

自由研究発表 3

**EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN POST-WAR ENGLAND  
AND JAPAN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL  
POLICY, 1944-1970**

**Akito OKADA**  
(Graduate Student Oxford University)

**INTRODUCTION**

This presentation is designed as a comparative study of England and Japan in educational policy. It aims to throw light on the evolution and historical transformation of the concept of 'equality of educational opportunity' as applied to educational policies in these countries, and on the multiplicity and complexity of factors which bring about changes in the meaning of equality of educational opportunity. In addition, the universality and the uniqueness of the changing process of the concept of equal opportunity are to be analysed and clarified through a comparison between England and Japan.

**1 THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CONCEPT OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**

"Equality of opportunity" has over many years become one of the key phrases in the public policy debates both at the national and international level. Scarcely any other term is so significant for identifying the basic principle of social justice in industrial societies. In fact, equality of opportunity has been one of the ideals which England and Japan have developed in political, economic, social and educational democracy during this century. At the end of the nineteenth century educational opportunities in these two countries were dependent in part upon, and generally corresponded with, the contemporary patterns of social stratification, regional disparity, and different treatment of men and women. Despite the fact that elementary education was already free, universal and compulsory by 1891 (in England) and 1886 (in Japan), the principle was hardly ever applied to a secondary education which was based on social distinctions, regional disparity, and sexual discrimination, and the term itself was not even

mentioned in the secondary context.

In England, however, since the very beginning of this century, when both Liberals and Socialists called for equality of advantages and distributive justice, the principle of equality of opportunity had begun to be applied to almost all domains of national policy including education. In the 1930s and the 1940s, the principle was related closely to psychological views of intelligence and , by 1944 when the Butler Act was enacted, it had become an ultimate goal to which most subscribed. After the War, once consolidated as an accepted national ideal which England had developed in its political, economic, social and educational democracy, equal opportunity began to be applied more widely and variously, and people's desire for more equality in society increased. Starting in the late 1950s and continuing through the 1960s, governments world-wide, recognising the necessity of planning for the human capital needs of the decades ahead, became more concerned than before that the talents of their nations' children should not be wasted. Equality of opportunity thus came to be seen as not merely compatible with but essential for economic growth and the welfare of society.

In Japan, the principle of equal opportunity had rarely - if ever - been implemented or even mentioned beyond the primary education level until the American Occupation authorities scrapped the pre-war Japanese education system. Before and during the Second World War, Japanese education had been seen as a conscious vehicle for carrying out the intent of Kyoiku-chokugo, which gave legal form and, perhaps more significantly, moral force to an educational system that supported the rise of militarism and ultra-nationalism, Monbusho (the Ministry of Education in Japan) called for the eradication of thought based on individualism and liberalism, and the firm establishment of a national moral standard with an emphasis on service to the State. When Japan surrendered to the Allies in 1945, the major goals of the Occupation could be simply stated as the democratisation, demilitarisation, and decentralisation of Japanese society. A new orientation of the educational system was an indispensable element in achieving these objectives, especially that of remaking Japan into a functioning democracy. Once the official American occupation of Japan was over in 1952, the Japanese government immediately started to fine tune the new system to reflect more faithfully the Japanese cultural environment and the spirit of the nation's democratic ideology, and it also began to expand the net of educational opportunity more widely than ever before in Japanese history and to improve the quality of the education

offered to pupils.

## 2 QUESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that post-war England and Japan have made enormous strides in providing expanded educational opportunities for their young people. The widespread popularity of the idea of equality of opportunity resulted from the belief that expansion of education would bring about greater social equality and at the same time a stronger national economy. However, in recent years the principle of equality of opportunity has raised enormous controversy regarding its practical application. There is a growing awareness among social scientists that:

\*the quantitative expansion of education has not resulted in greater equality of opportunity for pupils from different social backgrounds.

\*in industrial societies home background contributes significantly not only to educational outcomes, but also the extent of participation by an individual in education beyond the years when schooling is compulsory.

These findings gave reason to question the effectiveness of the policies pursued in both countries, and the concept of equality of opportunity itself began to be more confused and ambiguous and more open to debate. In other words, despite the fact that equality of opportunity has surely become a concept which reflects universal aspirations, there has been no consensus about what equality of opportunity is or about how it can be achieved in either country. This dilemma has led us to review several fundamental questions:

\*What kinds of equality of educational opportunity have England and Japan aimed to achieve during this century, especially since the Second World War?

\* How have decision makers, and interest and pressure groups, applied equality of opportunity to educational policies?

\*What were the most distinctive influences behind the historical changes in attitudes towards equality of opportunity in education in these two countries?

\* What philosophical issues have lain behind educational policies and reforms intended to interpret the concepts of equality of opportunity in various way?

\* What kinds of criteria were used in the two countries to measure equality of educational opportunity?

This presentation attempts to analyse the pattern of the shift of the concept of equality of educational opportunity through a cross-national comparison of England and Japan and to examine the question of what are the similarities and differences in the process of transformation. Cross-national comparison is essential in evaluating claims of similarity and differences. Isolated study of equality of opportunity in a particular society cannot by itself address the question of whether a process of historical transformation of the concept is typical or anomalous. Through comparative analysis, it becomes possible to identify what is common and what is different in the patterns and process of the historical transformation of the concept.

In its analysis, this presentation focuses on two fundamentally different versions of the concept - egalitarianism and meritocracy - and it examines how equality of opportunity was understood when applied to educational policy in these two paradigms. Indeed, throughout this presentation we see an interplay between egalitarianism and meritocracy which eventually caused a transformation in the concept of equality of opportunity over the period. The future remains uncertain, but the findings of this presentation suggest that this dialectical stress between meritocracy and egalitarianism will continue to plague policy makers not only in the two countries under consideration but also in other industrial countries. The struggle will continue to influence the distribution of life chances and the subsidies that shape the educational future.