

Issues generated in Japanese education

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INTRODUCTION

Every nation has its own educational system. In Japan, people are conscious that education is essential for individual and nation development. After World War II Japan's educational system was reformed with reference to the American system. Six years of elementary school, three years of middle school/junior high school, three years of high school and four university years. Japan has a heavily examination based educational system in which students are expected to master subjects such as math, science, English language, Japanese among others. Parents and students take education extremely seriously. Parents invest in cram schools to prepare their children to get test taking skills. Students are aware that their educational success will have an impact in their future. Japanese students are conscious that their achievements will determine their future social and economic status. As a result Japan has the best-educated population. The nation's education level has created multiple benefits such as a well-educated citizenry, work force with a capability of high productivity, improvement of quality life among others. Many Japanese students are aware of the significant costs as well as the great benefits of their accomplishments acquired in their educational career. However Japanese educational system is not perfect despite these achievements. Students face parental and social pressure to excel in their education. The Japanese educational system provokes many issues for students, affecting their lives and determines their social and economic status.

In this paper I will analyze the Japanese educational system providing examples and analyzing different issues. I will analyze the different stages a Japanese student

educational career, societal and parental pressure, consequences of not being successful, and lastly I will compare Japanese university level to the United States university level.

EDUCATIONAL CAREER OF A JAPANESE STUDENT

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In Japan, social and economic status is determined by school achievements. In Japanese schools attendance is required in the first nine years of schooling. According to lecture elementary and junior high students attend nine years of compulsory education without skipping. The ages of these students are between six to fifteen years old. Junior high school students with the highest achievements are accepted in the best high schools. According to lecture 96% of students enter high schools. Only the best high school students are accepted to the best universities or colleges. Basing on class lecture the percentage of enrollment is 54% (40%) in Hokkaido. In 2015 there is a total of 775 colleges/universities in Japan. As seniors in university, students prepare and ultimately do job-hunting so that companies hire them.

A second system is created in Japanese education

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According to DeVault and Kato (1977), "Parental and societal pressures to excel are great in Japan and created a highly competitive environment for young people, at least to the time of entrance into institutions of higher learning. These pressures have created a second system of schooling..." the Gakushu-juku educational system. For many decades in Japan cram schools have been private schools teaching students subjects such as math, music, dance, among others and recently added English conversation. Lately juku schools have an absolute purpose of preparing students for entrance examinations. It is mainly for junior high and elementary students exclusively to pass entrance exams.

Students attend these cram schools several hours a week. Many parents invest in their children's education by sending them to juku schooling so they are able to pass entrance examination to enter high school. As a result the majority of Japanese student are attending many hours of school leaving them with a little or no time to due any other activities.

Japanese children are not getting enough or any playing time



An average child of the world is expected to go to school to learn and many have other privileges. They do other activities after school such as sports (soccer, baseball, football), dance classes, singing classes or simply play outside with friends or use electronic devices to play computer games. The track for children in Japanese society is clear and set to enter college or a university as a top priority. Many Japanese students do not have the opportunity to play after school due to fatigue, juku or other appointments. Japanese educational system focus on acquiring as much knowledge possible rather than acquiring emotional and physical development trough playing time. According to Watanabe, T. (1992, Sep 14) "Mothers are stuffing their children's schedules so tightly with cram school, piano, art, swimming and other structured lessons that two-thirds of 1,168 Tokyo elementary school students surveyed in 1989 had to make special appointments just to play with friends." Most mother's dream is that their children get accepted to top universities, the problem is that is their dream not their child's dream. According to lecture, there are issues of monster parent (s) due to hyper anxiety for competition, over protection, and lack of confidence to schools and or teachers. Japanese parents are also under societal pressure and all they are trying to do is to help their children to ultimate get accepted to one of the best universities or colleges.

HIGH SCHOOL, YEARS OF EXTREME PREPARATION



High schools in Japan are composed of the best junior high school academic achievers. Students participate in cram schools to prepare to pass the entrance examinations to be able to get accepted to universities or colleges. High school students attend to cram schools “yobiko” for a couple of years. Yobiko are schools that are designed to help students with the entrance examination and there is competition from taking the course to pass the entrance exam of the university of their choice. According to lecture Yobiko is not only for current high school students, it is also for people who graduated from high school (Ronin). Ronin students are students who do poorly on university exams leaving them with little choices. During high school years students continue to suffer from stress and pressure to be able to pass the university examination.

Entrance examinations



In Japan many students consider entrance exam to be the greatest challenge of their lifetime. Students feel tremendous pressure and have labeled the examination period “exam hell”. According to Nagano, Yuriko, “Japan's juken, or “exam hell,” has long evoked images of stressed kids competing for slots at top universities in an all-or-nothing exam. But this approach has increasingly moved down the ladder.” According to class lecture private and public elementary, junior high, and high schools take the exam once a year. The examination results are crucial to the path the student will follow in their life. The academic score level also known as Hensachi system is how they measure the student’s level which depending on their result students can select the schools they want to apply. According to lecture the scores for Hensachi system is the following: 75-

exceptional, 70- superior, 65- very good, 60- good, 50- fair, and 40- poor. For University level students can take exams once a year to specific universities becoming Ronin after graduations. Student's scores determine which university they can attend, that is why they extremely prepare for entrance exams. There is also an alternative to writing exams in Japan. It is a self-promotion examination that is based on an application material and an interview. According to lecture specific people with certain talents or publicity can pass this exam in which their academic levels do not matter making this exception unfair. Other exceptions are Suisen that is a school recommendation for qualified students, Fuzoky system, which are affiliated schools from elementary through college/university level.

Negatives of entrance examinations



The juken system is a system of intensive entrance examination that Japanese students experience from kindergarten to university. The problem with the exams is that the exam could not accurately measure someone's intelligence because there is many human talents students cannot proof via an examination. As a result discrimination will be trigger due to the academic levels students accomplishment. Another negative of the exams is that students suffer from lack of sleep and socializing, stress, anxiety, and depression due to the societal and parental pressure to excel the entrance examinations.

University/College life: Japan vs U.S.A



There are differences and similarities in college life between Japan and U.S.A. I'm going to focus and analyze the differences. Japanese students work extremely hard to prepare and get an excellent score in the examination exam. They only have one

chance for the exam. Once they get the results depending on their scores, they can select the university they want to attend. In contrast in the U.S.A. there is not such an individual exam system. According to lecture, Japanese students select a major not because they are interested in it they select the major that is available. In the U.S.A. student's major is highly important choice, they major in the area they are completely interested on. Another difference is that in their senior year Japanese student go through job-hunting to obtain a job and grad school is considered to be a waste of time in Japan. In the United States, many students complete university and continue to grad school because the higher education a student receives the better pay and prestige they get. According to personal statement of several Japanese classmates that are studying abroad in the U.S.A., they think students in the united states study a lot, they are exposed to class discussions, attendance and participation is important, and they are required to do class presentations. For them their attendance does not affect their grade, they are not active participants in class or school, they are not required to do class presentations. They only take one or two exam and they are extremely easy because they have the answers to it. For Japanese students university years are considered being a break between fifteen years of preparation and obtaining the real world. Many students have label university years as "The last paradise" because they no longer have the parental and societal pressure.

Young people prepare for the work world



Japanese young people prepare for their senior year to do "shushoku katsudo" (job-hunting) a process on how young people seek for lifetime jobs once they finish school. According to Kara (2005) it is " A pivotal time in Japanese young people's lives is when they leave school and start to work. When the employment system that once

taken for granted can be taken for granted no longer.” It is a process that scares young people entering the world of work. It is an exhausting process that requires months of preparation but it is one of the most important processes for Japanese because it’s decisive in their life.



In conclusion parents and society set Japanese student’s path. They experience many years of parental and societal pressure to excel entrance examinations so they can ultimate obtain a job at a prestigious company. Parents play an important role in their child’s education. Society expects them to be able to pass examinations and get hire by a good company. Students cope and survive the system to ensure a lifetime job that will give them a social and economic status.

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good headings

Format : minor issue, but ok overall

overall : good well-organized paper

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