also, the research tried to clarify the small history of multicultural education in Japan. Then, in order to highlight some major characteristics of Japan's multicultural education, the research focused on how Japan's development has been different from the original multicultural education in the US. Through the analysis, this paper has concluded that there are five major differences as follows.

First, Japan's multicultural education is for helping foreign students rather than its own citizens. Second, it does not primarily deal with academic achievement, and rather focuses on moral slogan for creating a multicultural society. Third, Japan's multicultural education has not had a Japanese equivalent to the African-American as a driving force, and it has excluded the identity politics of oppressed people, thus creating a de-politicized version of multicultural education. Fourth, Japanese academia does not have an agreed upon conceptual framework because of a lack of collective efforts among researchers. Fifth, Japan's multicultural education may be on the verge of disappearance in the future, unless researchers actively make collective

efforts to organize the framework.

Notes

1. See http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=4682
2. See http://www.e-stat.go.jp/SG1/estat/List.do?lid=000001133760 Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.
3. The term "Dowa" derives from "do," meaning "same," and "wa," meaning harmony.

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