

THE BRIGHT AND DARK SIDES OF “ACADEMIA-INDUSTRY COOPERATION”: THE POSTWAR EXPERIENCE OF JAPANESE SCHOOLS

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I. *Theme*

Academia-Industry Cooperation in Japan has its historical roots in the arbitrary modernization policy of the Meiji government in the late 19th century. Up till then, Japan had an agriculture-oriented, feudalistic society; moreover, it was semi-dominated by the Great Powers of the world. The government bureaucrats acted as a trigger to modernize Japan. They believed that the only way to get Japan out of this situation was westernization. They set out to establish western-style schooling designed to increase the wealth and military power of the nation. To increase the impact of the system, they invented the rule of diplomaism, which was allocating human resources to areas including public administration, industry, and culture (employment and promotion), according to educational credentials. This way, the peculiar academia-industry cooperation was formed, determining the course of people's lives depending on when and which school they graduated from, not on their origins or abilities.

Consequentially, Japanese society turned out to be a diplomaistic bureaucracy with highly educated bureaucrats setting forward the bureaucrat-led modernization of all quarters. The schooling system from elementary schools to colleges became the institution for the bureaucracy to train and allocate their staff. It is an *idée reçue* to consider the individual as the basic unit of westernized modern society. Although some bureaucrats and intellectuals did know this idea well, they were never enthusiastic about nurturing and developing individuality. They were committed to cultivating human resources who would comply with the policy of increasing Japan's wealth and military power. If anything, they were devoted to constricting individuality accompanied by the maturation of industry and commerce that had taken the place of agriculture.

The schooling system built up the literacy sphere with classless terminology and characters. At that time, people still lived in different worlds based on locality—east, west, south, and north. The system created, at least on the surface, a single geographical space, that of Japan, in people's minds. Japan became the nation with the highest literacy rate and the strongest nation-state consciousness in Asia. As can be imagined, however, a modern industrial system called “capitalism” couldn't develop vigorously with only the elite who fill the posts in various fields with academic background and seniority as their passports and a submissive public. Around the time when modern industry started to develop after having managed to pass through the Industrial Revolution with bureaucratic policies, there appeared a move to criticize the schooling system. It was carried forward, sometimes being forced to counter sabotage from bureaucrats. This paper will roughly describe the bright and dark sides of the

Japanese academia-industry cooperation promoted from the 20th century to today.

II. *The Image of “Active Person (Katsujinbutsu)”*

Criticism against schools first appeared as an action to seek practical benefits from school education in Japan. The Industrial Revolution in the 1890's created secondary and tertiary industry groups including large manufacturing and business companies concentrated in the cities. These groups asserted the effectiveness of school education—the education effective for their industries. The people working for these industries were businessmen and laborers, and the image they suggested was a new, idealized image of themselves. Representing these voices, an educationalist suggested the “active person”—a person who can courageously fly abroad and pioneer a new business without depending on state care and academic background. He pointed out the need for new education to cherish the initiatives and ingenuity of every children and youth, calling such education “the education of wealth”. The argument referred to the new school movement of the same age in Europe led by E. Demolins and others.

In 1907, a civilian established a school called Nihon Seibi Gakko. Those involved in the business community invested in the school. One of the characteristics of this school was its curriculum, which included considerable play and productive activities. In the same way, another school called Seikei Jitsumu Gakko was established in 1912. The emergence of these new schools presented that the new school intended to nurture “active persons” started first in secondary education in Japan as in Europe. This move, however, was nongovernmental and didn't last long. Most education-minded parents wanted their children to go to government-managed schools, acquire a good academic background, and succeed in life. In the wartime years of the 1930-40s, Japanese industry fell under the control of monopolistic capitalism focusing on armaments, and the basis for the emergence of the new non-governmental schools disappeared.

In 1945, Japan lost WWII and its schooling system collapsed as well as its military and economy. Under the occupation of the Allied Forces, Japan's “democratic” policies propelled new education, mainly from the U.S., in public and private sectors.

In the 1950s, there was political conflict between the conservatives and the power outside the government. While the conservatives intended to make the transition to new education on the initiative of bureaucrats as had always been done in the past and to control daily classroom activities with national standards, the power outside the government tried to proceed using private initiative and put curriculum in the hands of teachers and children. At this time, strange to say, few people tried to advance new education with the idea of the education of wealth in order to foster “active persons.” This idea appeared temporarily as “production school” for some people outside of the government, and this move never became the official/unofficial guiding principle of the school system reform in Japan.

In the 1960s, the situation changed drastically. The commercial and industrial groups recovered, and Japan entered the high economic growth period. The new administration created from the conservatives urged reforming Japanese schools into staff training institutions designed especially for commerce and industry. This was the signal of the new era in which business leaders, who fell from power under the Meiji Restoration that broke down the class system, took the lead in economic affairs and educational affairs.

The schools' effectiveness for commerce and industry was first suggested with the “active person” image in the beginning of the 20th century. The index at this time suggested that people who were active, self-disciplined, and without resort to bureaucratic or school factions were regarded as financially effective to the industry. The signs of the birth of individuals were found in the Japanese schooling system. The effectiveness index suggested by the conservatives after the 1960s was connected to screening the school children by examining their ability for the new industry with the whole schooling system and the pursuit of economic usefulness in the academic activity of teachers. New indexes such as “education investment” and “academia-industry cooperation” started to be used heavily with an implicit premise of the commercial and industrial society. These two arguments of effectiveness sound similar, but a wide gap existed between them.

III. *Actual “Academia-Industry Cooperation”*

The approaches the government took under the new indexes included reducing general education that had low investment value based on the industry-centered economic index, placing great importance on vocational/professional education, reducing literature departments in universities and agroforestry/fishery high schools, and drastically expanding universities and other higher education facilities. To ensure economic growth, it was essential to increase the well-educated population. Moreover, the government implemented the commercialization of schools and cosigned public educational institutions to the private sector, in the guise of deregulating and liberalizing school management intended to increase the efficiency of schools. Children's daily learning activities were also forced to change with relative evaluation, selective entrance exams, and the expansion/abolishment of school districts and other approaches. The hostile competition for academic achievement, which was latent in the Japanese schooling system since prewar days, became open and everyday. In addition, the rule of employment and promotion was altered to be academic-background oriented as one sphere of the government's meritocracy policies.

That was the direct challenge to conventional diplomaistic bureaucracy and the attempt from the position of big-business leaders to reform the schools into facilities to make students fit for industrial society. Those changes on the human-forming system in Japan were comparable to the school creation by bureaucrats in the 19th century. However, some aspects were left unchanged. The government maintained the control of the curriculum of primary and secondary education and kept charging for school education according to the benefit principle. As you can see from the factors stated above and the poor public/private scholarship system, it is clear that Japanese schooling had a very exclusive character. This kind of system was/is limited in Western countries. Nevertheless, the majority of the people accepted the system in Japan. The reasons why they supported the system were deeply related to the futures of each and every one of them. This will be demonstrated by examining the social process of the same age.

The government proceeded with school reform as part of the economic policy called the “national income doubling plan.” Aiming to be an economic powerhouse, the industrial base of Japan moved from primary industry to secondary and tertiary industries and then to a post-industrial society. Facing the shifting situation, the parents of the old middle-class gave

up on their traditional family businesses including farming, forestry, fishery, crafts, and small shops. They started to be education-minded, which had been the child-rearing and life philosophy of the new middle class. The philosophy was also widely accepted in the working class, and middle-class consciousness extended all over Japan. Accordingly, the competition in the schooling system for better achievements, better educational credentials, and better posts in career structures became fierce among the entire nation. This created the condition called “school explosion.” The situation came to support the government’s policy of the large extension of universities that was serving as an important pipeline for academia-industry cooperation. The aftereffects still exist today in the 21st century. The percentage of students going on to university or junior college was approximately 20% in the mid-1960s, and increased to about 50% in the late 20th century. Not only an economic power, Japan seemed to have become an education power as well.

The changes in university education over this period were more drastic than those in elementary schools and high schools. Universities in the former diplomaistic bureaucracy were considered as “sacred space for the elite” and had academic atmospheres as typified by the seven imperial universities. The atmosphere changed completely, and universities were temporalized. Consequently, the temporalization of schools, one of the fundamental principles of modernization being pursued all over the world, was implemented in Japan.

Although opinion on the merits and demerits of the school reform is divided, the foundation of the Japanese schooling system was experiencing internal collapse because of the Malthusian-related hostile competition for ability that began even before the concept of childhood emerged and the drastic changes made by the system itself.

IV. *Light and Dark*

It started with the student revolt in the 1960s. From the 1970s to 1980s, the revolts became diverse, and the age group of the students revolting gradually became lower. While cram schools for preparing students for entrance exams enjoyed prosperity, problems such as domestic violence (in the elite group), school violence, bullying between children, apathy about everything, diminished desire to learn, school phobia, and withdrawal spread all over. Pupils can’t pay attention to the teacher in class, and classrooms sink into a state of chaos. The teachers who suffer from neuroses or are led into delinquency increased.

Families were facing problems more serious than domestic violence. The adults who do not stand on their own and live off their parents, the young people who make no attempts to get married and create homes, and the couples unwilling to have children were increasing.

It is natural that the birthrate continues to decline. This goes beyond women’s desire to have jobs and achieve economic self-reliance. The difficulties in educating children are also considered to be one of the reasons why couples decide to have only one child or no children at all. The difficulties fall into 2 types.

Parents’ efforts to make their children graduate from university do not always lead to success. Unless children graduate from one of the few prestigious universities, they can’t get good jobs. Additionally, in the 1990s, the children who can enter those prestigious universities became more and more limited to upper class children including the children of parents with selected professions. Although schools state the freedom of school and career choice, these are

only empty words. In reality, the schools have been engaged in the cultural reproduction of the hierarchical social class. According to an investigative report of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (August 2002), one of five university graduates is unemployed due to the recession and for other reasons. The expectation of social mobility through schooling with no segregation based on family origin and the acquisition of a good school record, the so-called "academic achievement," has been the source of the high rate of school enrollment in Japan. Diplomaism, however, became weak in the workplace as meritocracy prevailed. In addition, the correlation between parents' incomes and children's academic achievements (the ability to acquire academic achievement equals financial power) were fixed. A sense of stagnation prevailed among people including adults and children of the old middle class who were searching for new opportunities in the winds of change. This sense of stagnation is the first cause of the expanding social awareness of the difficulties in rearing children and sending them to school, which is also one of the reasons of the sharp decline in the birthrate.

The second reason is that the *Menschenformung* ability of the family declined deeply and widely under the "school explosion." In the diary of old-time elementary school teachers, you often find their laments that the parents including peasants, small-scale retail merchants, and craftsmen were indifferent to their children's education, even during compulsory education, with the parents who were laborers being even worse. This appears true on the surface. It was the new middle class who supported schools as school district residents. Wealthy merchants and farmers joined later, and those three groups made up the mainstays of schools. This does not mean that the other groups of parents were not interested in their children's education. They were indifferent to the school education managed by the government, but not to training their own successors. The prewar *Menschenformung* skills and networks of peasants, small-scale retail merchants, and craftsmen seemed to have changed drastically, but were still strong after the war. Those intangible schools had nurtured the farmers, small-scale retail merchants, and craftsmen of the next generation.

This family *Menschenformung* was seen only in the upper-class dominant group at first. As the ancient and medieval local thane and other communities broke down and divided into stem families, the family *Menschenformung* skills and networks became diversified according to class, community, or family business. These skills and networks were formulated and passed down for several centuries.

The high economic growth, the conversion of industrial infrastructure, and the "school explosion" broke up and undermined the network of handing down the family art of work and relationships between the generations. Around the same time, the trend toward the nuclear family cut off the pipeline for transmitting the folk pedagogy of parenting from grand parents to young parents. Young parents do not know how to bring up their children and have to depend on baby books, which are not always trustworthy. The loss of the close liaison among generations caused a great number of tragedies and has had devastating impact on Japanese *Menschenformung* structures and young couples' incentives to become parents.

Some local governments and volunteer groups understand the seriousness of the situation and are trying to restore this liaison, but it is not easy to restore what has once broken up. Without coping with the fundamental problems, there will only be nostalgia for the good old days without any substantial improvement.

Then, how can we overcome this educational aporia caused by the transition from the

schooling system for the diplomaistic bureaucracy to one for industrial society? The prewar school education was criticized for its illogical system in which the acquired educational credentials can be effective for a lifetime and also for its weak points. For example, the schools fill children with unpractical knowledge that is never used in real life, and the knowledge is too conventional to develop the creativity and individuality of each child. It is also said that such education is ruining individuality before it has a chance to be born, causing the stagnation of Japanese society. The view of “active persons” already pointed out these points in the early 20th century. The points have been the problems to surmount for a long time. It cannot be said that the traditional practice in diplomaism brought about all of the problems, but there is no doubt that it has something to do with the basis of these problems. In that case, the fact that diplomaism is put in a shaky state may bring Japanese education a ray of the light into the darkness, even granting that this dampens the incentive of the Japanese to go to school and send children to school, breaking up the Japanese schooling system.

Japanese diplomaism started to be reexamined as part of the “academia-industrial cooperation” reform. If this cooperation is destroying the Japanese schooling system inside, another approach, cooperation between schools and society should be considered as a means to eliminate the negative affects of diplomaism. Thinking people have already begun to ponder deeply about this issue.

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