Globalization is a major focus in education today. Nations all over the world are struggling to change their educational systems to meet what are perceived to be the needs of globalization. This book, Globalization and Japanese “Exceptionalism” in Education: Insiders’ Views into a Changing System, attempts to analyze the challenge posed by globalization to educational systems through the case of Japan. As insiders involved in educational reform affected by globalization, the authors successfully demonstrate the educational dilemmas that Japan faces in keeping up with the internationally dominant Western nations.

This book’s important overarching theme is that Japanese “exceptionalism” is not just a practice implemented in the particular setting of Japan but an idea which can be shared with the rest of the world, especially with non-Anglophone Asian countries. This exceptionalism—the idea that Japan has a unique character that separates it from other nations—is characterized by use of the term “Galápagosuzation” (Chapter 1). While most of this book draws upon the investigation of experiences or insights the contributors have gained when developing or observing educational reforms for globalization in Japan, the principles of the reforms are suggestive or applicable to the situations of other nations. Therefore, the Japanese Galápagosuzation has some implications for people outside of Japan to better understand and cope with the current globalization movement in education. This is the key concept of this book.

The volume is divided into four sections: Section I, Setting the stage (Chapters 1-4), Section II, Globalization and the multicultural challenge in Japan (Chapters 5-7), Section III, Case studies in meeting the global and multicultural challenge (Chapters 8-9), and Section IV, The issues revisited (Chapters 10-12). The following chapters showcase Japanese exceptionalism:

· Japan’s Challenge in Fostering Global Human Resources: Policy Debates and Practices

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· From High School Abroad to College in Japan: The Difficulties of the Japanese Returnee Experience
· The University of Tokyo PEAK Program: Venues into the Challenges Faced by Japanese Universities
· Globalization or Anglicization? A Dilemma of English-Language Teaching in Japan

This book’s primary audience include international readers who already have at least some fundamental knowledge about Japanese culture and education, and who want to develop and refine their understanding of the movement for globalization. Chapter 1, the introduction, and Chapter 2 (“Exceptionalism” in Japanese Education and its Implications) serve as a primer on Japanese globalization and also help the readers to perceive what the author/editor, Ryoko Tsuneyoshi, wishes to build as a framework of discussion. The key framework she presents is “globalization from above” and “globalization from below.” “Globalization from above” refers to globalization coming from governmental policy reacting to the need to increase global talent or Japanese competitiveness. In contrast, “globalization from below” is defined as a reaction to globalization pressures at the grass-roots level.

There is much to commend in Globalization and Japanese “Exceptionalism” in Education. One of its key strengths is the authors’ ethnographic or participatory deep description of the agonies experienced by international youth living in Japan. In each chapter, they go into great depth on one program or policy in which they are engaged, and so this book contains a variety of Japanese “exceptionalism” such as the issues and difficulties of fostering global human resources, Filipina immigrant schoolgirls and their academic and career pathways, and Taiwanese students’ transition from university to work in Japan. These chapters ask us whether or not we should apply the same practices of job-recruiting and academic or career guidance to the international students as to the Japanese students.

In addition, this book is structured to provide the program supply-side experiences. The chapters highlighting the University of Tokyo’s PEAK program (Programs in English at Komaba) and Gunma University-Gunma Prefecture’s cooperative program for a certificate called “Multicultural Community Advancement Officer” provide readers with good examples of reactions to “globalization from above” and “globalization from below.” The PEAK program was sparked by the Japanese Ministry of Education’s Global 30 Project so as to attract elite undergraduate overseas students, but 70 percent of the students admitted to this program for the 2014 school year declined to come and decided to go elsewhere. The latter Gunma program started in 2010 to train professionals capable of solving problems from the perspective of multicultural context, and came to an end in 2015 after producing nineteen certified officers.

While Tsuneyoshi et al. depict a variety of Japanese exceptionalism, individual chapters of this book do not orient the discussion of applicability of Japanese approach of globalization to other nations with a solution-centered frame of mind that seeks to better explain why Japanese exceptionalism can be shared among other nations, and how the dilemmas Japan face would be solved in a different country. Also, as shown in Chapter 2, the concept of “globalization from above” is likely to turn into “globalization from below,” or vice versa. They are not irrelevant to each other, rather mutually interwoven in the actual process of globalization.
The last part of Chapter 12 (“Japanese Schooling and the Global and Multicultural Challenge”) deals in part with the possibility to transform Japanese assimilative education policies and practices admiring homogeneity into more inclusive ones praising diversity. But its discussion of the dilemmas and difficulties we face in the age of globalization is more preparatory than comprehensive. The readers of this book will expect more advanced discussion of this controversial subject, being reminded of the key concept that Japanese Galápagosization has some implications for people outside of Japan and that the Japanese reaction to globalization can be an alternative for other nations. If each chapter had its own discussion of the applicability to other nations, the Japanese Galápagos islands might have been seen more clearly as alternatives.

Despite this dissatisfaction, *Globalization and Japanese “Exceptionalism” in Education* is a profoundly valuable book to read. It provides quality information on policies and practices, and enables deeper insights into the next phase of globalization.