



## A Comparative Study of Social Education in the Primary Education of Iran and Japan

**Maliheh Rabiei<sup>1</sup>**  
**Irاندokht Fayyaz<sup>2</sup> (Corresponding author)**  
**Tayabeh Mahrouzade<sup>3</sup>**  
**Abolfazl Bakhtiari<sup>4</sup>**  
**Ali Khorsandi Taskooh<sup>5</sup>**

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 03 January 2020            Revised: 16 March 2020            Accepted: 22 March 2020            Online: 23 March 2020</p>	<p>The purpose of the present paper is to compare social education in the educational system of Iran and Japan from the perspective of macro policies and content analysis of primary school textbooks. The research method is comparative (qualitative type) using Bereday's Analysis Approach to analyze data. The unit of analysis and level of observation is "macro" (country) sampling strategy is "different social systems, different educational outcomes" based on the "making stranger familiar" approach. To collect data, educational resources such as national documents, Ministry of Education reports, elementary school textbooks, and journal articles and books were used. The findings of the study showed that main Iran's educational policies on social education influenced by the three factors of national identity, Islamic identity and modern identity, while in Japan macro education policies are influenced by Buddhist and Shinto religion, Confucianism, nationalism and modernism. The Japanese education system in primary education compared to the Iranian education system has a much stronger policy and process focus on the social education of children. According to this study, the upstream documents of the Japanese education system strongly emphasize the increasing role of modernism (as opposed to other factors) and the teaching of concepts such as the environment, global issues, international understanding, cultural exchanges, citizenship, the future of the world and the role of Japan. In addition, the findings show that the time allocated, and the variety of topics related to social education in Japanese primary education is more than that of Iran. The key recommendation of this study is to reconsider and recreate strategic approaches to social education and to focus on formal (intentional) and informal (hidden) education programs on the real and daily social life of children in Iranian primary education.</p>
<p><b>KEYWORDS</b></p> <p>Social education,            Primary education            Identity            Iran            Japan</p>	

<sup>1</sup> PhD Student, Department of Education , Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Education , Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Email: irfayyaz@atu.ac.ir

<sup>3</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences , Alzahra University, Tehran

<sup>4</sup> Assistant Prof. Farhangian University, Tehran

<sup>5</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran

## **1. Introduction**

One of the main tasks of education systems in the world is the social education of children and youth. For many sociologists, social education occurs in two stages: First, the learning norms, customs and behaviors (socialization) and second, the critique and evaluation of social learning (Sims and Manz, 1982). In the first stage, the individual is subject to the implicit and explicit pressure of the norms, values and patterns imposed on society, but in the second stage, the individual consciously thinks to accept or reject the norms and values. Also, educational thinkers often refer to both individualistic and collectivist approaches of social education (Black, Mrasek, & Ballinger, 2003). From an individualistic perspective, society through social education can hinder one's inner growth and maturity, talents and creativity. The collectivist approach with the primacy of society over individual rights, emphasize the need for social education of human beings. Against these two views, a third approach put forward convergence of the individual and society in social education process. It seems that in general education level, the main focus of social education is on socialization and acculturation and higher education critically examines social values.

Regardless of the theoretical debates about the role of social education, it must be acknowledged that it has long been emphasized in all human societies that social education should be learn since early childhood ( Adnan and Smith, 2001 ). Accordingly, there has always been a consensus among parents, social reformers, politicians, educators, and teachers that the first formal education - the elementary school - is the most appropriate time for children's social education. In their view, social education is important because it links the new generation to tradition and culture and to issues such as collective identity, citizenship behavior, values, and social development. This wide range of social education effectiveness indicates that it can be looked at from different angles.

In the last two decades in academic communities, social education has taken on a purely educational subject and gained a more prominent place in development policy. According to this idea, social development - as one of the main dimensions of development- indicates the active presence of individuals - as actors - in a network of social relations. The social education of the younger generation is the ground for the creation of a new capital called "social capital" that can - along with other forms of capital - accelerates the pace of development (Siisiäinen, 2000). In this

situation, the first step to accelerate social development in developing societies - which comprise a large proportion of the population under the age of 30 - is to pay particular attention to the process of social education in effective institutions such as family and education systems. The view of present researchers on social education is based on its role in the development process.

Given this view, it is natural that countries like Iran - as a developing country - need to gain international experience and model from developed countries. On the one hand, Iran has a very young population. It has witnessed an increase in population growth over the past four decades. Iran's Statistics Centre estimates that 24.6 percent of the population is under the age of 15 and 22 percent between the ages of 15 and 29 (that is, about 40 million of the 82 million populations) (Mahzon, 2010). This situation has made social education more important to politicians and educational planners. On the other hand, the increasing role and importance of social capital in the development process has led policymakers to draw on the experiences of countries such as Japan. In fact, the key question for development policymakers in countries like Iran is what is one's social characteristic in developed societies like Japan, and what difference is between an Iranian and Japanese in social education. With a geographical area of less than a quarter of Iran and a population of over 60 million, Japan, as an Asian country loyal to its culture and tradition, has always been the focus of Iranian politicians and social and educational planners (Sarkar Arani, 2013). This focus is not just on Japan's economic progress. Iranian policymakers are trying to understand how Japan has achieved social development. In our opinion, the first step in understanding the process of social development in Japan is to acquire knowledge about the process of social education. A process beginning in childhood and forming the character of Japanese. In light of this brief introduction, the purpose of this paper is to present the findings of a comparative study of macro educational policies of the two countries on social education in primary education, the main components of social education in the context of primary school textbooks and similarities and differences between the two countries. The major research questions are:

- What are the similarities and differences between the macro education policies of Iran and Japan in the social education?
- What are the similarities and differences between the dimensions of social education in the two educational systems of Iran and Japan?

## **2. Research Background**

The education system is one of the most effective institutions in society for making a change in the younger generation. This system tries to make appropriate changes in the personality of the individual through the curriculum. Primary education is one of more important stage to shape beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals because children are more readily sociable. During this period, the development of cognitive learning and the development of favorable behavioral and social changes in children occur through formal and informal activities. Some of these activities are done through teaching various lessons. These courses are offered in a variety of subjects including social studies, ethics education, citizenship education, life skills, environmental studies, history, geography and civic studies in different educational systems. The main and common goal of these courses - explicitly and covertly - is to teach social principles and manage the values, beliefs, and attitudes of students from elementary school (Maleki, 1996). Accordingly, many scholars interested in social education are trying to evaluate the degree of success of educational systems in the social education of the younger generation, by measuring the content of these lessons as well as the amount of learners' learning and the teacher's role (Althof, & Berkowitz, 2006; Cogan, 2002; Kang, & Glassman, 2010; Ikeno, 2013; Izumi-Taylor, & Scott, 2013; Shimura, Ibaraki, Yamamoto, & Ohsaki, 2014; Yusof, Noor, Jalil, Mansor, & Awang, 2018; Jacoby, 2006). For example, the findings of a number of studies can be mentioned: UNESCO's International Office for Education reports that Swedish education system is based on the foundations of a democratic society and transfer of knowledge and values at school should be consistent with the student's native context, language, experiences and background (UNESCO-IBE 2012). Heggart, Arvanitakis, & Matthews, (2019) found that Australian adolescents appreciate democracy, but their perception of citizenship was lower than expected. Boon, Sim and Print (2005) show that in public school curricula of Singapore, social studies is a key topic for citizenship education (focusing on developing students' thinking skills and preparing them to become a responsible and knowledgeable person). In Ireland, Fass and Ross (2012) analyzed the content of social studies textbooks and found that the primary school curricula compare to secondary school emphasized more on active role of citizens of society. In Japan, Ikemoto (1996) indicated that social education has three chief goals: To develop a sense of respect for life; to teach the importance of the connection between the individual and the

group and to transmit a sense of social order and hierarchy, stemming from Confucian values of respect for elders and for those in positions of authority.

Research findings in Iran show that social education has not been fully realized in practice and does not have the desired output, which can be attributed to several factors. In a recent study, Tabatabaei (2019) shows that in primary school textbooks issues such as justice, self-knowledge and consciousness, freedom and independence were at a lower than average level. Beheshti, Mahmoudi, and Hosseinpour (2018) found that social studies textbooks of primary schools focused more on the components such as socialization, belief in science, belonging to the country and social discipline than respect for others' rights, punctuality, social trust, and work conscience. Hasani and Vajdani (2017) also in analyzing the qualitative content of these books - from the perspective of moral education - concluded that the amount of value themes is high, so it seems that these books are a showcase of values than a plan for learning and understanding of values by pupils. Fazoni Sharajini, Peiri, and Asadian (2016) study on failure of social education in primary schools of Iran refer to important challenges such as inability to communicate effectively between school and community, lack of coordination of goals with basic needs of students and lack of attention to group activities. In their research, Badagyan and Nateghi (2016) concluded that none of the dimensions of citizenship skills were favorably reflected in primary education textbooks. Darkhah, Mazidi, and Mofidi (2012) also found that social education textbooks in the third, fourth, and fifth grades of primary schools were relatively poor in content, questions, and imagery of democracy concepts and components. These books do not provide necessary information for democratic education. Mazbohi (2012) found that primary school curriculum neglected training of basic social skills. Razavi (2010) found that social education goals tend to focus more on cognitive and emotional dimensions and less on skill and behavioral dimensions. Aghazadeh (2007) understood that a major challenge of Iranian educational system is fostering of citizens who lack the ability and skills to solve life's problems. He also believes that the Iran's education lacks a system of thought, theoretical foundations, and clear philosophical and social foundations for shaping the process of social education (Aghazadeh, 2006). FathiVajjaragheh and Choukadeh (2006) revealed that in the Iranian educational system, officials, planners, administrators, teachers, parents and even students believe that subjects like

social studies are not so important compare to math and science. Noushadi, Shamshiri and Ahmadi (2011) in their research entitled "The Role and Function of social studies on formation of national identity of pupils in Grade 5 of Primary Schools and Grade 3 of Junior secondary schools" found that the components of national identity were insufficiently addressed in these textbooks and on the contrary, religious and political components accounted for the highest amount (83%). Dehghani (2009) analyzed teachers' opinions about social skills in the contents of social studies textbooks of primary schools. The results of this study showed that the distribution of social skills in these books is not the same and some skills such as fostering a sense of cooperation have been emphasized more and little attention has been paid to social rules. Gawazi (2008) concluded that the most important shortcomings related to citizenship education in Iran's primary schools textbooks were centralized planning of the education system, failure of all stakeholders to design, implement and evaluate programs, and inadequate use of participatory methods and practices.

### **3. Research Method**

This is a qualitative, non-experimental and comparative study. The researchers have used Bereday's comparative approach with four steps of description, interpretation, juxtaposition, and comparison for analysis of data. As a sample of study, only two countries of Iran and Japan were selected through the strategy of "different systems, different results"(Bray, Adamson & Mason, 2007). For present researchers, the internet demonstrated its value as a research tool as they were able to retrieve the Japanese curricula in English, as well as other key documents and information such as books and journal articles, which provided the appropriate supporting information. Although in primary schools of Iran and Japan, different textbooks are devoted to social education of children, in this study only the contents of social studies textbooks of Grades 3 to 6 are analyzed. In Iran, students have one social studies textbook at each grade (in total 4 books), but in Japan there are two common books for Grade 3 and 4, two books for Grade 5 and two books for Grade 6 (in total 6 books).

## 4. Results

This First Question: What are the similarities and differences between the macro education policies of Iran and Japan in the social education?

### *A) Description*

Regarding the four stages of the Bereday's approach, this section presents the data related to educational phenomenon (social education) for each country:

#### *Iran*

Determining the macro policies governing education systems largely depends on the identity of each community. In order to understand the concept of social education in Iran, one must also identify the Iranian identity and its main components. Ahmadi (2009) believes that Iran has existed for centuries in its political existence, boundaries, history and culture, and most importantly the institution of government. This historical continuity has never been lost, despite short and sometimes prolonged ruptures, so it is the most important feature of Iranian identity. According to Tajik (2000), in the modern era, Iranian identity like a pendulum has fluctuated between the three discourses of Islam, Iran, and West. According to Davari Ardakani, Iranian identity and culture is an Iranian-Islamic identity that has emerged in the contemporary period in contact with the West; According to Shayegan (2003), Iranian identity has three national, religious, and modern dimensions that are intertwined and thus create interactive areas that are becoming ever more complex and often incompatible with each other. Which of these national, religious or modern dimensions are more important is a difficult question to be answered yet. On the one hand, some authors emphasize the importance of national identity, an identity that is more than 2,500 years old (Avery, 1971). Another group attaches more importance to the religious dimension and believes that the impact of Islam on Iranian identity is greater than the national factor or developments in the modern world (Ramazani 2012). Therefore, in order to reach the Iranian educational system's approach to social education, we must first explain the Islamic view of social education.

For example Tabatabaei (1985) believes that in Islam, man is a composite being of body and soul and has a personal and collective identity, so Islam condemns monasticism and emphasizes the importance of social life. Among Muslim philosophers, Ibn Miskawayh (932 -1030 AD), Mulla Faiz Kashani (1007- 1091 AD) and Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (1201-1274 AD) also emphasize the convergence of individual and social education. Emphasizing on social education, Ibn Miskawayh believes that one cannot achieve the desired perfection -From a material and spiritual perspective - without connecting with other people in society. He also believes that virtues and good morals are not possible without the presence of society, so that the growth of virtues such as courage, chastity, justice, generosity, self-sacrifice and many others, flourishes in the shadow of association and communication with others (Shokouhi 2000). Nasir al-Din al-Tusi believes that for her survival and to achieve perfection, one needs the support and participation of others (Naqibzadeh, 1995). Some scholars also emphasize the Western dimension of Iranians identity. For example, Shariatmadari (2005) identifies similarity of Iran's social identity and philosophy with many of the modern life ideals by referring to important events in Iran's contemporary history such as the Constitutional Revolution and the Islamic Revolution. Regardless of these verbal arguments, two important points should be noted:

First: In the past monarchy, the major policies governing the education system focused mainly on the two national and western dimensions of Iranian identity, while in the current Islamic regime, its Islamic dimension is more prominent. In 2011, the Iranian education system, by compiling "Fundamental Education Reform Document", modified the foundations and aims of education based on Islamic philosophy of education in order to change the predominantly of Western philosophies. The Fundamental Education Reform Document of Iran as the most important document and the reference for the enactment of educational policies and laws, set the six main objectives of education in economic, religious and moral, social and political, biological and physical, aesthetic and artistic, economical and professional, and scientific and technological (Sadeghzadeh et al., 2011, 160). Among these goals, although social education has the largest share (21.4%) (Abedi&Neili, 2013), religious and moral education have been the focus of all school programs, in a way that the Fundamental Document on Education Transformation has emphasized religious identity more than 110 times (Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution 2011). This national document also mentions a number of concepts that represent religious dimension of Iranian identity: monotheism,



world justice, Mahdism, and the development of Islamic-Iranian civilization. The "Principles of National Curriculum" section of enactment No. 745 , Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution indicated that : Curricula should improve the promotion of national identity through attention and reinforcement of Islamic beliefs and values, culture and civilization of Islam and Iran, Persian language and literature, the values of the Islamic Revolution, patriotism, unity and national independence, and strive to promote the identity of pupils to the level of divine identity (Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, 2011).In addition, the preservation of national unity and social cohesion with a focus on Islamic-Iranian common identity has been emphasized. The objective of social education studies is to understand human actions and interactions and the ability to create a positive and constructive relationship with the people – with focus on the relationship with God, understanding of position and transcendence, and its elements in various dimensions (time, place, natural and social factors) and the divine traditions that govern the individual and society. It also seeks to foster desirable practices in accordance with the Islamic standard system (Haji Babaei et al., 2011, 31). The goals of the social education dimension in the Fundamental Education Reform Document of Iran are:

- ❖ Recognizing, preserving and reforming the customs, norms and values of society in the light of the Islamic standard system,
  
- ❖ Understanding the social and political situation of individual and society, and rationalizing social and political developments based on the Islamic standard system, in order to build a bright future and to influence individual and society future at the national and global level and the development of freedom and development of freedom, the status of self and others in the light of understanding and reforming social situations (family members, relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues, citizens, etc.) establishing a constructive and appropriate relationship with them based on the Islamic system criteria (Sadeghzadeh et al., 2011, 154).

Second: Extreme emphasis on each dimension can lead to ignoring the important role of other dimensions of Iranian identity. For this reason, a survey on contents of national documents shows that the Iran's education system seeks to train individuals to express all three dimensions of Iranian identity in their social behavior. People who act as members of a group (family, friends, school), demonstrate their sense of belonging through empathetic and participatory behavior, obey laws

and regulations, and acquire citizenship skills, roles and duties in the community - Participate in environmental, cultural, political and social activities and programs (Navid Adham and Sadeghzadeh Ghamsari. 2015). In sum and with attention to top documents of the Iran's educational system, it can be said that the social education of Iranian children is affected by three elements of religion, tradition and national-local customs and modern life developments (Figure 1).

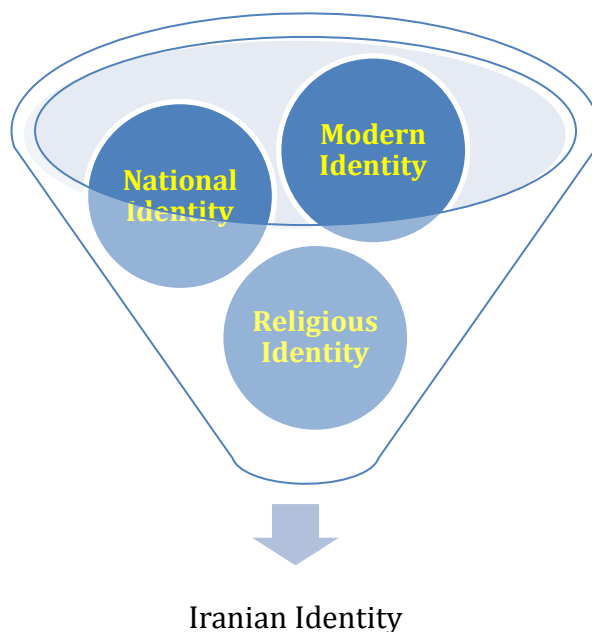


Figure 1: Elements of Iranian Identity in an Interactive Process

Compare to China, India, and Iran, for centuries Japan has not had a strong civilization because of its geographical limitation. On the one hand, Japanese history has demonstrated the effective role of Buddhist and Shinto religions and Confucian social philosophy in the process of social education and the formation of Japanese identity. As Takeda (no date) indicated " In Japan there are many religions, heterogeneous by nature—Shinto, the indigenous religion of the country, Buddhism, a religion introduced from the Asiatic continent, which is originally even atheistic, Christianity or monotheism relatively recently introduced from the West". (p.211). Nevertheless in the history of Japan, like in that of many other countries, religion and education were in a close relation. Especially since the Nara Period (710— 794 AD) the role Buddhism played in education was great. In the Edo Period (1603— 1867), the Tokugawa Shogunate treated Buddhism as a state

religion and at the same time adopted Confucianism as the ideology for guiding national morality and for executing its cunning policy for taming the people (Ibid, p. 213).

Another influential factor in Japanese identity is Confucian philosophy. According to Chen & Chung (1993) Confucianism is based on four central ideas: hierarchical relationships, the importance of the family system, concern for the less well off, and a strong emphasis on the importance of education. Nhu True and Van Thi (2014, p. 5) highlighted that “..... after being introduced into Japan, from the late 4th century, Confucianism has gradually been considered greatly by Japanese noble class”. Since that time, Japanese applied positive values of Confucianism into education creatively. Confucians believed that education is necessary because whoever people, good or bad, also need to be educated. Thus, Confucianism thought that “no education, no human”. The core Confucianism education content is humanistic values. Confucianism aims at teaching humanity to govern the country with an emphasis on training people to become talented and moral citizens. This makes learners self-responsible, willing to strive, self-respectful, moral, and honorable. These principles have influenced Japanese social education for centuries.

Although Japan is one of the countries applying positive ethics of Confucianism into education logically, but this country absorbed Confucian thoughts in its own ways and its national features to train people meeting requirements of Japanese society (Ibid, p. 5). For this reason, Japanese identity did not limit herself to the influence of the Buddhist and Shinto religions and the Confucian school and welcomed new developments. Therefore, Japan cannot be considered a religious or traditionalist society - in the sense that these words come to mind nowadays. In fact, some of the historical events of the last two centuries have transformed the notion of Japanese identity. The advent of the Meiji era, and in particular Japan's active role in political relations with neighbors during World War II, led to the introduction of nationalism in shaping Japanese identity. Also, Japan's economic restructuring and the transformation of it into a global economic power marked the beginning of a new chapter for the nation's relationship with other nations and the introduction of a new factor called Westernization (McCullough 2008). The arrival of these two factors had two major effects on the construction of Japanese identity:

First, it diminished the role of religion in people's lives. The education system was thus religion-free, and the secular system was instead encouraged and endorsed by statesmen and legislators. Countries that embrace secular ideology, do not allow religious education held in

schools. In Japan, which chose secular ideology as the foundation of the nation, religion plays no significant role in the country. The consequence of this policy is that in recent years religious culture education would be far more acceptable to people, including students, than the inculcation of religious sentiment (Inoue ,2009) and according to Edwin Reischauer and Marius Jansen, 70-80% of the Japanese do not consider themselves believers in any religion (Nuryatno, 2014 ).

Second, national and international goals have played a greater role in the social education of children. Instead of teaching religious and philosophical values, the schools taught moral values, life skills, environmental education, social and cultural tolerance, citizenship education, and universal values. In fact, top national documents such as “Japan's Basic Law on School Education” mainly emphasize goals such as fostering a sense of cooperation, personal independence, a good understanding of social conditions, life skills, communication with the environment and international cooperation (Kobara, 2010; Minei et al, 2010). For example, Poukka (2011) states in Japanese primary schools and in curriculum revision of moral education which was initiated in 1998 and implemented in 2002, the content of the moral texts was summarized in terms of moral responsibility in four moral areas (intrapersonal, interpersonal, natural-supernatural and societal) as follows: 1) continuous self-development, 2) caring for others, 3) awe of life and forces beyond human power, and 4) societal contribution (p.1).

In summary, it can be seen that first of all the four elements of religion (Buddhism and Shinto), Confucian philosophy, nationalism and modernism - which form the Japanese identity –still have impact on the social education of the young generation. Second, as we get closer to the past, the role of the first two factors becomes less prominent. Thus, in an evolutionary process, Japanese identity today is increasingly affected by the developments of the modern world, and the government, education system, and school system support modernism (or post-modernism) more than any other factor (Figure 2).

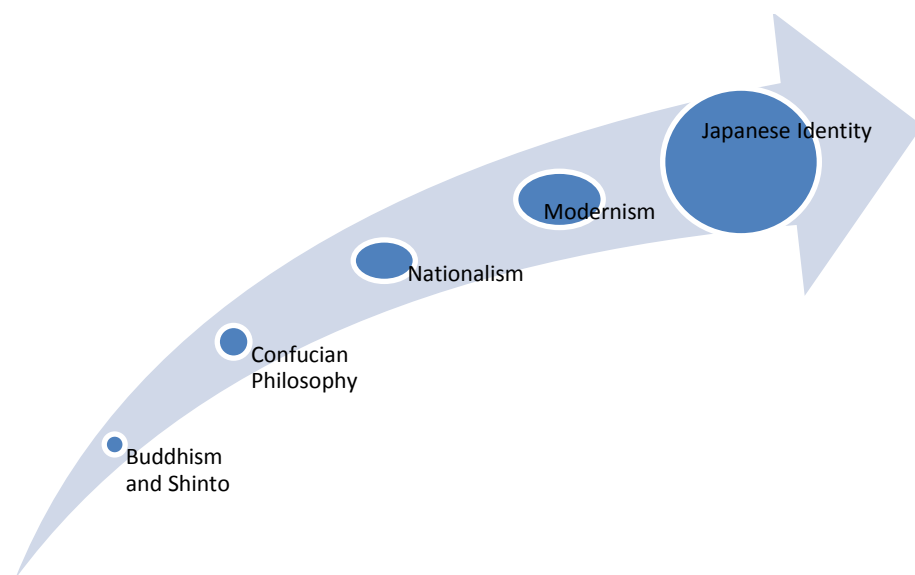


Figure 2: The constituent elements of Japanese identity in an evolutionary process

Question 2: What are the similarities and differences between the dimensions of social education in the two educational systems of Iran and Japan?

Awareness of macro policies of government and education system makes it possible to better study the content of school textbooks in both countries. The information related to the first step of the Bereday's approach for this question is presented here:

#### *A. Description*

##### *Iran*

The Iranian Ministry of Education is responsible for basic and secondary education. The Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution is the highest authority in the area of policy and planning. Most education is provided in Farsi language (Persian). Primary education started at age 6 and lasted 6 years. It is free and compulsory. There are various school textbooks in Iran primary education that are somehow related to one aspect of social education. Table 1 shows the topics of the courses by grade, book and number of pages:

Table 1: Characteristics of school textbooks related to social education in primary education

Title of textbooks	Grade	No. of Book	No. of page per each book	Explanations
Gifts Of Heaven	2-6	15	Between 50-100	At each grade, three separate books with different content based on the students' religion. A book for Shia students, a book for Sunni students, and a book for other religious minorities
Social Studies	3-6	4	Between 100-150	Common to all students across the country, regardless of their gender or religion
Work and Technology	6	1	104	Common to all students across the country, regardless of their gender or religion
Thought and Research	6	1	126	Common to all students across the country, regardless of their gender or religion

In Grades 2 – 6 of primary education, Iranian pupils must learn a subject entitled “Gifts of Heaven ” while learning reading, writing, math, social studies, science and Persian. This lesson is held for 45 minutes each week and the number of its textbook pages varies from grade to grade (minimum 50 and maximum 100 pages). Interestingly, the content of these books are different for pupils based on their religion. In fact, the Ministry of Education has produced and published three separate textbooks under the same name (Gifts of Heaven) for each grade (3 books in for each grade). The first book is for Shiite students, which covers more than 80 percent of school pupils, the second for Sunnis comprises about 15 percent and the third for Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian students nearly about 5 of learners. The contents of these books can be divided into two thematic categories: First, religious rules, customs and habits and second, ethical education (kindness, Forgiveness, generosity, courage, patience ...).

As Table 1 shows, in Grade 6, students should study two new subjects entitled “Work and Technology” and “Thought and Research”. The content analysis of these two books shows that part of it is about the social education of students: For example, in the work and technology book, students are introduced to topics such as how to prepare a variety of foods and vegetables, and some basic skills. In the subject of Thought and Research, students learn topics such as decision

making, identity and value, trustworthiness, preference for others' needs, attention to the impact of our decisions on others, research stages, collection of data and information and environmental issues.

In the Iran's primary education, social studies are provided for grades 3 to 6 with four textbooks for learners (Hasaniand Vojdani, 2017). Initial review by the researchers shows that in the academic year of 2019, social studies textbook of Grade 3 has a total of 76 pages with 7 chapters and 23 lessons, in Grade 4 it has 99 pages with 6 chapters and 22 lessons, in Grade 5 with a total of 112 pages, 5 chapters, and 22 lessons and in Grade 6 with a total of 124 pages, 12 chapters and 24 lessons that were used for content analysis. There are a few things to note about the textbooks: First, the authors of these books are mostly expert teachers selected by the Ministry of Education. Second, they are published and distributed by the Ministry of Education to all schools in the country and the private sector does not have the right to produce school textbooks. Thirdly, they are same for public and private schools as well as for girls and boys. Fourth, books are usually cheap and of good quality. In each chapter, two or more subject areas and key concepts related to them are integrated. These books also contain activity sheets. These worksheets are part of each book and contain part of the content that the students should be learned and do. Most of these worksheets are completed inside class. According to the authors of social studies textbook of Grade 6, the main purpose of this subject is that "The Social Studies Curriculum seeks to provide individual and social education for children and adolescents, with a view to the overall national curriculum based on monotheistic naturalism and its prosperity. Therefore, the ultimate goal of social studies is to educate believers who are responsible, aware, and capable in their individual and social lives, adhering to Iran's ethical and religious values and interests, and Iranian Islamic identity" (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Content Analysis of Gifts Heaven, Work and Technology, Thought and Research and Social Studies textbooks of Grade 3 to 6 showed that it could be divided into two main themes: Social values and social skills (Table 2). Social values include components such as patriotism, legalism, favorable interaction with national culture and identity, and religious values. Social skills include components such as communication, participation, demand of science and research, freedom and creativity. Also, the content analysis of these books suggests that authors have paid less attention to social values than social skills.

Table 2. Components of Social Education in Iran Primary Schools

Components and sub-components of social skills	Components and sub-components of social values
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication (respect others, respect and obey parents, communicating and expressing own views effectively, pay attention to opposite views, social adjustment, listening and seeing skills)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patriotism (respect for nationality and culture, acquaintance with the country's resources and talents, preserve unity, honor cultural heritage, defend the homeland, preserve national resources, cherish national heritage, care for the country's past, and preserve cultural heritage)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships and cooperation (teamwork, responsibility, collective decision making, consultation, patience, self-sacrifice, self-management, helping others)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand of Science and Research (Thinking, Social Questioning, Recording Information, Presenting Results, Investigating and Analyzing Information, Comparing and Classifying Information)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legalism (respect for individual and social rights, respect for the law, respect for the rights of others, respect for discipline)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Favorable interaction with national culture and identity (honoring the language and customs of national and local customs, favorable interaction with different cultures)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom (personal reaction, attention to personal inference, criticism, sound judgment, personal preference)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious values (respecting religious principles and laws, fighting oppression, striving for justice, doing good and forbidding evil)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity (developing and extending lessons learned, proposing, visualizing and predicting, designing and producing new strategies)</li> </ul>	

### Japan

A report from the National Curriculum Standards Reform Council states that one purpose of primary education in Japan is to enable children to have a healthy social life as an individual as well as a member of the society or nation (McCullough, 2008). Japanese primary school lasts for six years. Primary schools in Japan are open from 8am to 3:30 pm. The elements that comprise social education in Japanese primary schools come from three areas – moral education, social studies and special education. According to report prepared by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) purposes of social studies is to facilitate pupils' understanding on social life; to nurture an understanding of, and affection toward, our land and history. Purposes of moral education subject is that through the entire educational activities at school, to nurture morals



in pupils' mentality, judgment, willingness to practice, and behavior and purposes of special activities is to enable pupils to think in their own way about life through cross-synthetic studies and inquiry studies (National Institute for Educational Policy Research, 2010 ). As Mccullough (2008, p. 28) indicated "moral education in Japanese schools is divided into four major areas of study. These are self-awareness, relations with other people, relations with groups and with society and finally, relations with nature and the universe". Japanese children are expected to play active roles in various special activities that occur throughout the school year. There is a strong emphasis on teamwork, communication of ideas, maintenance of school traditions and the handing-on of experience from older to younger students.

Social Studies was introduced to Japanese schools as a formal part of the curriculum following the war and initially followed an experiential, problem-solving approach to introducing children to social issues (Shimura, 2015 ). A report prepared by Fukuoka University of Education (2006) highlighted that in Japan "social studies classes begin for third year elementary students with an introduction to the concept of community, fourth year students study community organization and Japanese life styles. In the fifth year industrial and environmental issues are studied and, finally, sixth year students are introduced to Japanese history and the Japanese political system and also spend some time studying the role played by Japan in world society" (as cited in Mccullough, 2008, p. 28). Because of this, 16.5% of total class hours at the primary school level were allocated to teach Social Studies (Tabe 2004 as cited at Shimura, 2015). Currently, this subject reduced to just 6.4% of total class hours (Shimura, 2015).

Textbooks for all subjects are provided free of charge and prepared by private publishers and go through the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's screening (National Institute for Educational Policy Research, 2010). Currently, Japan's primary school curriculum is divided into three main categories: compulsory subjects, moral education and special activities. Compulsory subjects are Japanese language, Japanese literature, arithmetic, social studies, science, music, arts and handicrafts, programming and physical education (National Center on Education and the Economy, 2020). In Japan and for the academic year of 2018, There was two social studies textbooks with total 313 pages, 7 chapters and 16 lessons for pupils of both third and fourth grades of primary school; In fifth grade two books have 260 pages, 5 chapters and 19 lessons and in sixth grade two books have 224 pages, 3 chapters and 10 lessons which were used for content analysis. Studying and analyzing social studies textbooks from third to sixth grade showed that the content

of the chapters could be divided into two general categories of social values and social skills (Table 3). Social values include components such as Global values, Cultural Understanding, Patriotism, and Modern personal values. Also social skills include components like understanding the living environment, knowing the country, Life Skills, Communication Skills and Creativity. Content analysis of social studies textbooks of elementary school indicates that the diversity of components related to social values is less than the components of social skills.

Table 3. Components of Social Education in Japanese Primary Education

Components and sub-components of social values	Components and sub-components of social skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global values ( Japan as a diverse society/ internationalised society /global peace/political developments /crisis-ridden world/ Japan's place in the world/ understanding international relationship as well local and global ecological issues/ Politics of Japan and the world)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Understanding the living environment (public utilities and services/ understanding of environmental life / historical changes in our local area/ consumption behavior/ protection of nature/ environment beautification/cleaning and separate waste collection/ breeding and production)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural Understanding ( recognition of various cultures in the world / understanding native culture/ / international understanding)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Knowing the country ( Land of Japan/ Japanese agriculture and industries)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patriotism (History of Japan / favorable interaction with national culture and identity / honoring the language and customs of national and local customs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Life Skills (teach the students how to think decide, and organize their thoughts/ how to gain the skills for learning, research, and collection and analysis of data/ industrial and information technology transformations )</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern personal values ( love truth and justice/ esteem individual values/ respect the workers/ deep sense of responsibility/ independent spirit/ understanding information society skills and complexities)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Communication Skills (respect for parent and grandparents', 'respect for teachers and school staff', and 'self-awareness as a Japanese person and patriotic spirit'</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;">-----</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creativity (contextual discourse :talking about the background to an issue / judgmental discourse : giving an opinion about an issue / explanatory discourse : helping others to understand key issues/ persuasive discourse : convincing another of one's point of view/ procedural discourse :talking about the ways in which issues are discussed)</li> </ul>

### *B) Interpretation*

This section introduces the interpretation stage with regard to the Bereday's regional approach. In the interpretation phase, Bereday considered the role of non-educational factors (i.e., social factors) of the countries under study. These social factors can be considered as geographical features, demographic characteristics, cultural aspects (Customs), religion, race, language, political system and economic characteristics. Available data show that in terms of size and population, Iran is a large country (seventeenth in size) with a small population (82 million) and Japan is a small country with a high population (eleventh in population). Linguistic and racial diversity in Japan is small and widespread in Iran. While the majority of people in Japan do not consider themselves religious, Buddhism and Shinto are more prevalent, the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran recognizes Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism as official religions, but the vast majority of Iranians are Muslims of the Shiite branch, which is the official state religion. The Kurds and Turkmen are predominantly Sunni Muslims, but Iran's Arabs are both Sunni and Shiite.

While Iran, as an empire, has had various geographical boundaries throughout history and the Iranian identity as Shayegan (2018) is a forty-piece identity, Japan's geographical features have kept foreigners invaded for centuries. It is also necessary to briefly mention two factors of the political and economic systems of the two countries. While both countries have had monarchies for centuries and the Japanese still maintain this political tradition, from last four decades, the political system in Iran is the Islamic Republic with the rule of the Islamic religion. From economical perspective, while Japan per capita income (GDP) for 2018 was \$39,287, in Iran it was 5,494. In addition, Japan's Human Resources Index (HDI value) for 2018 is 0.915— which put the country in the very high human development category— positioning it at 19 out of 189 countries and territories; Iran's HDI for 2018 is 0.797. When the value is discounted for inequality, the HDI falls to 0.706, a loss of 11.5 percent due to inequality in the distribution of the HDI dimension indices. From educational dimensions, in both countries education is compulsory only for the nine years of elementary and middle school, but 98% and more than 80% of students go to high school in Japan and Iran respectively. The Student teacher ratio (primary school) in 2017 for Japan was 16 and in Iran, 27 pupils. These wide differences between social factors in the two countries seem to make

comparisons difficult for comparativists, but one might find some interesting points when considering the strategy of "making strangers familiar".

### *C) Juxtaposition*

At this stage, we attempt to provide the necessary criteria for comparability and provide a comparative analysis by juxtaposing the findings of the previous two steps and the similarity and differences. This stage includes juxtapositions of social structure, the structure of the educational system, and the phenomenon under study (social education):

#### *1. Juxtaposition of Social System*

The most important sub-factors of the social system are: geographical location, race, language, religion, political system, and economic system. In terms of interpretation, it can be said that the only similarity between Iran and Japan is that they are both geographically located on the continent of Asia - but with the greatest distance from each other. The vast dissimilarities among the underlying factors of the social system have led us to say that we cannot find a country in the world such as Iran and Japan that are so different. The following can be concluded:

- There is huge gap between two countries from economic aspect.
- Iran is a Muslim country with a political structure based on the Islamic rule and regulations but Japan politically and socially is extremely secular.
- In Iran, the role of religion in determining macro policies of education is on the rise, while in Japan the role of the religious system is in decline.

#### *2. Juxtaposition of Education System*

Educational comparativists around the world are well aware that borrowing different dimensions of education system over the last century has made it possible to find many similarities among different countries. Japan and Iran are no exception. The findings in Table 4 show that

among the six educational factors, there are very similarities between the two countries in the five factors. In Iran and Japan, the Ministry of Education is responsible for the supervision and control of formal general education; elementary education is compulsory for all children aged six years and a there is similar period of six years of primary education. In both countries, primary school subjects are similar, and students need to learn reading, writing, math, science, social studies, physical education, and mother tongue; a descriptive qualitative assessment model is used to determine learners' academic achievement in Japan and Iran too. The findings in Table 4 only show the juxtaposition of selected countries in compilation of primary school textbooks, while in Iran the Ministry of Education plays a major role in the preparation and distribution of textbooks, in Japan the private sector has an active role in textbook compilation.

Table 4: Juxtaposition of selected countries in the structure of education system

Country /factor	Iran	Japan
Role of Ministry of Education	*	*
Type of training	*	*
Primary education Period	*	*
Authoring and publishing of textbooks	*	-
School subjects	*	*
Evaluation system	*	*

### 3. Juxtaposition of Social Education

The juxtaposition of social education between the two countries is divided into two parts according to the research questions: juxtaposition of macro policies of educational system and juxtaposition of social education of school textbooks contents. Factors affecting the proximity of the two countries on macro policies of educational system are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Juxtaposition of Iran and Japan in Macro Education Policies Related to Social Education

Country /factor	Iran	Japan
Number of main factors affecting identity	3	4
Religion	1	2
National identity	1	1
Westernization and Modernism	1	1

Accordingly, in both countries at least three factors - religion, national identity, and relation to the New World - are involved in the development of Japanese and Iranian identities, although their performance are not the same. In Iran, Islam and its religious rules plays a major role in determining macro-education policies. In Japan, on the contrary, the religious system still continues its influence on social education in the form of behavioral customs (Japanese behavior). The second factor, national identity in Japan, has been heavily influenced by political events such as World War II, while the political system in Iran has much emphasis on Islamic-national identity. New civilization, westernization, modernism, postmodernism, internationalization, globalization or any other similar term indicates the influence of Europe and U.S.A on Iran and Japan during the last century. This influence is still more or less maintained in both countries, although in Iran the political system and, of course, the education system is not much in favor of reinforcing this factor in the process of social education of the young generation. This factor appears to be increasing its influence on macro policies of education in Japan.

The result of juxtaposition of school textbooks contents related to social education in both countries are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Juxtaposition of school textbooks contents related to social education

Country /factor	Iran	Japan
Diversity of textbook resources	4	1
Diversity in the main factors of social education	2	2
Diversity in the sub- factors of social education	9	9

The first thing to consider is the diversity of courses and educational resources. In Iran, contents of four school textbooks namely Gifts of Heavenly, Thought and Research, Work and Technology and Social Studies through 21 textbooks have focused on one of the sub- factors of children's social education. In Japan, only 6 social education textbooks teach students in Grades three to six. The results of the descriptive section also showed that in both countries, social education focuses on two main factors of social values and social skills. In addition, the diversity of social education sub-factors is the same in both countries (9 sub-factors in each country), but in terms of the nature of education, there are many differences between the two countries. In addition, the analysis of diversity of sub-factors shows that in Japan the aim of social studies is to increase children's

understanding of peaceful, democratic and responsible social life with their awareness of the status of their country, the world, and the environment in which they live. In other words, the ultimate goal of the social studies curriculum is to build a democratic society through education (Toshio, 2009).

## **5. Conclusion and Comparison**

Today, social education is one of the most important priorities in all countries of the world. Without a clear picture and understanding of the educational system's approach to the social education process cannot develop appropriate educational goals, principles, and methods. Iran's society has witnessed many social changes - political, economic, demographic, and educational - during the last four decades, especially after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in the late 1970s. These developments have necessitated a change in the social education process and a new definition of it. Iran is a young and developing country with politicians and social planners who looking at the past on the one hand and worried about the fast-moving changes that take place in every aspects of life in the other hand. In this situation, many Iranian policymakers think that Japan can be a good model for learning how to deal with new challenges. The results of the present study highlighted the main differences and similarities between the two countries:

The first difference concerns the role of religion. Iranian policymakers place a high value on religion in social education process while Japanese policymakers move on a secular system. This fundamental difference cannot be ignored in the process of adaptation. The second point concerns the role of national identity in the social education of the two countries. Over the centuries Japan's culture and social system have influenced by factors such as Confucius' social philosophy, shaped the relationships between individuals in society. Accordingly, interpersonal relationships, socializing, respect for senior people and the preference of social rights over individual rights form a major part of the components of social education. Iranian national identity is also very similar to that of Japan.

The third finding of study focuses on the role and position of Western civilization in the process of social education of the young generation in Iran and Japan. Upstream documents in Iran show that educational policymakers focus on the positive and negative effects of Western civilization - largely transmitted through new technological and information changes - on social education. On the contrary, the Japanese view of modern times is accompanied by positive attitude and acceptance of change. In fact, one of the major differences between the two educational systems in social education is the Japanese politicians' special attention to interact with other countries in the world, while in the Iranian education system little attention is paid to international relations. For example, in the age of globalization, having a vibrant society depends on the rational relationship with international communities. Peace education for the young generation is one of the important components of social education that establishes a good relation with other countries. The roots of Japan's special attention to this component can be traced back to Confucius's belief that peace should be provided by satisfying the desires and feelings of different classes of society. In addition, the damage caused by World War II - which the Japanese people have not yet forgotten and do not want history to be repeated for them - has led Japanese authorities to teach children peace. The analysis of the content of the upstream documents and social studies textbooks indicate a contradiction in the emphasis on international relations. While upstream documents consider it as a very important goal, in school textbooks international relations is limited to establishing relations with neighboring countries.

In fact, the mental structure governing the components of social education in the two countries well illustrates the distinction between positive and negative views on Western civilization. While Japan's education system focuses more on the role of transnational society and modern values in the social education of individuals, the lack of attention by Iranian education policymakers to the realities of modern life and the extreme attention to the factor of religion has been created a gap between formal education and actual learner behavior. For this reason, many Iranian scholars in the study of the realization of social education's goals have found that accepting the values of modern life such as respect for different cultures, international understanding, responsibility, respect for the law, good citizenship, social participation, and environmental concern are not institutionalized in the behavior of Iranian students.



The latest research findings are closely related to the content of social education textbooks with the real life of students. While formal school and social studies programs in Japan are designed to provide a realistic understanding of everyday life, In Iran, these trainings have become more theoretical due to the short attendance of students at school (5 hours per day), the shortage of educational facilities and lack of proper out-of-school infrastructure.

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