Chapter 2

Japan and South Africa: A Political, Economic, Social, Technological and Legal Evaluation

Takayoshi Maki
International Education Development Program
Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Hiroshima University
Japan
maki@hiroshima-u.ac.jp

C.C. Wolhuter
Comparative and International Education Professor
North-West University
South Africa
Charl.Wolhuter@nwu.ac.za

2.1 Introduction

Educational structures worldwide are shaped by the societal frameworks within which they are embedded. To explore the scope of collaboration between South African and Japanese universities, our study examined the education systems and national backgrounds of these two countries, thereby aiming to map their education systems and societal contexts. The first part of the chapter will survey the South African societal and educational frameworks as well as the higher education system, followed by a similar survey of the situation pertaining to Japan in the second part of the chapter. Finally, after a comparison of these two, the scope for partnerships between Japanese and South African universities will be assessed.

2.2 South Africa

2.2.1 South African Societal Context

2.2.1.1 Geography

South Africa covers about 1.2 million square kilometres at the southernmost section of the African continent. This geographical position is at the periphery of the world's scientific, technological, educational and economic systems even in the present age of globalisation. With the core far away in North America and Western Europe (a vestige of the colonial era, but part of the reality of enduring asymmetrical global power relations) and a rising second core in Eastern Asia, the country is in a disadvantageous position. The 500 mm rainfall line cuts midway through the country, from north to south, dividing it into a semi-arid western half and an eastern, arable half receiving 500 mm plus rainfall every year. The southwestern corner of the country has a Mediterranean climate.

2.2.1.2 Demography

The population of South Africa is about 60.1 million (mid-2021 figure, Peyper 2021:4). In the pre-1994 era, the country's people were classified into four racial categories, which is still used in official documentation for purposes of tracking progress in equalisation and affirmative action. These categories are:

- Blacks: 48.6 million or 81% (people of African descent),
- Whites: 4.7 million or 8% (people of European descent),
- Indians: 1.5 million or 2% (people of Asian descent), and
- "Coloured": 5.3 million or 9% (people from mixed racial descent) (Ibid.).

The Black population group has been in the country for ages. However, settlement of the White population group commenced with the establishment of a refreshment station in 1652 by the Dutch East Indian Company at present-day Cape Town. Over the course of time, the introduction of slaves from

what is today Malaysia and Indonesia as well as intermarriage between Whites and Blacks led to the "coloured" component of the population (while the term "coloured" is still used officially in documentation related to the implementation of affirmative action policies, the categorisation and the name are extremely controversial). The most recent population group, the Indians, dates back to 1855. They migrated to work as indentured labourers on sugar farms.

The population growth rate is 1.33% per year and has been decreasing for several years (World Bank 2022).

The most recent addition to the demography of South Africa is the post-1994 influx of immigrants, mainly from other African countries and South Asia. The last census recorded the number of legal immigrants in the country as 2.2 million. With the addition of illegal immigrants, the figure comes up to 5 million by some estimates (for an extended study of the recent waves of immigration from other African countries in particular to South Africa and their impact on its economy, interested readers can refer to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Report 2018).

2.2.1.3 Politics

After centuries of White rule and policies of extreme racial segregation, a new political dispensation came into effect in 1994. This dispensation is based on the constitution of a Western liberal democratic kind, containing a bill of human rights. Fukuyama (2004) describes a weak state as being incompetent in effectively performing core functions assigned to it such as providing security to citizens and delivering basic services, including running water, electricity, roads and public health systems. In contrast, an overregulated society stifles innovation and entrepreneurship and undermines the autonomy of civil society. The inept service delivery is compounded by corruption, cronyism and a lack of political accountability (see Johnson 2019; Pauw 2017; 2022). Moreover, the problem on the political front is the combination of a weak state and an overregulated society.

2.2.1.4 Economy

According to the World Bank, South Africa is an upper-middle-income country. However, this statement needs to be qualified by a list. First, it is (as the Gini index of the country shows) one of the most unequal societies in the world. Moreover, the situation is exacerbated by socio-economic stratification, which corresponds to the racial divide, with Whites being mostly affluent and Blacks relatively impoverished. An indication of the stark inequality is that South Africa's aggregate population ranks at 116 on the United Nations' Human Development Index among all the countries in the world. However, if White South Africans are taken out of the equation as a separate group, the rank order rises up 100 places to number 16 (Sithole 2021:27). Second, even during the pre-coronavirus disease (COVID-19) years, the economy in the context of a weak or a weakening but over-controlling state and policy uncertainty, failed to grow faster than the rate of population, which means that South Africans, on average, are getting poorer. To aggravate matters, in 2020, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's economic growth came down to the negatives. In terms of employment, the great hopes harboured in 1994 at the onset of a new sociopolitical dispensation were dashed. In 1994, there were 3.4 million unemployed South Africans. Since the onset of COVID-19, the unemployment rate has multiplied more than three times to reach the 10 million mark (for a thorough analysis of the pressing and growing problem of youth unemployment in the country, the interested reader can refer to the Centre for Development & Enterprise Report 2017).

2.2.1.5 Sociocultural Situation

Cultural diversity and the extant lack of social capital are two salient features of the sociocultural situation. Based on the demographic survey presented earlier, South Africa is the meeting point for people from three continents. Cultural diversity is also evident from the fact that the country has eleven official languages, the largest of which is the first language of less than 25% of the population.

The lack of social capital is visible in the high crime rate (including violent crime), corruption and the culture of impunity. Every day, 68 murders are reported (Fraser 2023). A staggering number of more than 49,000 cases of sexual offences are reported to the police annually. Moreover, it is widely believed that many incidents of rape are never reported to the police. Only 8.6% of rape reports result in a guilty verdict in court (Rape Crisis, Cape Town Trust 2020).

2.2.1.6 Religion, Life and World Philosophy

Seventy-six percent of South Africans declare themselves Christians, including Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking Whites. To a considerable extent, coloured and Black people belong to different church denominations, and even different congregations in cases where they belong to the same denomination. Many Blacks of all denominations practice a kind of syncretic religion, combining Christianity with elements of traditional African religion, such as the worship of their ancestors. Eighty percent of South Africans of Indian descent are Hindus, whereas 8% are Muslims.

At a secular level, modern, western, liberal, individualistic and materialistic philosophy, with its attached value system, has become widespread among all population groups, existing alongside traditional cultures and their philosophical systems. Religious groupings have their philosophical systems, whereas political groupings have their philosophical superstructures.

2.2.2 South African Education

Formal education in South Africa began with the establishment of a refreshment station at Cape Town by the Dutch East Indian Company in 1652. In a typical colonial set-up, education (throughout the society) was segregated along racial lines. Separate schools for black (non-white) and white children were developed. These two organisations were highly unequal. In terms of infrastructure, teacher qualifications and quality, schools with white children were far superior to

schools with black children. In the Black community, strong opposition to the system of segregated education developed in the mid-twentieth century. This opposition revolved around the Eurocentric nature of education and its unequal provision in South Africa (where schools with white children received better quality education than those with black children). Black children dropped out of school after only a few years. Moreover, their participation in secondary education and access to higher education were unequal, which drew criticism.

Objections against the segregated and unequal education system were a rallying point in the sociopolitical turmoil that characterised South African society in the run-up to the 1994 political change. After taking over the government in 1994, the ANC (African National Congress) spelt out an education policy based on its ideals. The *intrinsic* goals of the post-1994 education systems were:

- desegregation
- democratisation
- decentralisation
- equal educational opportunities, and
- multicultural education.

The entire education system will aim, as *extrinsic* goals of education, to develop the entire population and to promote a complete range of societal goals, including the eradication of poverty, spurring economic growth and development and building a society free of racial, gender and other forms of unfair discrimination (see Wolhuter 2015).

The assessment of an education project entails three dimensions: quantitative, qualitative and equality dimension (see Wolhuter 2014). South African requires assessment on all three dimensions.

In the quantitative dimension, enrolments increased in recent years. Primary school enrolment increased from 7,444,802 in 2000 to 7,698,124 in 2021, whereas secondary school enrolments increased from 1,141,946 in 2000 to 5,353,649 in 2021 (The United Nations Educational, Scientific

and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] 2023). However, concerns about the rising number of school-age children who are not enrolled in school still prevail. Recent studies indicate that there are 843,050 children of primary school age, 207,714 children of lower secondary school age and 607,129 youths of upper secondary school age not in schools (2019 figures) (UNESCO 2021). Moreover, the net enrolment ratios seem to be slipping. The net primary school enrolment ratio dropped from 95.68% in 2015 to 89.21% in 2019; the lower secondary school enrolment ratio was steady at 89.68% in 2019, while the upper secondary school enrolment ratio decreased from 87.53% in 2015 to 79.06% in 2021 (UNESCO 2021).

Education quality is a concept difficult to define. Therefore, it is more comprehensible to enumerate the components of education quality. Wolhuter and Van der Walt (2018) distinguish between the following components of education quality: input, process, output and product quality. Based on the indication of these components, the quality of education in South Africa is seriously lacking. For example, for input quality, Hodgson's (2021) study found that of the 23,471 state schools, only 28% had Internet access. The study further reported that many schools lacked basic essentials. For example, 19% had illegal pit latrines and 37% had no sanitation facilities. On the academic front, 77% had no libraries, 42% had no sports or recreational facilities and 85% lacked the physical infrastructure to provide quality instruction (Hodgson 2021). For instance, in the most recent cycle of Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS), South Africa was the second last out of 39 participating countries (TIMSS, 2019). The average score of Grade 8 South African learners in the mathematics test was 372, compared with other countries like Singapore (which came first): 621, Russia: 538, United States of America: 518, Australia: 505, Turkey: 458, Egypt: 392, Botswana: 391 and Saudi Arabia (which ended last): 368. It is conspicuous that usually the schools with black children are poor in terms of quality. This brings the discussion to the next point, namely, equality in education.

Education in South Africa is highly unequal. As stated earlier, the most glaring fault usually lies between schools of white and black children. Historically, schools catering to white children offer an education comparable to the best in the world, whereas those with black children leave much to be desired regarding the quality of education. Other dimensions of inequality in education, which occur worldwide, include socio-economic descent, gender and the rural-urban divide. Educational inequalities, interrelated with the socio-economic status of families, are strongly present, but the discourse about education is truncated by the discussion of racial inequalities. For example, while 90% of four-year-old children from the most affluent quintile of South African families are in structured, formal early learning programs, the corresponding figure for the poorest quintile is 50% (Berry, Almeleh, Giese, Hall, Masitery & Sanke 2017:35).

2.2.3 Higher Education in South Africa

If the development of education in South Africa was late and slow, higher education has been worse. The first university in South Africa was established only in the mid-nineteenth century. The universities followed the historic trajectory set by the primary plan of colonialism and apartheid: separate, segregated universities were created for White and Black South Africans. By the end of the 1980s, there were 11 universities for white and black students, respectively.

The industrialisation and development of a strong mining sector and the general economic development of the country necessitated the development of higher education institutions offering technical-vocational education. Thus, a new kind of institution, called a Technikon, came into being in the twentieth century. By the end of the 1980s, there were 13 Technikons in South Africa: seven for Whites and six for Black people. With the onset of the new sociopolitical dispensation in 1994, the same imperatives impacting education in general, explained above, exerted their force on the higher education sector.

In 2001, the Minister of Higher Education launched radical reforms with the stated purpose of ending the segregated and unequal higher education policies. However, the restructured strategy fell short of this ideal. The number of higher education institutions (universities and Technikons) was reduced from 36 to 24 through several mergers. In 2003, the name 'Technikons' was replaced by the name 'Universities of Technology'. Since 2003, two new public universities have been established. While the Constitution and the Higher Education Act allow for private universities, the size of this sector, mainly because of government animosity, remains negligibly small.

The number of university students in South Africa soared from 495,355 in 1994 to 1,157,021 in 2021 (UNESCO 2023). Despite spectacular progress in enrolment growth since 1994, the higher education sector in South Africa is beset by a host of pressing problems. Despite the increase in enrolment, the gross enrolment ratio is still relatively low. The higher education gross enrolment ratio in South Africa is 25% (World Bank, 2023a). While it towers over the sub-Saharan aggregate gross of the higher education enrolment ratio of 9%, the average gross higher education enrolment ratio of upper middle-income countries (in which South Africa falls) is 63% (*Ibid.*).

An internationalisation drive has occurred in the congenial post-1994 context. Rather than promoting a global flow of ideas and students, ultimately benefitting South African higher education and society, internationalisation is a one-way process: inbound international students are mainly from neighbouring Southern African states, while outbound students choose European and North American universities, where they often remain after graduation, thus contributing to the brain drain affecting South Africa (see Wolhuter2023).

2.3 Japan

2.3.1 Japan's Societal Context

2.3.1.1 Geography

The Japanese festoon of islands is located to the west of the Pacific Ocean in the Northern Hemisphere. Japan's neighbouring countries are the Republic of Korea, China and Russia. The land area is 377,930 square kilometres and consists of four main islands from north to south: Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu. Additionally, there are 6,852 small islands (World Population Review 2021). The stretch of the land between the northern and southern tips is approximately 3,000 kilometres. Thus, climate division varies from sub-polar or subarctic to subtropical zones.

Consequently, Japanese people experience four seasons in a year: spring with cherry blossoms, summer with seaside beaches, autumn with maple leaves and winter with snow. The vertical difference also varies with mountain ranges from north to south of the mainland, including active volcanoes such as Mt. Aso on Kyushu and Mt. Fuji on Honshu. These features enhance the supply of fresh underground water that flows in rapid rivers through all cities, towns and villages to merge with the ocean. The forest area covers two-thirds of the total land, while the rest of the region is for residence and farming (Japan Institute of Country-ology and Engineering, n.d.). With the above-described variety of climates and rich natural resources, the Japanese enjoy an abundance of rice and a variety of vegetables and fruits throughout the country during all four seasons. It is worth noting that Japan experiences natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and typhoons. However, such disasters strengthen the Japanese citizens' capability for endurance (Watsuji & Bownas 1961).

2.3.1.2 Demography

The total population of Japan is 125,120,000 as of 1 October 2021 based on the latest population estimates of the Statistics Bureau of Japan (2021a). The population density is about 340.8 persons per square kilometre. Since 2015, 12 cities have over 1 million people each, including: Tokyo (9.27 million), Yokohama city (3.37 million), Osaka city (2.69 million) and Nagoya city (2.30 million) (Statistics Bureau of Japan 2021b). Today, Japan's population is decreasing, with a birth rate of 865,239 in 2019, called the "860,000 shocks" because it is the lowest on record (Cabinet Office 2021b). In contrast, the proportion of people aged 65 and over was 17.4% in 2000, but it has increased to 28.8% in 2020 (Cabinet Office 2021a). The number of marriages decreased by 12.7%, while the number of pregnancies decreased by 5.1% compared with the previous year. Therefore, the government is enhancing supportive measures in marriage, pregnancy, childbirth and child-rearing (Cabinet Office 2021b). Moreover, according to future population estimates, the population of 18-year-olds in 2040 will be 880,000, just 74% of the 1.2 million in 2017. Additionally, the number of students entering universities is expected to reduce to 510,000, 80% of the 630,000 in 2017 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT] 2021a).

2.3.1.3 Political System

Japan has had a constitutional monarchy as its political model since the Meiji era (which commenced in 1868), during which Japan began its modernisation. Until today, this polity has maintained the constitutional monarchy, with the emperor as a symbol of unity of the state, a two-chamber legislative system and separation of powers between the administration, legislation and judicature (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, n.d.). The current political situation includes the prime minister's office, which leads education reform. Since 1984, the Prime Ministers have been establishing private advisory bodies including the National Council on Education Reform under Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, the National

Commission on Educational Reform under Prime Ministers Keizo Obuchi and Yoshiro Mori and the Education Rebuilding Council and the Council for the Implementation of Education Rebuilding under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. These advisory bodies have been deliberating and forming recommendations for education reform, which are then executed accordingly.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education also has the Central Council for Education as a permanently installed official advisory body to investigate and deliberate important basic policies concerned with education, science and culture (Japan International Cooperation Agency [JICA] 2004). In September 2021, the cabinet decision document abolished the Council for the Implementation of Education Rebuilding, which will then be replaced by a new council. In 2021, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida began his term, and his future governmental policies will be closely monitored.

2.3.1.4 Economy

A state of emergency was intermittently declared in 2021 owing to COVID-19. However, as mobility-related restrictions have gradually reduced, the expenditure is on the way to recovery (Mitsubishi Research Institute 2021). The percentage of people who have completed vaccination in Japan has risen to about 74% (Prime Minister's Office 2021) and economic activity is expected to resume gradually. In 2022, the economic growth rate of Japan was 1.0% (World Bank 2023b). As mentioned in the previous demography section, Japan faces a severely ageing society with a declining birth-rate, resulting in reliance on foreign workers. As of 2019, there are 1.65 million foreign workers in Japan with China, Vietnam and the Philippines accounting for 60% of the total foreign workers. However, problems surrounding foreign workers require the urgent attention of the Japanese government (see Nippon 2020a).

2.3.1.5 Sociocultural Situation

Because of COVID-19, society and culture in Japan has changed drastically. Despite Japan's history being described as a mono-ethnic country, which is not totally the case, the country is

home to minorities such as Koreans (Zainichi) oldcomers and Chinese, Brazilian, Vietnamese, Philippines and Thai newcomers. There are also First Nations people in Hokkaido (Ainu), discriminated outcast people (Burakumin), overseas returnees (Kikokushijo) and 'double' or hybrid-identity Amerasian people in Okinawa. Moreover, there is a substantial educational disparity between the Japanese majorities and minorities (Gordon, Fujita, Kariya & LeTendre 2010). This disparity is not limited to an income gap but extends to opportunity discrepancies. Additionally, many Japanese admit that wealthier families are better off in terms of educational opportunities (Tachibana 2021).

2.3.1.6 Religion, Life and World Philosophy

Most Japanese are deemed pious, belonging to either Shinto or Buddhist religions, with a few others belonging to either Christianity or Islam. Notably, Japanese people's annual events also demonstrate diversity in terms of their religious beliefs. During the New Year holiday, they respect a multitude of gods at Shinto shrines. The Japanese have romantic notions about celebrating weddings in a church. One month after a child's birth, they are taken to a Shinto shrine to pay respects and pray for their health and prosperity. However, when organising funerals, the Japanese follow Buddhist customs. In December, the Japanese celebrate Christmas, when many families decorate Christmas trees at home and visit temples to ring the bell 108 times, which is considered to be the number of earthly desires. On New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, they visit the Shinto shrine to mark the start of new life (Ebeid 2016).

The Japanese view of the world is deeply connected to nature. As mentioned above, Japan has four seasons, and although natural disasters have hit the country in recent years, the Japanese continue to help each other and keep thriving. They even write phrases appropriate to the seasons at the beginning of letters. Additionally, the dishes on the menu reflect the seasons. This deep connection with nature is the foundation of the Japanese worldview (Kondo 2013).

2.3.2 Education in Japan

Pressure from strong Western powers has influenced Japan's education system, prompting it to focus on modernising the country's wealth, military and industrial development. Moreover, Japan advanced towards war under the emperor's system of public education following the Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890. After World War II, Japan experienced democratisation promoted by the United States and high economic growth (JICA 2004). During this time, the education system was also characterised by democratisation (Maki & Hida 2021:240-241). Since the 1980s, Japan has promoted neoliberal educational reforms (Kitamura 2014) which are consistent with features of the Global Educational Reform Movement (GERM). As described by Sahlberg (2012), the features of GERM include standardisation of education, focus on core subjects, the search for low-risk ways to reach learning goals, the use of cooperating management models and test-based accountability policies.

After World War II, the educational administration in Japan based its basic principles on legalisation, separation of independence (securing political neutrality) and local decentralism. For example, the MEXT legally notified the National Curriculum to standardise textbooks' contents (i.e., contents of education). Additionally, all internal and external matters of education are organised according to the Standards for Establishment of Schools, the Education Personnel Certification Act and other related laws and regulations (Omomo 2019). In contrast, since the pre-war era, the Board of Education, based on professional leadership and layman control, has managed and supervised schools, faculty and staff, thus securing political neutrality and decentralisation. In response, various systems that combine to ensure accountability, such as school and teacher evaluation systems, have been introduced and implemented (Katsuno 2019; Omomo 2019).

With the amendment of the Fundamental Law of Education in 2006, educational administrative intervention on

internal education matters such as the National Assessment of Academic Ability became legalised (causing teachers to lose their educational freedom) and the Education Promotion Basic Plan was formulated under Article 17 of the same law (Omomo 2019). Although securing decentralisation and autonomy of political neutrality are stated, school education is under centralised control by the cabinet. Under neoliberalism, self-responsibility and personalisation are advancing. Recently, moral education has become a special subject to maintain cohesive power as a nation-state.

In the early stages of COVID-19, Japanese schools were closed nationwide. Moreover, efforts to ensure online learning opportunities were implemented across the country at all levels of education. However, there were reports that online classes were rarely implemented (Nippon 2020b). Education officials have indicated that children of single parents and poor families were adversely impacted. Moreover, resources such as the Internet and laptops necessary for online education were not available to all (Nippon 2020c). In January 2021, the Central Council for Education issued a report on the future of school education: Japanese Style School Education in Reiwa Era. It outlines the direction of reforms that will bring out the potential of all children through personalised and collaborative learning to respond to Society 5.0 and an unpredictable future (MEXT 2021b).

2.3.3 Higher Education in Japan

Japan's school education is based on a 6-3-3 system, after which four years of university and two to five years of postgraduate programmes are established. The mission of universities in Japan is outlined in Article 7 of the Fundamental Law of Education.

1. Universities are the core of scholarly activities, which contribute to the development of society by cultivating advanced knowledge and specialised skills, enquiring deeply into the truth to create new knowledge, and broadly offering the fruits of these endeavours to society.

2. Autonomy, independence and other unique characteristics of university education and research must be respected.

There are national, public and private institutions of higher education in Japan, and as of August 2021, there are 86 national universities, 98 public universities and 619 private universities (MEXT 2021c). Having so many private universities are a characteristic of higher education in Japan, and more broadly in Asia than in the West (Altbach & Umakoshi 2004). About 80% of school education is public, while about 77% of universities are private. In 2020, 83.5% of the 18-year-old population continued in higher education institutions, and 54.4% were enrolled in a four-year college or university (MEXT 2020). Meanwhile, in terms of the number of students enrolled in postgraduate programmes in 2021, there are 75,306 in doctoral programmes, of which 51,040 are national universities, 18,953 are private universities and 5,313 are public universities. In other words, national universities are central institutions for developing researchers and other professionals (MEXT 2021c).

In 2004, a decision to incorporate Japan's national and public universities was taken. This corporatisation is the root of many problems surrounding higher education in Japan today (Komagome 2021). Incorporation was expected to liberate universities from traditional constraints to fully realise the academic freedom stipulated in Article 23 of the Constitution of Japan, allowing universities to develop their unique research and educational activities more autonomously. However, operating expense subsidies are being reduced annually (Morozumi 2019). As a result, universities have been forced to limit the replacement of retired faculty members drastically. Furthermore, universities must engage in competitive grants to obtain external funding. The research capacity of Japanese universities is declining as faculty members are busy writing applications to obtain external financing (Torii 2021). Additionally, recent research on university governance reform highlights that universities have become the personal property of a few people. According to the study, the authority of a small

number of university executives, including the president, has been strengthened. The president's selection is such that some universities allow the president to continue being the president if they are alive, or a small number of people can choose the president without regard to the vote or the will of the university members (Komagome & Kurihara 2021).

Despite the complex environment caused by the incorporation mentioned above, Japanese universities also focus on internationalisation (see Morel 2023). However, COVID-19 has made it difficult to study abroad physically, and they are working on securing opportunities for online study. As of November 2021, the number of people infected with COVID-19 in Japan has been declining, and university education is switching from online to face-to-face classes. In the future, internationalisation will further advance, depending on whether travel is possible like during the pre-COVID era. However, as mentioned earlier, the internationalisation of research and education activities under a selective and concentrated regime and during the competition for external funding will require a lot of sacrifices.

2.4 Conclusion

South Africa and Japan are approximately 14,000 kilometres apart. Due to the lack of connecting flights, the entire journey takes over 20 hours by air.

Thus, South Africa and Japan are vastly different in terms of population, ethnic composition, social, economic and political situations and all schooling and higher education aspects. However, we are colleagues in comparative education, and there is much to be learned from drawing comparisons between the two countries.

For example, while South Africa is a multi-ethnic society, many foreign workers and their children live in Japan. This internal internationalisation can also be seen in schools and higher education. We enquired how higher education can support internationalisation in school education. Moreover,

we assessed the contribution of higher education to the internationalisation of the local community.

Second, both countries share the same problems of inequality and disparity in education. Inequality is a challenge faced by many countries. In the context of COVID-19, we introduced online classes in Japanese schools and universities, but the implementation was not completely successful. In contrast, digitalisation is progressing rapidly in emerging countries (i.e., Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa [BRICS]). Thus, Japan and other countries can learn from the digital technology in South Africa and other emerging countries.

Finally, universities exist in both countries. Thus, the exchange of researchers, graduate and undergraduate students from both countries in various aspects of education and research in higher education institutions is possible in the future. Moreover, both higher education systems desire an increase in research activity and output. The relationship should enhance the United Nations Research Agenda, African Union Research Priorities and the vision spelt out in the COP28 Summit and the place of North-South collaboration in realising this vision and international collaboration can contribute towards the realisation of this goal (see Anon 2023; Bega & Nyathi 2023).

With regard to teaching and learning, Japan and South Africa are at different stages of demographic transition. The youthful population profile in South Africa and the shortage of university space for prospective students seem inversely proportional to the situation in Japan, where there is a decline in university-age population and an abundance of student space. Both countries can collaborate to complement each other.

Memorandums of Understanding between Japanese and South African universities should take advantage of push factors present in both countries' contexts, while at the same time plan to handle adverse, repulsive factors. Examples of the former include entrepreneurship, innovation, technology,

possible public-private-university partnerships, African context, academic freedom and freedom of speech. An example of the latter is the call for decolonisation and for Africanisation of African universities. With democracy in visible retreat in many parts of the world, notably in Africa (see Soyinka 2023), universities in South Africa and Japan can harness their synergy as two democratic societies to strengthen democracy in two parts of the world where it is coming under threat.

This book further shows the cooperation and collaboration between African and Japanese universities in education and research activities. We hope that these examples will serve as touchstones for future partnerships between South African and Japanese universities.

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