



Importing Diversity: Inside Japan's JET Program

By David L. McConnell

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In 1987, the Japanese government inaugurated the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program in response to global pressure to "internationalize" its society. This ambitious program has grown to be a major government operation, with an annual budget of \$400 million (greater than the United States NEA and NEH combined) and more than six thousand foreign nationals employed each year in public schools all over Japan.

How does a relatively homogeneous and insular society react when a buzzword is suddenly turned into a reality? How did the arrival of so many foreigners affect Japan's educational bureaucracy? How did the foreigners themselves feel upon discovering that English teaching was not the primary goal of the program? In this balanced study of the JET program, David L. McConnell draws on ten years of ethnographic research to explore the cultural and political dynamics of internationalization in Japan. Through vignettes and firsthand accounts, he highlights and interprets the misunderstandings of the early years of the program, traces the culture clashes at all levels of the bureaucracy, and speculates on what lessons the JET program holds for other multicultural initiatives.

This fascinating book's jargon-free style and interdisciplinary approach will make it appealing to educators, policy analysts, students of Japan, and prospective and former JET participants.

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

"Japan's official efforts at internationalization have been painful to witness. . . . The government's JET program is easily the most ambitious and its history and on-the-ground problems offer significant insights into Japan's struggle to open up to the outside. David McConnell's book provides a most interesting analysis of why this process has been so complex and difficult. It tells us much about Japanese society and education at this critical point in time."—Thomas P. Rohlen, author of *For Harmony and Strength*

"In this superb and insightful book, David McConnell explores perhaps the greatest (certainly the biggest) education program in humankind's history, offering patient, balanced analysis of its workings, problems, and accomplishments. McConnell's confucian equanimity and multifaceted perspectives lend the book a depth seldom found in contemporary writing on Japan."—Robert Juppe, First ALT Advisor for the JET Program

"This is a very astute, thorough, and personal account of the JET program as a case study of how a program can both change a system and provoke defenses against any change. With his fine ethnographic and analytic material, McConnell reveals the faultlines of "internationalization" in Japan. This is a great contribution to the study of organizations, marginality, and shifts in global and national identity."—Merry White, author of *Japanese Families: It Takes a Nation*

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

David L. McConnell is Associate Professor of Anthropology at The College of Wooster.

Users Review

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