

The Right to Education in Japan, Denmark, the US and the UK

In grade 9 EAL students have been researching and discussing the right to education and the school systems in the United States, the UK, Japan and Denmark. Although the four school systems differ in their pedagogy and sometimes content, all have laws which make education compulsory from ages 3 to 16. The systems are similar in the length of schooling from kindergarten to secondary school. All four school systems differ in the secondary and all have the same goal: to prepare their students through different routes to enter a university. In all four systems, the subjects taught are similar in their content. However, there are many cultural and historical differences in each of the systems. At age 16 in all four systems, if students are acquiring a diploma, they have already begun to specialize and concentrate on a specific subject: Science, Maths, Humanities, the Arts or other.

In the UK, it is important that a student complete an appropriate course of education: GCSEs, GCSE + A levels. In the United States a High School Diploma with Advanced Placement is advantageous and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is a must for all students to enter US universities. It is possible for any student around the world to take these tests to apply to US universities. In Denmark, there are four different types of secondary schools which offer subject specialties and the final certificate is known as Danish Abitur. In Japan the acquisition of a diploma is like a ticket to take an entrance examination to enter a university of their choice. In addition, every system may require its own language entrance exams.

All four school systems offer student's an advanced level of education and graduate at around 18-19 years of age, ready to begin university. Obviously not all four systems mentioned above are always geared to welcoming and absorbing new students. Some systems offer a structure to ease non-native speakers and their families into school life within a reasonable time. Moving from one school system to another is probably one of the trickiest transitions of all. Success depends on the age of the student, parental support and the student's ability and willingness to adapt and take on the extra work that will undoubtedly be required. Needless to mention when a student making this transition is learning the language of instruction it requires more academic, social and emotional skills in any school system. Learning to study in a new system and acquiring new languages is like jumping on a turning carousel going at full speed and trying to catch up the whole year.

Because the topic of comparing the four school systems is so complex, the grade nine students decided to write about their own school systems and compared them on a chart for people to see how the US, the UK, the Danish, the Japanese and the IB systems differ.

Education in Japan

After primary school most children in Japan attend state public junior high schools. Many of these are non selective comprehensive schools, this means that any pupil can attend. It is co-educational and a small number of students attend private schools. These private schools are not funded by the state but obtain most of their finances from tuition fees paid by parents. One of the best known private schools in Japan is Ritsumeikan Uji (立命館園治) which has an excellent reputation for getting students ready for higher level examinations. The students in Japan have to go to another support school after school. This type of school guides the student's learning and teaches them skills. If a student has an entrance examination for an elite school or university, they have to study for that exam at that school.

The Japanese school system has shorter holidays than the European schools. The Japanese school has three semesters, and between one and the other semester, there are only 2 weeks of break. The spring break between the 3rd semester and the new term is one month long. There are certain core-subjects; Japanese, Maths, Science, Social Studies and in junior high school students begin to study English. In Maths, teachers teach student standards and practical skills, without any calculators. At the end of the each grade level or at the beginning of each grade, pupils take a test so that their progress can be assessed. Schools have to keep records on every child, including the result of their tests, and to provide a written report card to their parents at the end of each semester.

During their last year of education, pupils go on “work experience.” They find a placement in a company to see what work is like in a particular field.

Pupils who go to a boarding school begin the school day at 7:45 and eat breakfast at 7:50. Following this, the day is divided up into different periods or lessons. School starts at 8:30 and ends at 18:00. Students are not allowed to go to their dormitories during the school day. After school pupils can do their homework, or study. Pupils can also take part in extra curricular activities such as sports, music, or arts even on Saturdays and Sundays. Sometimes the school organizes competitions after school and students practice very hard everyday to compete. Pupils can be absent from their activities if they have an exam. However, students have to keep up with the work at all times and maintain good grades.

In conclusion, the Japanese school system offers a national curriculum just like the UK school system. In Japan, education is compulsory and entrance examinations are required from all students who want to attend a university. The Japanese word for a high school is *kōtōgakkō* (高等学校; literally *high school*), or *kōkō* (高校) in short. High school in Japan covers grades 10 through 12, and it is not mandatory. Most Japanese people attend high school because education is important to all Japanese people. The last year of high school in Japan is allotted for students to prepare for college exams known as "juken" (受験.)¹ Perhaps the speed of which Maths is taught is also different. I find that education in Japan is much more difficult than in Europe, the UK or America. I think I miss learning Japanese language and Japanese history the most and of course the class on civics.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_school#Japan

Japan	Grade	Year	UK	IB		US		Approx. age	
Nursery School			Nursery School	ELC	Nursery School	Nursery School	Nursery School	3~4 (2 Japan)	
Kinder Garden			Kinder Garden		Kinder Garden	Kinder Garden	Kinder Garden	4~5	
		1	Primary School	1				5~6	
Elementary School	1	2		2	Elementary School	Elementary School	Elementary School	6~7	
	2	3		3				7~8	
	3	4		4				8~9	
	4	5		5 PYP Exhibition				Middle School	9~10
	5	6		6					10~11
	6	7	Secondary School	7					11~12
Junior High School	7	8		8	Junior High School	Combined Junior Senior Advanced Placement High School	High School	12~13	
	8	9		9				13~14	
Juken(受験.)	9	10		10 Personal Project	Senior High School			14~15	
High School	10	11	GCSE exams	11				15~16	
	11	12	Sixth form = 2 years	12 IB Diploma	High School	School Diploma		16~17	
Juken (受験.)	12	13	A levels or equivalent		University	Freshman year		18~19	
College			University; graduation After or 4 years depending on degree course		Sophomore	year		19~20	
					Junior	year		20~21	
					Senior year	and	Graduation		21~22

ELC/Early Learning Center, PYP/Primary Years Program, MYP/Middle Years Program, IB/International Baccalaureate, Juken/exam in Japanese

Education in Denmark

Every child in Denmark has basic right to education, which means all children in Denmark have an education, but not a school obligation. Most people in Denmark believe in life long learning, whether they have a limited education or are highly educated.

Education in Denmark starts at the age of 2 where the children go to Nursery school. After Nursery school the children go to Kindergarten for 3 years.

The parents can then choose to send their child to a public or private school or parents can home school their child. Pupils then study from 1st to 9th grade, where they take an exam on different subjects at the end of every school year. The students can do after school activities before or after school. In grades 8 and 9 it is required that every student go on a job experience. Students are responsible for finding a placement, but the school can also help in finding one.

In 9th grade the students prepare for their exams, and take mock exams throughout the academic year. All the subject content that students are taught during 9th grade can be used as the subject to their 9th grade final exams.

In Denmark there are four different types of gymnasiums/secondary schools: higher trading exam (hbx), higher technology exam (htx), higher preparation exam (hf) and student exam (stx). The hbx is a 3 year course which prepares students to get business based jobs. The htx is a 3 year course too, and is a foundation to all technical careers. The hf is a general knowledge 2 year course, which prepares students for practical careers. The stx is a 3 year course, and it emphasizes on languages.

In Danish gymnasiums students have a choice of subjects, however, it is a requirement to take Danish and History at A level, which is the highest level before entering a university.

Danish gymnasiums are free for the students that attend, but some gymnasiums require a high average in their 9th grade final exams. Depending on which type of gymnasium the students go to, there are different times that you have to attend. Danish independent schools teach mostly Danish and European History, but also a bit of global history, depending on the importance of the event. For example WWII.

Education in Denmark, including universities, is free for all if students qualify and meet the requirements. If a foreign student attends a Danish secondary school or university, they have to pay for their own education and attend an international school. The Danish school system does not provide an education at the secondary level for foreigners. If students are not from the European Union, they have to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) to enter a university. This general test measures verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and analytical writing skills that are not related to any specific field of study. If the student is applying for university studies in Denmark, then he or she needs to take tests like the TOFEL², or the IELTS³ tests. The Danish school reputation is generally good, but it has a few problems, i.e. a separate grading system. Danish schools have a scale ranging from -3 to 12, with 7 steps. The steps are -3, 00, 02, 4, 7, 10 and 12."

² Test Of Foreign English Language

³ International English Language Testing System

3		Kindergarten				
4						
5						
6	0	Kindergarten class				
7	1	Elementary school				
8	2					
9	3					
10	4					
11	5					
12	6					
13	7					
14	8					
15	9					
16	10	High school educations (gymnasium)			Vocational training records	Individual educations
17	10	HF	STX	HTX	HHX	
17-18	11					
		Short further transient educations			Middle further transient educations	Short further transient educations
21-22	15	First professional degree				
22-23	16					
23-24	17	Pnd				
24-25	18					
25-26	19					