

## Reading Reflection 1

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I would like to start with the awareness of keeping in mind that the valuation of the success of multicultural policy making strongly depends on what outcome we expect, and by what method and to what extent we try to separate it from the leading discussion on topics such as tolerance and diversity. Furthermore, the sheer number of nuances in many versions of the understanding of multiculturalism and the fact that there is no clear definition leads to the acknowledgment that its discourse itself has a rather complicated concept ([Shih 2020](#)).

In his paper on Multicultural Coexistence in Japan, Bradley argues that Japan along with other east Asian countries like Taiwan or South Korea, contrary to the so-called west, pursues what can be evaluated as a passive multicultural policy approach. Through analysing the historical and contemporary situation of multiculturalism in Japan and comparing it to other East Asian countries which show similar developments in declining fertility rates and “selective” immigration, he formulates the concept, which he labels “Three areas of contestation”. These are (1) education (2) local political participation and (3) anti-discrimination legal framework. Bradley claims that these three main fields demand the highest attention and can lead in the long term to a successful shift towards a multicultural system when implemented broadly on the national and local levels.

This reflection has the purpose to understand, compare and think critically about the effectiveness and possibility of application.

The author bases his call for an improvement in the multicultural education system on two central topics. Firstly, he argues that considering the efforts of Korean and Burakumin communities to promote civil rights-focused ethnic classes, can be treated as proof of a multicultural education notion in Japan. Such education is to a certain extent bound to limited areas (Osaka city) and is in a way reduced to the concept of majority/minority relations. Considering the lack of data used to back up this example by Bradley, One can question how strong this impact on the Japanese educational system in reality is and what role the historical motives play, that nourish this movement.

Ha argues that “*Korean schools have tried to maintain their autonomy by not demanding a recognition as “clause-1 school” (...) which would put them directly under the supervision of the MEXT*”. The case of Korean schools especially in Osaka can be seen as an example that schools have to decide between freedom or tax money (Asahi Shimbun, 2010).

In their cases, a multicultural approach, contrary to what should be expected, did not lead to a change in nationwide education but was seen unfit from the Japanese perspective of coexistence between Japanese and Koreans. One can argue that coexistence begins in the view of the Osaka school board when “inconvenient” information about Japan's imperial past is “forgotten”. ([Ha 2020](#)). This would include removing political and historical elements, which paradoxically build the foundation for Korean schools in Japan.

Secondly, Bradley addresses the current issue with what is called Newcomer education (specialised teaching of refugees and immigrants). Indeed the author makes clear that there are fundamental problems when it comes to teaching equipment and lacking competence and enthusiasm of teaching staff but offers no notion towards an approach that could be taken to change this situation. Redirecting our attention to Taiwan (*chosen as an example, due to the parallels stated in the paper before*) where teachers from the elementary school level before starting to teach must receive training on the “correct” understanding of multicultural education and the way how to design courses which can include “newcomers” ([Shih 2020](#)). I believe that to a certain extent this change in Taiwanese policies could serve as a source of inspiration to its neighbour.

Describing various Japanese Cities that established local participation possibilities like an assembly for foreign residents, the possibility for foreigners to work for municipal government, or local voting rights, the author argues that even lacking “real” political power, these assemblies, and the integration of foreigners have a meaningful influence on the decision making process. From dialogue to voting rights. That means that foreign residents have limited but actual political power which furthermore leads to the aspect that local politicians have an interest to represent not just Japanese nationals but also foreigners. Multiculturalism can or *must be defined* depending on the place and community. That leads to the conclusion that including the “local foreigner” can be a successful way of improving the system.

Lastly, referring to various studies and reports by reputable organizations such as the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Bradley argues that Japan lacks an overall framework for anti-discrimination and legal policies, which are necessary to protect residents from political and social-economic discrimination. *“ensuring durable structures that will protect foreign residents not only in good situations but bad situations as well”*.

The 2016 law on the *“Promotion of efforts to eliminate unfair discriminatory speech and behavior against people originating from outside Japan”*, got a lot of criticism, due to the impression that it is only designed for reducing especially “intrusive” forms of hate speech and to create “publicity” aiming to demonstrate that the government is taking measures on this matter.

On the one hand, One can argue this law lacks substance, on the other hand, it is a step in the right direction and opens the door to additional action in the future. (Powell 2022)

The incident of the Korean schools in Osaka corroborates with my perspective that multicultural education won't be successful by just including more “virtual” diversity in Japanese classrooms, the problem here lies deeper in the Japanese incapability to clean up with the historical past which nowadays to a certain extent limited their possibilities to a “true” and open multicultural education. On the other hand, can I conclude that the paper managed to give me new insights and something to chew on when it comes to the concept of establishing local participation networks. This seems for me to be a relatively fast method to what some people might consider the key essence of successful multiculturalism, which is bringing people together.

## References

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